

DAUGHTERS OF THE UAE

In a very short period of time the Emirati people have carved their names into history by building up a world class country in just a few decades. Among them are women who are inspirations with their contributions to this society. These daughters of the United Arab Emirates speak to **umuma** about their achievements.

إميراتي
emirati



THE UAE'S FIRST FEMALE TRAIN DRIVER

Mariam Safar – I graduated from the Higher Colleges of Technology (HCT), and currently work in the Dubai Metro as assistant manager of train controllers. My message to the world is that the Emirati woman is capable of handling any responsibility or duty in all areas.

My dream is to become one of the leading women in the UAE and to make my country proud of me. My dream started to come true as I became the first Emirati woman

to drive the Metro manually and who trains employees.

After graduating from HCT, I worked in banking for four years but then I moved to work in transport and I joined the Metro project which was a totally new idea in this part of the world. I was so excited to be part of it.

This is where I got direct access to operations department and I expressed much enthusiasm to know all the details of their work.

The senior management recognised my passion and that's why they offered me a position in the Metro trains department.

I was trained to operate the train. I also received training in the engineering of trains as well as the travelling process. I was excited to learn how to drive the train manually. Later, I went to London to gain experience in training and scheduling.

Thank God I passed all the tests with honours and continued my career development as trainer, Metro operator and as assistant manager of commuter services – which is considered to be one of the most important supervisory jobs.

My ambitions have no limits and every day I aspire for more. I have recently been assigned to the position of assistant operations manager of the Al Safouh tramway and I dream to succeed in this new endeavour and to overcome all obstacles I may face.



THE HIKING LIFE COACH

Hala Kazim – I am a general counsellor and work with women in the UAE to help them overcome emotional issues and realise their full potential. I was born in Dubai and studied in New York for five years. I am married and a proud mother of five boys and am also a grandmother. A few years ago, after years of working as an artist, I realised that my true calling was to help other people. I decided to get away and went on my first ever hiking trip to Camino Santiago, Spain.

This is where I had an epiphany and recognised that I needed to share this feeling of enlightenment and happiness with the women in my community. I went on a journey to discover the world, but instead, I found myself.

I then attended several counselling and coaching courses both in Dubai and London to strengthen my knowledge of human behaviour, and as a result, I formulated the idea and created "Journey through Change" in 2010. It's an initiative to organise hiking trips with small groups of women, where I counsel while walking.

All women get stuck at some point, and this is where they need to make a decision to do something about it. To me, walking is the best way to sort your feelings and to reassemble your mind. Walking energises you and because you're heading into a particular direction, it gives you a sense of achievement when you reach your destination. It gives perspective and reorganises your mind to shake

off that stuck feeling. We organise trips to exotic places four times a year and we have many regulars of Emirati and other nationalities who join in. Emiratis are a strong family-based community, and women are raised to give so much of themselves, so what happens is that she often ends up forgetting herself. My message to every woman is to love yourself. Loving yourself is not a designer handbag. It is taking care of your heart and your soul. It's a journey – an emotional, physical, intellectual journey.



THE FASHION ARTIST

Alia Al Shamsi – Drawing has been my passion since childhood, but I stopped practicing since graduating from school to join Zayed University to study social media communication. I was then selected for the Sheikh Mohammed Bin Zayed Educational Grant to study law and public affairs for one year in NYU.

After that I established a newspaper called Unleash: A Wandering Journal which was my graduation thesis. It aims at reviving the love of art in a society through distributing 1000 copies of the magazine, and whoever receives the copy uses one page of it and gives it to the next person.

This led me to start my studies in fashion design at the French Fashion ESMOD University. I was selected among several Emirati artists to participate in the opening ceremony of the Ara Gallery of Arts in 2011, where I exhibited my photography and digital artworks. All proceeds from this event were forwarded to charity.

I held an exhibition at the Ritz Carlton Hotel in the DIFC during November 2013, entitled "Moments in Time". This theme was inspired by the art of fashion photography popular between the 1930s and 1960s. My images tell the story of a bride's thoughts and feelings during a sequence of events in the last 48 hours before her wedding ceremony. The focus is on the simple details that may wither away from memory unless captured by the lens of the camera. Images are the best storytellers. This exhibition



portrays the tale starting from the night when the bride's hands are coloured with henna, up until the next morning when we see her sipping her coffee, and excitedly calling her friends, the hairdresser fixing her hair and her mother placing a diamond necklace around her neck.



THE HORSE RIDING INSTRUCTOR

Mariam Ahmed – I own the Asawer Horse Ranch in Dubai and I train women and children in horse riding. My passion for horses and my love for this hobby made me come up with this initiative to serve my country and highlight the role of the Emirati woman and her contribution to society.

I am always keen to encourage my students to perform their very best so that they would be able to continue by themselves in the future. I am very proud of my students and their ability to show high performance endurance during the intensive training sessions and competitions.

I also train children with special needs free of charge. These kids have a very high level of endurance and they are the heroes of the future. They have a high tendency to learn and face challenges and I try to contribute in achieving their dreams in addition to providing them with therapy through riding. I don't consider them to have difficulties. What they need is patience, since a child with special needs requires more time to learn and to pass the first stage. And after doing so they show me a big smile which makes me so happy.

Owning a horse ranch has been my dream since childhood. I love the beauty of horses and their characters that show a lot of dignity and self-esteem. I thank God that I could achieve my dream by enrolling in one of the horse riding clubs five years ago where I learned the basics of horse riding and technicalities of dealing with them. The support of my mother,



father and family has been the key to my success. I was lucky to be able to learn from professional horse riding instructors until I received my trainers licence.

After I attained my instructor's licence, I always tried to learn from the advice and ideas of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, the Vice President of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai.

THE MARRIAGE CONSULTANT



Mariam Ali— I am a married woman with four sons. My story started when I was flipping through the TV channels. I love watching cultural and social programmes, one of which is a family and education consultant programme. At the time I wanted to contact her for a consultation regarding an issue with my youngest son. My communication with her developed, and instead of getting consultation for my son I started getting consultation for myself.

I started learning and educating myself. I studied family counselling and attained a diploma in Family Consultation with honours. This was a turning point in my life, and opened the door for me to work as a family counsellor at the court. I invested in my job to improve myself and to serve the community and to help improve the quality of family life.

I love my job with all its intricacies. I educate people based on the famous proverb: "Prevention is better than the cure", and I published a book called "Vitamins of Marriage".

I try to support families by improving their relationships and minimise the potential of divorce by teaching them to accept differences, respect the other and preserve the unity of the family.

I participated in the Best Employee Government Competition and I was nominated for the award. I have also received a certificate of appreciation from the head of the court and my direct supervisor in the Department of Family Counselling and Rehabilitation.

