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Spread Some Inspiration with Philadelphia

the campaign to honor and celebrate the GCC's most inspiring women, culminated recently in spectacular fashion. At a Gala Dinner held at the Westin Dubai, Faiza Natto from Saudi Arabia was announced as the **Philadelphia Inspiring Woman of the Year 2011** for her extraordinary contributions to her community. Faiza, who has made it her mission to champion the cause of the deaf and dumb community of women in her homeland also received the Prize Money of USD10,000 from Philadelphia Cream Cheese, which she pledged to use to support her cause.

A history teacher who left her job to establish the first center of its kind in Jeddah to cater to the needs of deaf

and dumb women, Faiza has since dedicated her life to empowering this community by integrating them into the workforce, helping them to start their own families and giving them the tools they require to lead normal, fulfilling lives. Today the center she runs is



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fully equipped with a state-of-the-art computer lab, hair-dressing salon, embroidery institution, art section, and a lecture room where seminars and specialized courses are held. To date Faiza's efforts have seen more than 150 deaf girls find jobs that would otherwise have been closed to them, and more than 50 have been married off into good homes.

First Runner Up **Ruqaya Abdul Wahab Essa Al Qatami of Kuwait**, and Second Runner Up, **Lola Lopez** of UAE were also both rewarded with USD 5,000 each to support their respective philanthropy efforts. Ruqaya, a prominent and much-loved philanthropist in her country, is the founder of the **Rugaya A. Al-Qatami Charity Foundation & Cancer Patients Helping Fund**" and the **Hayat4Cancer** center in Kuwait, which provides free-of-charge cancer treatment for non-GCC nationals residing in Kuwait in addition to supporting cancer-awareness efforts and support groups for Kuwaitis. Lola, a British national residing in Dubai, is the founder of Volunteer in Dubai – and subsequently Abu Dhabi and Sharjah – which connects residents with any charity or aid organisation that requires support of any kind. Through her unique concept of connecting UAE residents with charitable initiatives in the country, Lola and her team of 6173 volunteers have dedicated more than 74,000 hours in voluntary work and have raised some DHS 2,681,795 for funding since 2008.

During the event, Azzam Alameddin, Director Corporate Affairs Kraft Foods MEA, who announced the winners, addressed the audience and explained the appeal of the campaign. "*Spread Some Inspiration* with Philadelphia is unique because it is one of the few regional campaigns of its kind to seek out and honor the many unsung female heroes in the GCC. It celebrates the achievements of ordinary women who have touched the lives of others in positive ways and it is also open to all nationalities of women living in the GCC".

The event was attended by some of the GCC's most exemplary women who have been role models in their communities, including the campaign's notable panel of judges, *Maha Shafiq Al Sarraj*, one of Saudi Arabia's most prominent female media personalities and accomplished poet; *Nabila Al Anjari*, Kuwait's foremost women's development advocate; and *Nayla Al Khaja*, UAE'S first female film producer.

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The campaign, now in its second year, commenced on February 17, with the aim of honoring women residing in the GCC who have made positive contributions to their communities by way of charity and community relations. Women were invited to nominate themselves or others by sharing their stories on www.phillyarabia.com. The judges then short-listed the three most compelling stories of women from the region, and the public was invited to vote for the one story that had inspired them the most. Public support once again proved phenomenal and a total of 2,600 unique votes were recorded during the two-week voting period.

Commenting on the three-month long campaign, Vishal Tikku, Managing Director Kraft Foods GCC said that the campaign by Philadelphia Cream Cheese has quickly become one of the most widely talked about women's campaigns in the region. "Although only in its second year, the Spread Some Inspiration campaign by Philadelphia has grown in scale and has established a large following amongst both the public and the media in the region. We received 185 stories from the GCC and even North Africa and Levant, of

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which 55 stories were selected for nominations. This year, we also extended the campaign to women in Saudi Arabia, and were very pleased to learn that the highest number of entries came from there”.

The spectacular evening was charged with the excitement and enthusiasm of the campaign nominees and their families, many of whom came from Kuwait and Saudi Arabia to witness the exciting finale.

To read the stories of Philadelphia's inspiring women in the GCC, visit www.phillyarabia.com

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