

# BAREEN

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## ARRIVAL

When I left my country. . . we were in [a] hurry. So we couldn't bring a lot, and our departure was kind of sudden, so we didn't know when we will have the flight. What I could take [is] just a book, a grammar book of English. . . I thought it may be useful for me to use it and to read it, because my grammar has [a] problem. It is from when I was teenager, and I just started English classes. So at that time I was studying in it, so whenever I open it . . . I go to my teenager age. At that age I was with my grandmother. She passed away. My grandmother was very encouraging [of] me to learn. Oh, every time she was just . . . encouraging me. She was telling everyone “shh, be quiet, she is studying.” It's very precious for me. So whenever I open it. . . it brings a lot of memories [to] my mind. It give[s] me a kind of relief or something . . . All my memories are inside this book. [Now] my kids ha[ve] it.

When we came to Stillwater. . . my mind was blank. [It was like] I was. . . in a hot boat . . . when the winds are pushing [it]. I was totally blank. I didn't know what will happen, what will be the next step? So when I came here, and then a lot [of] other Afghan families had already arrived before us one or 2 months earlier . . . it was good. . . then I thought, “Okay, I'm not alone, and a lot of other families were there already.” At the time, my kids were . . . 4, 3, and 2 [years old]. At this time we were living in. . . the campus apartments, and so it was good. Yes, looking, [and seeing] you are not alone.



Hosted by:

**OKLAHOMA STATE  
UNIVERSITY**



Interviewed in English by:

**ZAKIA ANWAR**

With the informed consent of participants, interview transcripts have been adapted here in narrative form for clarity and efficiency with a commitment to retaining the intended meaning.

We cried a lot together. I was feeling depressed. . . I was thinking “I left my house, my everything, [a] full house, everything I left just behind, and I came here.” In the beginning, yes, I was suffering, I cried a lot, and then gradually I thought – at the time my oldest son was about 5, so he was going to school – Okay, it will be a kind of sacrifice for their future. They will have a better life. And it was very encouraging when you see that they are going to study, for at that time I was suffering how. . . should I start? I was just sitting behind the window. And I was watching. Okay, it's the time for them to go to their classes. . .and when they were coming [home]. “Hello!” I saw them coming. So it was also very encouraging for me to see them and get the spirit: “Okay, you should never give up and try from different sides.” I was trying to apply for my master degree.

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## SUPPORT ON CAMPUS

There was [a] building which was called FRC. It was very nice. Whenever we had some questions or problem[s], we were just asking FRC.\* And they were always ready to help us. In the beginning. . . we need[ed] a lot because we didn't know, we were not familiar with anything. So a lot of [it] helped a lot, and also [there was] a lot of volunteers.

Every family had a family assistant and volunteers [who] were helping us. Ms. Terri. She was a wonderful, great lady. She helped us a lot, not only our family, but a lot of Afghans. So she was ready to [help us] whenever we had any problem. We were just texting her, and she was available for us. . . she was feeling what [it is] we would need as a mother or as a person who is totally alone in the country. So she was great.

*They introduced us [to] everything about the US. We didn't know how to get the sim [card] for our mobile. Once we had questions, these volunteers were available with us after the English classes.*

\*The Family Resource Center (FRC) is a department at Oklahoma State University.

OSU, the department of Global Studies has provided English language [classes], still for almost 2, 3 years. So they are still providing English classes for Afghans who are still suffering. . . from from the beginners to the advanced level they are providing classes. . . They provided the courses for ladies to learn driving, and it was very helpful. Till now they are providing the facility to get together on our two important celebrations, *Eid*. [They also take us] to visit another city. It's very interesting. We have visited Oklahoma City two, three times to get familiar with the places and also other places. . . These are very interesting and useful to get familiar with other places.

*Inside the campus, it was very calming. Very relaxing . . . We had English classes in the Global Studies [building]. So Afghans were gathering there. . . about 3 days in a week. So we were gathering. I was not alone. We were crying. We were sharing together. One day there was a celebration for *Nawruz*, and they played the song, *Alan Auru Zama*. So all the men and women were crying, and they had to stop the song in the middle, and because no one was able to watch it, some men left the class, and the ladies and the men who were in the class all were just crying. Yes, we cried a lot.*

Image of the School of Global Studies at Oklahoma State University.



*They had some kind of gatherings, maybe twice a month, once a month. They had daycare after school. So the kids were getting familiar with each other, even if they were not in the same classes or same schools, and then [the] parents got introduced [to] each other. So these were very helpful for making a community.*

When I didn't have a car. . . I was waiting [at] the bus stop. There was an Irani[an] lady who was also a student. So whenever she was meeting with me [at the bus stop], she was always showing me something: "Okay, on these days you can go to [the] mart" or "they have sales. You can go ahead and buy something." Or she was advising me; FRC\* was also sending us the emails about . . . fresh vegetables and food which they were providing for students. So, that lady was always [telling] me "Okay, today is the day you can go to the FRC and get some bread, and these things." I miss her. I [have] not seen her [for] more than [a] year. And I miss her.

## NOT WITHOUT ITS CHALLENGES

I don't know when I will be able to get the job. . . but I'm satisfied for my kids' future, and my kids are going to school. They are studying. They are happy; they are learning. So it is. . . kind of okay from one side. I'm okay with it. Okay – my future, or my work, if I couldn't get [that], then it's okay; my kids will have a better life than me.

So whenever I was free from the kids or anything, I would stay at the house. I'm not the person to go outside. [As] for the kids, I was taking them to the playground.

[Before arriving in the US] I was scar[ed] a lot from driving. I never thought in my country [that] one day I will learn driving. But here, four kids I had to learn, because I had to drop them to school. In the beginning we suffered a lot because I was not familiar with driving. So I start[ed] learning driving and then got my license. So these all were not possible to do by myself.

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## CREATING A LASTING COMMUNITY

Afghans still are living there who are working at the OSU, and they are [also] their students. On *Eid* and other celebrations we go to each others', and we meet each other.

Most of [my] relationship was with Afghans, our own Afghans, and we get together with other Afghan families on *Eid* or any other gatherings, festivities, celebrations. . . it was good, because our on Afghan community was there. We were really close. The buildings were close. And whenever we wanted, we were going and visit[ing] each other.

*Thankfully, everything, everything get[s] better and better day by day, and we settled slowly.*



Image of community member donating a car to a former ECAR guest.