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Humanitarian to Speak at Founders' Day

Feb. 12, 2014

BLOOMINGTON, Ill.— Humanitarian Luma Mufleh will be the keynote speaker at Illinois Wesleyan University's annual Founders' Day Convocation, commemorating the institutions' establishment in 1850. Her speech, "Changing the World One Game at a Time," will be given at 11 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 19 in the Westbrook Auditorium of Presser Hall and is free and open to the public.

Also during the month of February, The Ames Library will hold its annual exhibit of historical documents from the University's founding, including the University's charter, or "**Birth Certificate**," that includes signatures of the 30 founders and the addition of "Wesleyan" to the University's name. The exhibit will also showcase a **Circular**, an advertisement from 1851 that declared the school was in operation and encouraged readers to consider an Illinois Wesleyan education.



Luma Mufleh

Mufleh is known for her extraordinary work as creator of the Fugees soccer team, comprised of child refugees from war-torn countries. Through the program, she helped the children achieve success and self-esteem. Her efforts were the subject of the book *Outcasts United: An American Town, a Refugee Team, and One Woman's Quest to Make a Difference*, by Warren St. John. The book was the University's selection for the 2013 Summer Reading Program, which encourages incoming students to participate in intellectual discussions with the Illinois Wesleyan community.

Born in Amman, Jordan, Mufleh graduated with a degree in anthropology from Smith College in Northampton, Mass. She later moved to Georgia, where one day she came across a group of barefoot children playing soccer in the streets in Clarkston. She learned that the children were refugees from countries across the world, including Afghanistan, Iraq, Congo, Somalia and Sudan, who lived under unimaginable hardships and turmoil.

A refugee herself, Mufleh witnessed the struggles the children were facing while exhibiting their love for the game of soccer. This led her to create the soccer team to enrich the children's lives.

In further support, Mufleh formed the non-profit organization Fugees Family, Inc. with her friend Tracy Edigar in 2006, which is dedicated to helping young refugees acquire the academic and social skills they need to succeed. The organization, which was awarded the Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Award in 2008, provides a space for children to grow and realize their potential.

Fugees Family, Inc. now hosts many programs, including multiple soccer teams, after-school tutoring, college and career counseling and the Fugees Academy. Current efforts of the organization are focused on creating a permanent home for the Fugees Academy, allowing it to grow to up to 300 students.

As a social entrepreneur, in 2004 Mufleh also established Fresh Start, a cleaning service, and in 2010 Queen Food Company, a food truck operation, to reach out to adult immigrants and refugees in the community as well.

Mufleh has appeared on National Public Radio, NBC's *Today Show*, CBS and ESPN and has been featured in *The New York Times* and *Sports Illustrated*. Her honors include the Smith College Medal and the Common Ground Award.

For additional information about the Founders' Day Convocation, contact Sherry Wallace, director for news and media relations, at (309) 556-3181.

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