

Alfred University alumna Neslihan Jevremovic announces start of Anka campaign to teach rug weaving to Syrian refugees

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Neslihan Jevremovic

Alfred University alumna Neslihan Jevremovic &78, the co-founder of Woven Legends and Anka Cooperative, announced this week the start of Anka Cooperative&s Kickstarter Campaign, an effort to expand the Cooperative&s mission to teach traditional rug weaving skills to 20,000 Syrian refugees, principally women, over the next three years.

“We have a mission that by 2020 we&re going to empower 20,000 Syrian refugees,” Jevremovic says. Her full description of the Anka mission can be viewed at: <https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/ankacoop/empowering-syrian-refugees-with-handcrafted-heirlo>

Jevremovic cofounded Anka Cooperative in 2016 with Josh Burke, a commercial attaché who was stationed in Turkey and appalled, as was Jevremovic, by the Syrian refugees& tragedy. They both currently volunteer their time to operating and expanding Anka.

“Teaching these women a vocation empowers them beyond making money,” Jevremovic says. “It gives them a career and power over their lives.”

As Alfred University&s Enews shared last week, Jevremovic&s Philadelphia-based company Woven Legends began in the 1980s, spearheaded by her former husband and Alfred University alumnus George Jevremovic &77. Neslihan Jevremovic keeps watch over Oz-Kent, a Turkish company (named after her son Kent Jevremovic) that produces only traditional hand-woven rugs. The 35-year-old partnership is responsible for rugs often presented as “antiques of tomorrow” in the international rug world.

Jevremovic was born in Istanbul as Neslihan Christobel Cabiakman -- and studied ceramic engineering while a student at Alfred. She says her mother originally sent her to the United States to live with her father, Dr. Pol Cabiakman in

Wellsville, and pursue a career in medicine; however, her exposure to ceramic engineering at Alfred University led to a change of plans. After graduating, she returned to Turkey and later married George Jevremovic -- the nephew of the late Alfred University Professor Emeritus Savo Jevremovic, and his wife, Bea who visited her and became fascinated with the ancient craft of rug weaving while teaching in the country. They returned to the U.S. in 1980.

These days, Neslihan travels and visits her looms in Turkey at least four times a year. In 2012, she began working with Oz-Kent to teach traditional rug weaving skills to refugees crossing the Syrian border into eastern Turkey. In 2016, when she co-founded the Anka Cooperative, she used the Anka symbol resembling the western phoenix icon to represent the hope of life rising from ruins.

“Many drops make a lake,” she says in her appeal for support and spreading the word on the Anka initiative, a four-year success story that to date has taught venerable and valuable -- skills to hundreds of Syrians struggling with their country&s disaster.

For additional information on Anka Cooperative, visit the following websites:

<http://www.ankacoop.org/>

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCM_dTBzvsevt2bg6rApudaw

<https://www.instagram.com/ankacooperative/>

<https://www.facebook.com/ankacooperative/>

<https://twitter.com/ankacooperative>

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/8of3nfow65jg33x/AADX4ByOs4UOMbWhtuQvwY-a?dl=0>