Thanks, everyone. Good afternoon. And you know, I have to tell you that I became dean four years ago and started attending a few anthropology forums and really truly enjoyed them and when I had this opportunity to travel to Sharjah and back with some of my colleagues I thought what a great forum to come and share the experience that we've had. And let me tell you my purpose for today. One is not only to share the experience that I've had with colleagues in traveling from here all the way over to the United Arab Emirates, but it's also to tell you about two of our Chico State graduates who happen to be royal princess, or Sheikahs, of the United Arab Emirates, and to let you know that I've been working with colleagues at establishing opportunity and relationship with folks over in the UAE, especially in the Emirate of Sharjah. And so my point today, or purpose today, is to kind of get you interested and thinking about the United Arab Emirates and even the possibility of perhaps doing some scholarship or some exchange or finding a way to make your way over to enjoy the people in the UAE as I have with some of my friends. So I've got a short period of time and a heck of a lot of slides, so I'm going to try to move through these quickly and share with you the experience that we've had.
The journey began with a trip to Dubai in 2008, and you'll recognize some of the folks in this picture and perhaps not, but I travelled with Dr. Cindy Radican, Dr. Chris Coughlin, who's here, and Cindy is here, and Dr. Judy Borden [phonetic], who's here. In fact, they're all sitting together and they're from the child development program, and two of their honor students, Allison Shultz and Emma Nye, and we went over in 2008. And I'm going to tell you just briefly about this trip.
When we get over we met a friend of Chris, and this is a former student, I believe her name is Esma and she runs a tour, at the time she was a tour guide, she brought us through one of the local heritage or the local, what do I want to say? Suits. One of the local malls where folks offered slices, etcetera, in Dubai.
But this first trip in 2008, and here we are, this is the group, was for a very interesting reason.
Chris, who has joined us about what, four years ago now, was a faculty member at Zayed University, and Zayed University is located in Dubai. It’s an all women's university. I believe they just built a men's campus, a brother campus, but at the time Chris worked there for about five years and when she came here, and we're very lucky to get her, she established a research with, I guess you were studying or are studying the perceptions of, children's perceptions of war and peace and you're working with Jesse Duzard, and I believe you're working with some anthropology students as well. So Chris and Emma and Allison and Judy and Cindy had an opportunity to take their research over to an international conference called Women as Global Leaders Conference, and they had that opportunity to work with students at Zayed University.
So we went together to Zayed, and what's interesting about this campus and all of the campuses that I show you today is that they're a bit over the top. You're used to perhaps what you see at Chico State, relatively modest, and what you see at the UAE or what I'm going to show you today are three campuses over in UAE, Zayed being the first one you see. It's built rather large and with cutting edge technology and an interesting architecture. Now when you look at this picture what do you see? I'm just curious. Any symbolism?
- A smiley face.
- You see a smiley face. Any other symbolism?
- Crescent.
- A crescent. What does that big stack remind you of?
- The Queen Mary.
- It reminds you of the Queen Mary or perhaps even a ship. And when you think about UAE and perhaps what you know about UAE is that they are very much located on the Arabian Gulf and the Arabian Sea, and when you look at that they spend a lot of their time, or they have in the past, with boat building and sea faring and trade, etcetera. So it's no surprise then that a lot of the symbolism you'll see really speaks to their heritage as it does in this case.
Chris, when we were there, the dean, her dean, said she wanted her back and I had to really work hard in making sure that we brought Chris back with us.
But more importantly, we had an opportunity to meet with the women, the students of Zayed University. This is a mothleis, this is an opportunity for folks to come together in a living room and share food, and on this particular day the mothers of the students with whom we were working, prepared all of these traditional dishes and brought them out to this mothleis, this large tent that they constructed in the quad itself, and there we kind of sat on these pads, as you see, you see Dr. Radican and Dr. Borden and the students, and we actually enjoyed a traditional treat.
The next thing we got to do which was rather cultural was we engaged in a henna tattooing. Artists were brought in from nearby in Dubai and since they really wanted to give us special treatment, they brought in some tattoo artists who engage in henna. Now I don't know if you've ever had a henna tattoo and I keep waiting for henna to really take off in the United States because they last for about three weeks. It’s definitely my kind of tattoo! And it really is artistic. So this woman spent a great deal of time, as you can see there are a lot of intricacies for this particular tattoo. Then we all had these wonderful, marvelous, beautiful tattoos for the entire time that we were there.
But the reason we were there is to connect with Dr. Myers. Galoises and Chris are colleagues together and they're responsible for setting up this research project on children's perceptions of war and peace. And it's Galoises' students that we were working with. So Galoises and Chris really led our expedition in 2008.
And here's just a picture of our two honor students working with one of the women who was also, working on this research project with us. And what I find very interesting about this is that if you didn't know where we all were from you would assume this was perhaps a class at Chico State where we're all engaged, and as we're engaged I also think it's very interesting that we see the Sheikh, and the Sheikh of, I believe this is, I can't remember if this is the Prime Minister or the Sheikh, but this is probably the ruler of all of UAE, and engaged in education, and this was on this woman's laptop. But our students came together, they worked on their presentation, because you have to remember we were going to the international conference on Women as Global Leaders and so they were putting the finishing touches on their presentation and getting ready to go to WAGL.
WAGL was another big event. It was at a local resort in Dubai, kind of southern Dubai. It was close to Burj Al Arab and if you've been watching television Burj Al Arab is one of the first large hotels that we built in Dubai. I have a picture of it coming up, or it was actually in the first picture that you saw. It's the kind of odd shaped one and if you watch television you've seen I think a tennis player hit a tennis ball off the top of it or you've seen Tiger Woods drive a golf ball of the top of it. But either way, our conference was held at a resort just south of that.
There were over 5,000 people at this conference. The rulers of all of Dubai and the UAE came to the conference, royal princesses or Sheikha's came to the conference, and even international diplomats and dignitaries or social activists for peace were at the conference. They were actually really promoting Jane Fonda and Sarah Ferguson, Princess Fergie, at this particular conference and we managed to snatch a picture of them. But what's most important to me is not the celebrities who were at this particular conference, but that there were 5,000 people internationally at this conference and they were presenting papers, and papers mostly on women's roles in rural communities, women's leadership roles in rural communities as it relates to keeping communities healthy and keeping communities, I think, educated so that they thrive. So of those 5,000 we had two of our students do their presentation with students from Zayed and it was just a marvelous occasion. And I understand that we've had more students go back to Zayed, I think one from child development and one from anthropology, and do another student forum on their research. So we already have a great relationship going on with at least Zayed University in UAE.
Then we also have some graduates. Sheikha Jameela Al Qasimi is a graduate of psychology department. She graduated in psychology with a minor in anthropology in 1981. Her cousin, Sheikha Lubna Al Qasimi graduated with some computer science in 1982, and Sheikha Lubna is also a very powerful woman leader in the world. I believe she's Minister of Finance of all of the UAE. Last year or two years ago she was touted as one of the top 100 most influential women in the world. This year the report came out and Sheikha Lubna is in the top 75 most influential women in the world. And she's a Chico State graduate. Sheikha Jameela Al Qasimi, our psychology graduate, has a long list of accomplishments as well, and my job when I went to the UAE, because you're probably wondering, all these folks went to Dubai and they did this wonderful presentation, what the heck was a dean doing over there? Well, my job was to track down Sheikha Jameela Al Qasimi and introduce myself to her. I don't know if you know, and we'll look at the geography in a minute, but Dubai is just south of Sharjah City, and Sheikha Jameela Al Qasimi lives in Sharjah City. So I got Dr. Radican to come with me that day and we went off for a two hour meeting with Sheikha Jameela and she was 30 miles away. We had to have a driver, we didn't know where we were going, we were very unfamiliar with the culture and it was rather exciting. We finally found Sheikha Jameela's office, which was with the Sharjah City humanitarian services, and I'll tell you about that in a minute, and we sat in the reception area and Sheikha Jameela finally came out and get us and we thought this was going to be a two hour meeting, this was going to be great, and we sat down, the first question she said to us was is Madison Bear still there?
And we said absolutely it's still there. She goes, you know, I don't eat there, I didn't eat there often but it was one of my favorite places and students seem to talk about it. So once we hit if off that the Madison Bear was still there we exchanged with her gifts that we brought from Chico State and our two hour meeting turned into a 12 hour meeting. We hit it off very well, to the point where she had to tour us around all the humanitarian services that she's responsible for, as well, as the ladies club in Sharjah, as well as University City, which is the subsequent trip, the trip I just took. We'll look at that more distinctly. Let me tell you about Sheikha Jameela. We honored her as our distinguished alumni for the college behavioral and social sciences last year. She has a long list of accomplishments and I just want to read this so I don't mess up. She graduated with a BA in psychology, subsequently earned an executive MBA in 2004 from the American University of Sharjah in UAE, and I'll show you a picture of the American University shortly. She pioneered in advocating for rights of people with disabilities and human rights in general. She is Director General of Sharjah City for humanitarian services. That logo on the bottom right is the logo for humanitarian services. And this picture is one of her children with physical, and I believe cognitive disability, and this young gal was the cover of our vanguard, our BSS newsletter. And I absolutely love that picture.
Jameela initiated the establishment of new services for the disabled and their families, including a kindergarten for the deaf and hard of hearing, a school for mentally handicapped vocational training programs, job placement programs, and Sharjah Autism Center. She also is the founding member of Al Thiqa, it's a sport club for people with disabilities, and the Handicapped Guardian's Association, which is a parent group, a parent association charged with trying to educate folks about services that we can provide for children with disability. She has had many recognitions and was honored for her pioneer in social work in UAE during the first Gulf festival for social work in 2008. She received the Serta Port appreciation award for promotion of global digital literacy and United Nations development program UAE accolade for Distinguished Achievements in Humanitarian Services. I can't show you a picture of Sheikha Jameela Al Qasimi because the royal women don't have their pictures taken. In fact, many women in the UAE may opt out of having their photographs taken, but you cannot take pictures of royal. Only their family members can. So the closest I can do is tell you about her and to show you about the work that she does.
This is just a picture of her autism center that we also visited that day.
But I'm going to come back to the humanitarian services, because we spent a lot more time on this most recent trip I took with Greg Van Dyke and Rebecca Lytle. Rebecca, raise your hand. Greg, raise your hand. The three of us went over this past October to visit the humanitarian services further. Sheikha Jameela, when she was here last spring, invited us to come back and really explore, and I believe Rebecca Lytle is taking five students back to UAE, specifically to Sharjah City Humanitarian Services, to work at camp for students, or children who are disabled, and you're going soon, I think in December, just a couple of weeks. The 15th. Excellent. Good. I'm glad you're here. So I'm very excited that we have more folks going back to engage in some work. So thank you for doing that. But you know, I thought gosh, I can spend all this time telling you about our trip, but maybe it would be worthwhile to really have kind of a synopsis of the culture and the history and a little bit of the geography and the polity that exists in the UAE. I'm not sure how much you know about the United Arab Emirates. Raise your hand if you've been there before. Okay, so we have a handful of folks. And raise your hand if you've studied it because I'm going to call on you to help me. Okay. So I'm going to tell you right now that I'm not an anthropologist and I also do not speak Arabic, so I'm going to struggle with some of the words, but I'll do my best. And then if we have time at the end for questions maybe some of you can help me.
But the United Arab Emirates, let's figure out its location. When you think about it, it is located over here next to Saudi Arabia, and it is west of India. Oman is right here. I was hoping this picture would be a little bit clearer, but this blue spot right here is the Persian Gulf. The folks that I spoke with in the UAE refer to it as the Arabian Gulf. But we have here this body of water. And I don't know if you can see it, there's a small spot right here and this is the United Arab Emirates, and Oman is here and Yemen is here and then, of course, you've got Iran and all of these. There are a number of islands too in the Gulf that I understand, Bahrain [phonetic] is one, Qatar as well. So this is where it's located. Now let's look at the UAE itself.
The UAE is comprised today of seven emirates, and you're familiar perhaps most with Dubai. Dubai sits right here. It is, as a city, it's the largest city. It has about a million, almost two million people in it. Abu Dhabi, which is considered the political capital, where many of the federal government offices are, Abu Dhabi is located here. Where we were in Sharjah, Sharjah City, is located right above Dubai here. And if I were to try to say these names I believe the seven emirates are Abu Dhabi, Ajman, Fujairah, Sharjah, Dubai, Ras al-Khaimah, and Umm al-Qaiwan. So those are the seven emirates. And you're going to probably ask me how did they get to be that way? So I'm going to tell you briefly.
It's an interesting history. Beginning around the 15th century, if we go back in looking at the map, because I think when you think back to explorers and trade that was going on around the world there was a lot of interest in many waterways that would allow trade from India and trade from a lot of these other ports, so there was a lot of international trade occurring. And Portuguese were perhaps one of the first European nations to come in and really set up trading. After the Portuguese you have the British and the Dutch had influence, or had interest. So about the 16th and 17th, late 16th century, you have the British who really kind of came in and kind of took over trading, but you also had a lot of trading among the UAE and all of these ports here. And what I want to say is that the Arab Nations, or the Arab countries and their ports, were as engaged in trading as I would say the British were, and there were opportunity for a lot of international folks to come to the UAE, and surprisingly one of the biggest industries at the time was pearling. I don't know if you knew that. But there are a lot of pearls, a lot of oysters in the Persian Sea. And so what we had is we had a lot of folks who were interested in coming and really harvesting those pearls out of the oysters and then engaging in trade. It was very lucrative. So with that the United Arab Emirates has always experienced a large number of international folks coming to the UAE and setting up trades. So you had kind of this merchant ruler economy set up where you had merchants come and engage in trade, not only for pearls, but other things, because once you start harvesting pearls you need boats and so you need boat builders and you need folks who are going to do the sailing and all of this wonderful stuff.
So as you do that you see a lot of internationals coming to the UAE and you see a long history in the United Arab Emirates of folks really relying on international skilled labor, and not so much the labor of the nationals themselves. Before trading got really, really big, folks in the UAE engaged in a little bit of agriculture and also husbandry, so they were doing kind of raising of goats and camels. And what you noticed, or what I noticed in my reading, is that the folks who owned the land, so the people who were engaged in agriculture actually became kind of the elite social class and the folks who were engaged in herding actually then became workers for the people with the land. And so over time you saw a rise of the elite or the monarchy. So when I talk about a merchant ruler kind of economy in the 17th, 18th, 19th century you're looking at wealthy merchants and the ruling class who have come together. Now when you look at the name Al Qasimi, you can trace it all the way back. So when you think about monarchy and kind of inheritance or heritage, Sheikha Jameela Al Qasimi, and even the Sheikh, the ruler of Sharjah right now, come from a long line of Al Qasimi's because the Al Qasimi's have been pretty much rulers of the area of Sharjah for an incredibly long time.
Okay, I bored you with that too much, but I think it makes a difference when you start thinking about, kind of where the United Arab Emirate is today. The religion of UAE is Islam. It's about 85% Sunni and about 15% Sheite. So we see minarets and mosques everywhere. In fact, I'll show you my cultural naivety. My roommate, the first time we went over, was Cindy, and Cindy and I are in our room and we're getting settled in, we noticed this arrow on the wall, and I'm not all that familiar with Islam and we were wondering what the heck that arrow was for and we were wondering if it was to show us the way to the exit. We just couldn't figure out why there was an arrow on the wall. And so my cultural naivety, I guess both of us, we soon figured out that it pointed the way to Mecca because that was important for prayer. So there are beautiful mosques everywhere, really wonderful to see.
Heritage, this would be something at a heritage museum that we saw, might have been something constructed way back when when we were talking about 15th, 16th, 17th century. What I loved about this is that this wind tower is really effective. It gets to be about 120 in the summer. The humidity when we were there, it was about 110 in October with a humidity of about 90%. It was quite oppressive. Summers get to be hotter. They talked about folks who lived in the port region in the summers going over to the mountains because the higher elevation you get it gets a little bit cooler. But these houses would have these wind towers in them and it's like central air conditioning. It was really quite wonderful. It would bring the temperature down. And if it was too hot to sleep in at night this is actually a bed that folks might come out and sleep in under the stars to cool off.
I took an opportunity to go out into the dessert with Chris Coughlin. We were on horses and we passed goat farmers. This is a current structure today.
We saw camels grazing and camel herders grazing, and if you remember we talked that they had some agriculture, but in a harsh climate like this you can't have much, and that they did a lot of goat and camel herding.
And we did see date farms and date farms are really big as well. We also had a chance to go to a preserve and when we think about hunting and fishing, gazelles, I couldn’t believe that these beautiful animals were part of the UAE at one time, now they live on a preserve. And there also is an Arabian leopard.
So I think of this really Arab area and I think of the animal life that existed here at one time. I found it really interesting. This is a beautiful animal as well.
So back to sea faring and back to pearl diving.
Back when they did pearl diving, it really was a really tough job.
Folks would actually dive from those boats and down to get the oysters, and then pull them up and they would harvest the pearls. Now what's interesting about that is that I think the pearl industry reached its zenith in about the mid 1800's. At the close of the 1800's and moving into the 1900's we had World War I, and so when we look at World War I and kind of the crash of the global economy in World War I, and at that time the Japanese figured out how to create cultured pearls, it actually crashed the pearling market. So we had a crash in UAE around 1920 and 1930, but at the time the relationship with Britain was really, really strong. There was a treaty with Britain that Britain basically said don't have any interest with other countries and keep your interest with us and we'll protect you. So with that they had great relationship and they started to do oil explorations.
Before I get into that, let me just tell you this is pictures that we took from our first trip and what struck me about this, is that they did a lot of trade by boat, but they’re still doing a lot of trade by boat and a lot of manual labor. So I have a wonderful picture here, and I don’t know if you can really see it, but it’s kind of like pictures of Dubai and maybe older Dubai, old town Dubai if you will, but there’s still a lot of boats like this that I think I have independent contractors that are doing a lot of trade coming in and out of the port.
I love this picture, the manual labor of unloading and loading these boats, everyone has a job and everyone is working really, really hard as they're doing this.
What I wanted to show you is this picture here. This is modern day Dubai in the background. So we kind of have this juxtaposition of modernization where you've got big large tankers, big large oil refineries because oil is their number one export in addition to some of the other minerals, but at the same time you've got kind of the independent contractor kind of trading as well. So I just, I found that whole thing fascinating. And let me say one other thing, and then I'll tell you about our trip. It's a rentier kind of economy, and what that means is that the UAE get to, for the most part, rent out their land. They rent out their land for oil exploration, they rent out their land for oil extraction, export, but not only that, they do so with aluminum and steel and some other products. And so when you have a rentier kind of economy what it means is you basically hold the land and people pay you to use that land. You're not really producing anything yourself. So when you have that going on and you couple that with a large international work force, there comes a point where you have to think about diversifying what you're doing so that in case one, the rentier aspect, or renting of land, let's say oil goes away, you have to be able to diversity so that you can make substantial, or substantiate your economy.
So anyway, thinking about all of that what we see happening, and Georgia, you mentioned it to me today that you see a number of museums coming up in the UAE. You know that Dubai is a financial center and so finances is one, there's world investments, you've got folks who are exporting all kinds of things from the land itself, and tourism is really big and higher education is really big. So cultural heritage is really, when we were over there the first time that was part of tourism, we felt like folks were coming over and really helping us understand tradition.
And the number of museums that are in Sharjah alone, that the Sheikh has committed to building are really fantastic. We went to three when we were there. We went to the Al Mahaca, the Airport Museum, we went to Sharjah Museum of Islamic Civilization, and we went to the brand new Archeology Museum. And I think they need some help over there with the Archeology Museum. I'm just saying. I'm just planning ahead. It was a beautiful facility. In fact, it's really done very, very well and I kept thinking to myself there may be some museum studies folks interested in maybe going over and helping or setting up something where we could do something cross cultural. And the museum was interesting. Greg is a pilot and he get a real kick out of it, but the kick that I think we get out of it most is that at one point the British really used air strips in the desert for helping tourists travel from let's say a stopping point to get to India so it really would break up the trip, or they used it to bring in supplies or for military purposes. But the number of museums and cultural centers is pretty tremendous.
So here's the trip. Sheikha Jameela is responsible for Sharjah City for humanitarian services and it really is an amazing enterprise. She has a kindergarten, she has a school for children with cognitive disabilities or developmentally delayed, she has an autism center, an occupational and physical therapy center, audiology unit, training and vocational rehabilitation department, a special arts program, a social empowerment foundation. The social empowerment foundation is really working on helping to empower folks with disabilities and help to find them jobs in the community. One of the neat jobs that I think they've worked on, is that they've worked vocational training with a lot of folks with mild cognitive disabilities who are able to type, or maybe have physical disability who are able to type. And they actually have trained them to do clerical, and then have given them jobs in all sorts of government offices, which I think it absolutely fabulous.
And then here we are. What I'm going to show you now is the first tour that we took of the humanitarian services and this is in Sharjah itself, and this is Rebecca on the left, Greg and I, this is our first introduction.
In touring the school, we went over to the autism center, it's kind of the adult portion of the center, and what you see here are teachers working with young men with autism, and you know that in Islam once men and women reach puberty they're separated and really are not supposed to be touching one another or comingling, if you will, unless they're family members. So you'll see that we either have classes of boys and classes of girls. At the university I know the Sheikh, when I had a conversation with him, he's working to try to create more co-educational classes. But right here we've got a man with autism, another man with autism, you'll notice that there's a photograph of the individual on the back of the chair which helps a person with autism remember where he's supposed to be sitting. We've got lunch back here, we have task charts. One of the things that I know is very important for someone with autism is to know what they're going to be doing next. So those things that you see hanging on the wall actually, has the picture of the young man and underneath that has a list of things that that person will be doing. And then a lot of these folks are kind of paraprofessionals, they're trained on the job to work with people with autism. And this woman right here is the director. She's from Sudan and she's trained in Germany and I think does a lot of cutting edge work with people with autism. Her name is Rhona Berger I think. So anyway, she's really good.
Now it's a non-profit and we thought well I wonder how they raise money for the non-profit? And what they do is they have their older students, students with the disabilities that we were talking about, engage in ceramic and engage in wood working. So they actually have a store that we get to see and students, with supervision, made all of these ceramics and then they take these ceramics out to airports and they take them out to museums and other non-profits and this is how they work to raise money. They have a store in one of the local suites too.
And we just marveled at it. They were absolutely gorgeous, the colors were wonderful. Much of it, as you can see, has symbols, Koranic symbols, out of respect for Islam.
And then here's the wood working section. And on the wood working section most of these are puzzles, these are wooden puzzles that are made for children that they can actually put together. And so you've got young men working with supervision here to create these puzzles, and I don't know, they were just doing a tremendous job. It was really a neat thing to see.
But in my opinion, there is sexism, because again we have men and women separated. It reminded me of junior high when I wanted to take wood shop and I had to go to home economics. So in this particular case the girls would be over and they would be sewing and making jewelry. So right now we have a bunch of girls who are really working on creating necklaces and we're admiring one of the necklaces that they made. But they also make some really neat and nifty bags that they sew. And again, these are sold to help raise money to support the services. And it was just really fun. We were very much engaged.
This particular picture gives you an example of how teachers work with students. They have really a low ratio of student to faculty members so usually it was like one, two, maybe ten was the most. In this particular picture that young, the girl who's really looking at me, is reaching into my purse at the moment, and she was quite taken with my pockets and my purse and wanted to see what I had in just about every location, and Rebecca's making fun of me, but that's okay. But it was really, really fun. The kids were great.
And what's interesting, too, is that these are just not Emirate children, these are children from the Gulf region. These are children who may be coming in from Iran or Jordan, Oman, and so for, I believe for the Emirate children, the nationals, this service is provided for them, and then for a fee some of the children would be coming in and have to pay if they're coming in from out of country. But basically what I'm telling you is that Sheikha Jameela had services for children with disabilities, pretty much the only services in the region, which is really spectacular when you think about it.
This is an animated first grade teacher, or I actually think preschool, these kids look to be about four to five, and they're all deaf. She had them really active and moving and learning and it was really exciting. But you also see an influence of Western culture. So we've got Emirate culture and then I think you'd recognize Disney characters here who are up on the wall. So it was really interesting to see. And the influence of Western culture, and I think because of modernization, it was really quite everywhere. So you would see women in their black robes, the Abaya, and their Sheila, and you would see men in their robes as well, but for the women particularly I know when we were behind closed door and with the women they often had designer jeans and T-shirts on under their Abaya's, which I found interesting as well.
This is an interesting story, and I'll tell you this story briefly. This was the handicapped Guardians Association. This is comprised of parents with children with disabilities who were charged to try to educate and bring awareness to parents who might not know what services are available for their children. And I have to tell you, it's important to know that in addition to providing these services Sheikha Jameela has really done a nice job, an important job, over the last 30 years of really influencing policy. In fact, I think in 2006 the UAE passed a disabilities act basically granting or saying that no one shall be denied access to school because of their disability. So Sheikha Jameela has been wonderfully influential. So this particular group we spent two hours with. Dr. Lytle, Rebecca was ill that day, and Greg and I went off and we met with the Guardian's Association, and this gentleman is the chairman of the board and he presented us with a plaque, he also presented us with three water colors. That water color that you see on the slide is over there to your right. I had it framed. We brought the three pictures back. And what's really neat about these water colors is that they were painted by people, or children with disabilities. And I think this one might have been, it's on the back, but nine years old with cognitive delay and just a beautiful water color. And I have another one from a child who was nine, and all the children, some are from the UAE and the one that I know the one that I have in my office is actually from Iraq. So we brought it back, but I had another cultural faux pas that I committed, and that is I was really doing well and we were really interacting and I thought that I was doing well.
And so after two hours, and for me culturally what was different, is when I greeted a woman it seemed like very European in my mind and I guess very Arabic that we would greet and actually give a kiss on three cheeks, so kiss, kiss, kiss, right. And so with the gentlemen they’re most gracious because they would extend their hand, and I know they would do this for Western women because it’s typical for us to shake hands, but we wouldn't kiss a guy on the cheek or anything like that. So this gentleman is a federal judge and when he gave me these paintings I really became a little overwhelmed with gratitude, so when he extended his hand and I went to shake his hand I also reached up to give him a kiss and just before I reached up and committed the act of kissing him on the cheek I pulled his hands down really tight and that kind of froze me in my tracks and then I had to back out of almost kissing him, and apologized profusely because I almost kissed him on the cheek and that wouldn’t have been good. And then when I learned he was a federal judge I thought that would have been worse. So he was a little embarrassed, but he gave me a mini lecture in Islam and let me know. I apologized profusely for being a Westerner and he said well in Islam this is our culture. So we were good, but we stayed away from each other for the rest of the night.

So anyway, it was all fine, but being naive to the culture and understanding that I committed a faux pas immediately upon seeing Sheikha Jameela I confessed what I had done, thinking that perhaps the Sheikha might over rule a federal judge. I don't know. But it was fun. And he was a good sport about it, I was a good sport about it, but what's most important is that these folks are doing tremendous grass root work, and doing that work for children with disabilities, which is really, really neat.
And this is another picture, and what I love about this picture is just the difference in the colors of the Abaya. So the woman with the pink Sheila she actually is an art teacher. So she is the woman who led the children through the art exercises and she chooses to express herself with color. Traditionally, most of the women are wearing black, and most of the women that we see are in a black Abaya like this, but now we're seeing more and more women actually starting to accent or decorate their Abaya with interesting threading, which is really, really beautiful. Threads and beads with just a hint of color, either around the cuffs or around the necklines, etcetera, and it's just beautiful. And then not many, but there were quite a number of women also who chose to cover their faces. And as you can see, these women didn't mind being photographed, and this woman, she just chose to keep her face covered and she kept it covered always. So I love this picture because it kind of shows just the difference in how folks interpret things.

Kalthum is the woman who is in the wheelchair, and she's the director of sport at Al Thiqa. Al Thiqa is the club for people with handicap. And I know that for Kalthum, she has her Sheila on and was always robed, but she didn’t have the clunkiness of the Abaya because of the wheelchair.
The Autism Center was a beautiful villa, and what I love about this picture aside from you can see the humidit, it was really warm that day, is that this villa was donated and this entire villa is an autism clinic. It was just fabulous. A wonderful location. And again, Mona is the director of the clinic itself.
Inside, they have this beautiful conference room/meeting area where they can actually bring parents in and do parent consultations. While children are playing parents can do observations of children playing. This is Mona you see over to the right. Rebecca, me. Greg took the picture. And then this woman is simply the interpreter for the day and we were meeting with her staff and talking about practice. And just wonderfully surprised and elated to see that practice is very similar to what we do here in the United States and what they’re doing there and that we believe to be contemporary.
Whenever you have a low basketball rim one cannot help but try to do a slam dunk, but at the same time these rooms are spacious and large, all sorts of opportunity for children with autism and young adults with autism to really be engaged one on one, each had a teacher, and it was just fabulous.
Now higher education, remember we talked about diversifying your economy and looking at tourism and higher education. We also had a chance to go to University City and this is of particular interest perhaps for some of you to think about the University of Sharjah. On this particular day we had an opportunity to meet the ruler of Sharjah, the Sheikh. He came to visit special. It was like similar to our presidential motorcade. The Sheikh's motorcade pulled with secret service, the whole bit, and we had an opportunity to meet him. This is the entrance to the University of Sharjah.
This is the campus of the University of Sharjah. Absolutely beautiful. Just gorgeous. And I think what we're looking at is the women's wing, on the other side was the men's, and then there was a new building being built in the back and that was going to be for co-education.
This is another look at it.
I had a chance to meet with the ruler of Sharjah. I have a video clip of it, but the Sheikh of Sharjah granted Greg and me a meeting so I felt like Hillary Clinton for a minute. I had an opportunity to meet with the head of state and it was really wonderful because he is truly a visionary in terms of thinking about higher education and culture in all of Sharjah. He really wants to modernize Sharjah.

Of the Emirates, Sharjah is third in size. It holds about 100, or 870,000 probably all of Sharjah, 840,000 of which reside in the city of Sharjah. And remember whenever you think about the numbers, like the eight million that I told you that live in the UAE, under 20% of that is national -- or Emirates. So you’ve got a large international population, much of which is coming from India, Pakistan, Iran and the Philippines. But I had my audience and someone said what did you talk about I simply asked a couple of questions and Greg asked a questions and we let the Sheikh do his talking. But I have to tell you this, the best thing, because I showed up with my gift for the ruler of Sharjah and as I presented it to him he said no need to give me a gift, the best gift you ever gave me was an education for my cousin, and Sheikha Jameela was right there, our Chico State grad. And that was wonderful. I thought that was fabulous.
Here are the colleges at the University of Sharjah. Sharjah Islamic studies, sciences, arts, humanities, and social science engineering. When you're looking at this there are tons of undergraduate degree programs and graduate programs. We toured the facility. It's not only a state-of-the-art facility, it's actually organized well for student learning, it's organized for interactive student learning with a lot of simulation labs as well as opportunity for applied behavior. It's really marvelous to see.
And then we took a trip across the street to the American university. This has accreditation in the United States. It's patterned after American universities in the United States. We met the director. It, too, has a fabulous campus and it literally is within a mile of the University of Sharjah campus. It is just tremendous. It's like a mall. Have you been to the mall in Washington DC? Well this is more impressive. It's set up like a mall where you have these large buildings.
And this is the campus on the American university. The students are all in class and it's hot outside. It was 120 degrees with 95% humidity.
The colleges here are arts and sciences, engineering, architecture, art and design, school of business and management and it, too, has about 39 undergraduate programs and really extensive. So I think there's lots of opportunities to think about scholarship and opportunities for cross-cultural dialogue or even exchange.
The university hospital, the Sharjah, actually all of UAE are building tons of hospitals and trying to improve their health care for all of their nationals and even healthcare for their expats [sounded like], but this is a brand new building. Greg and I received a tour of it with the director of the hospital and it's cutting edge as well, because they're into preventive care and trying to make sure that they take a team approach to each of their patients, so a patient would have a doctor, a nurse, a social worker, a psychologist, all of these things would be available in that team approach to medicine, which again I think is really forward thinking when you're thinking about prevention and you're thinking about helping with disease. And so we get to see it before, but if you go online you'll see that they're hiring for positions in that.
And then lastly is the Al Thiqa club for the handicapped, or for people with disabilities. It’s a sport club. We’re looking at class international athletes in, track. This young man is just learning, but these two are truly para-olympians. They’re highly accomplished on the international scene. And the club itself was just fabulous. Fantastic.
And we had a chance to meet the basketball team and they were very good at what they did.
We were not. We had a hard time. But they had just a beautiful facility.
They had a weight room for women, and they also engage again women in cooking and in jewelry making and kind of fine motor activity. They did have one woman who was a star track Olympian, para-olympian, but I didn't have a picture of her. But in my mind there's still some work to do. I understand that there are teams, but not all that much interest yet for women to be like on a basketball team, etcetera, and I think that's just going to take, time to improve.
Here are the gentleman that showed us around Al Thiqa, and again, the woman in the wheelchair is Kalthum, and she's the director of women's sports. And then this is Shondelle. Some of you may know Shondelle. She graduated from anthropology at Chico State I think only a year ago, and she's now working in the public relations department for Sheikha Jameela Al Qasimi. And then this is Amal, and Amal is an engineer. She's in charge of the public works department.
And I think that brings us to a close so thank you.