

SALAAM CLUB GALA AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH: GEORGE N. JALINOS

Thank you thank you thank you. Thank you everyone and thank you my dear brother Ralph Succar. Your introduction was indeed very kind and touching.

In fact let us have a round of applause for John and Ralph and the entire Salaam Club Board and membership for this phenomenal event tonight for the good of children who have challenges and are facing them every day. Let's hear it for these two gentleman as leaders of our community.

Reverend clergy, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen

You know when it first came to me that I was being considered for this award I was stunned. I said Oh boy! I must be getting old. Well, the truth is time is catching up with each of us and as it does it tells us how valuable each moment is. And as we get older, we look around often confused still wondering how could things be the way they are. We lose faith in many things and we wonder whether there is any good left in society. But we don't hear too much about the good that really does exist in society. We're more likely to follow the story of Tiger Woods than the story of a child who saves his parents.

Autism, our theme for tonight, is about that. It's about saving lives not from death but saving lives to save those who are living...the children, their parents, their friends, their relatives. All teaming up in a fight that has a difficult exit strategy. A fight that must be fought because there is no Plan B.

When my father Nasri came to this country, he didn't come in order to reject where he came from but to enhance what he already was. He strongly believed that each culture brought a new

dimension, each language a new personality. So for him America was about growth and development. It wasn't a substitute for a way of life but an alloy. And in teaching us his children it took a while for us to get it but what we learned is that the gift we have in being Americans is not about a state or a government but about a philosophy of living and growing in multicultural dimensions each adding to the wonderful mosaic that creates this colorful national artwork called America.

And in recognizing this mosaic we have to be proud of the individual mosaic inlays we represent as Syrians or Lebanese or Jordanians or Egyptians or Palestinians as with all Arab Americans who have so richly contributed to this nation. You don't need me to enumerate all the great Arab Americans among us from all walks of life.

Whether we talk about St. Jude Children's Hospital in Memphis or St. Nicholas Home in Brooklyn or the Arab American Family Support Center in Brooklyn or The Arab American Institute Foundation in Washington or all of our great religious organizations, our community struggles on asking little from the government; instead depending on itself and our people to take care of one and all as Americans be they of Middle Eastern origin or otherwise.

This night tonight I must say is not about me or Bob or Greg with all due respect for all their great accomplishments. This night is about you because you have chosen to be here and you have chosen to support a great cause of which few if any of you are directly affected...yet you know about it and you realize that your heart tells you to be with us and join in this beautiful mosaic of support for a great cause.

I am proud to be a member of the Salaam Club of New York. I have been with this organization since 1983. I have never known a

better group of men who love their heritage and love their country and most of all know what it means to be blessed by being representatives of both as exemplified by this wonderful gala this evening and the choice of the two beneficiaries.

Tonight I am fortunate to be with friends and family and first and foremost I want to express my love and thanks to God. I want to express my love and thanks to my mother who has blessed me with her wisdom throughout my life, my dear wife Ginette who keeps me smiling in difficult moments, my children Vic and Matt, my sister Mary Anne and Brother-in law Mark, the Haddad family, and all my cousins and friends who are with us. I am honored and humbled to receive this award and I can only say sincerely that each and every one of you here tonight deserves this award more than I do. I am privileged to be a member of this community so I ask that you allow me to accept this recognition in your name with the promise that our work as a community get stronger by the day and makes us even more ready for the challenges of the future.

God Bless you all for supporting the Salaam Club and our beneficiaries tonight the Eden II School of Staten Island and The Al Kafaat Organization of Lebanon.
Merry Christmas and Happy Holidays to you and your families.

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