

Paniz Shafaei Awarded Aspire2STEAM Scholarship Sponsored by Trade Press Services, Inc.

Aspiring professional clarinetist promotes peace and understanding through performing music from Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan

DES MOINES, IOWA, UNITED STATES, September 9, 2021 /EINPresswire.com/ -- "We've long believed music can heal and transform souls," said Cheryl O'Donoghue, CEO at [Aspire2STEAM.org](https://www.aspire2steam.org). "This belief is not only shared by Paniz Shafaei, but also amplified beautifully through her music and desire to offer us all unique insights into the daily fabric of Persian-speaking countries, ultimately, so we can experience a part of the world in a way that goes far beyond that which we see on the evening news."



Paniz Shafaei, Aspire2STEAM scholarship recipient

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As an Iranian female artist, Paniz's options to pursue advanced studies in her area of expertise—clarinet performance—were extremely limited after she received her bachelor's degree from Tehran University of Art. She worked hard to research several options and received a lucky break when a teacher at the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee (UWM) gave her an invitation letter to continue her clarinet performance education at the university. This act of kindness paved a path for Paniz to put into motion a dream to move to the United States to further her studies even though it was close to impossible for an Iranian to not only apply for, let alone be granted a U.S. Visa. Because

Iran does not have a U.S. embassy, Paniz traveled to Armenia for her visa interview. Once the interview was completed, she was then able to go through the lengthy background check

process. Finally, she arrived in Milwaukee in August 2018.

While Paniz was excited to pursue her passion in music at UWM, between the pandemic and U.S. sanctions against Iran she hit another significant roadblock. This time a financial one. Because the Iranian currency had devalued several times, her family could no longer support her. Still, she persevered, found work, and was able to cobble together several scholarships based on her high academic performance and clarinet artistry. She graduated with a Master of Music degree in the field of clarinet performance in May 2020. Additionally, in the summer of 2021 she completed the Chamber Music Certificate at UWM. Just recently, Paniz began working toward a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in clarinet performance at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas where she also works as a graduate assistant.

Paniz's scholarship was made possible through a donation made by Gerri Knilans, a well-known marketing strategist, entrepreneur, consultant, author, educator, and business owner. "As far back as I can remember, I've always known that life is a journey, often made easier through opportunity," said Gerri Knilans, President at [Trade Press Services, Inc.](#) "Fortunately, I've had my share, and now it's time to pay it forward. That's why I believe that organizations like Aspire2STEAM are so important. It's an honor and joy to support them as they work tirelessly to provide young girls and women with opportunities to pursue their dreams and create the life they want."

"I am so thankful for this generous scholarship," said Paniz. "I am really excited. I hope I can spread this given blessing through my art. In the future I plan to launch a musical project to perform and record works by composers from Persian-speaking countries like Iran, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan. I believe that the music of this part of the world if introduced to Western audiences can function as a bridge that connects all people and without political interference."

ABOUT...

Aspire2STEAM.org (formerly known as Mission Sisters Who Work) is a charitable 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. We provide scholarships and mentoring to young women and girls who are working hard— aspiring—to achieve careers that require education in science, tech, engineering, the arts or math...and they could really use a hand up over the incredible barriers of student debt and rising education costs, and the real, ever-present opportunity barriers that still



Paniz Shafaei, pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts in Clarinet Performance

keep them out of most male-dominated industries. These young women are doing their part, let's help them by doing ours.

[Donate now](#). Your kindness is a catalyst for change and empowerment for the young women and girls we serve.

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