

http://www.heraldtimesonline.com/news/local/haddawi-leaves-bloomington-a-legacy-of-generosity/article_36728226-98b3-5170-8fbd-e2170138d5fa.html

FEATURED

Haddawi leaves Bloomington a legacy of generosity

By Kat Carlton 812-331-3451 | kcarlton@heraldt.com Feb 8, 2015



Jeremy Hogan | Herald-Times

Volunteers in Medicine clinic founder Rajih Haddawi has also been a major supporter of the IU Jacobs School of Music.

After amputating a patient's leg, Dr. Raj Haddawi gave instructions to an X-ray technician in an operating room in Washington, D.C. Later that day in 1968, he asked her out.

Three months later, the surgeon and the technician eloped.

Fast-forward a few years. The couple were living in Louisville when they took their two kids on a trip to Brown County State Park.

They drove in one entrance, and they went out another.

“There was a sign saying ‘Bloomington, 11 miles.’ So (Darlene) looked at me, I looked at her and we said — Eh, that’s a nice name. Let’s go discover what this town is,” Raj Haddawi remembered.

And now, Raj and Darlene will soon leave the town they spread deep roots into, after serving the Monroe County community in any number of ways.

After retiring eight years ago, Haddawi led a drive to found Volunteers in Medicine of Monroe County. The clinic of hundreds of volunteers provides health care to uninsured residents of Monroe and Owen counties. Most years since its inception, the clinic has seen tens of thousands of patient visits.

Haddawi said he first thought about studying medicine after he graduated from high school. He was the youngest of nine children, living in Iraq. One day, he had a difficult time getting his father medical care.

“He was short of breath, turning purple — and he looked at me, I’m taking him in a cab, and he said, ‘Well, I have nine children — when I am really sick, none of them could help me,’” he said. “And that really registered big on me.”

Haddawi’s father died three years later.

Haddawi went to medical school, earning his M.D. at the University of Baghdad. He developed an interest in orthopedics and trained in the United States. He completed a hand surgery fellowship in Louisville.

The Sunday after his trip to Brown County, Haddawi picked up a copy of the Louisville Courier-Journal that featured a large spread on the Indiana University Musical Arts Center.

“That sealed the deal,” he said, and the family moved to Bloomington.

He opened a private practice and became the first hand surgeon in Monroe County. He would go on to perform numerous cutting-edge surgeries, including the first full hip and knee replacements.

Despite these accomplishments, the doctor said, one thing continued to bother him: There were too many people who couldn't afford health care. Haddawi said patients would refuse to show up for follow-up appointments, saying they simply couldn't pay for medication. So he started treating people for free.

Three years ago, Nancy Richman became the executive director of the VIM clinic. She said Haddawi quickly became a mentor.

"Raj is kind, compassionate, funny, caring — he is the epitome of what VIM represents, which is caring and compassion and treating everybody with dignity and kindness. For Raj, everybody counts or nobody counts," she said.

Darlene Haddawi agreed.

"It didn't matter whether you were a farmer, a mechanic, or a professor at IU. It didn't matter — people were people, and he loves everybody's story," she said.

Henry Upper is a close friend of Haddawi's and the former associate dean of the Indiana University School of Music. He, along with others close to the doctor, echoed Richman and Darlene Haddawi's sentiments about Raj.

"Well, he's extraordinarily energetic, to say the least," said Upper. "He can be lighthearted and be involved at the same time in some of the most serious concerns of our society, concerns of the School of Music and how to keep it as one of the great schools of music."

The music school, now the IU Jacobs School of Music, is one reason Haddawi said he moved to Bloomington, as well as another cause he would support.

Before college, Haddawi said, he didn't have much access to live music.

"I listened to it on radio and CDs, and before that we have tape, if you remember that. And that was something I couldn't do without."

Upper, who was also the chairman of the piano department, said he befriended Haddawi one day after giving him a ride home from the MAC.

The two bonded further while Haddawi served as the president of the Society of the Friends of Music at IU, a group that helps provide scholarships to musicians.

And a cold day in a January long ago, Haddawi became Upper's surgeon, after Upper slipped and fell on a patch of ice outside the MAC.

"The elbow is obviously greatly involved with everything regarding the hand, and the shoulder and all of that kind of thing," Upper said.

"So he worked very hard with me. And he did an incredible surgery."

But no matter how many people have said Haddawi is the reason for the VIM clinic's existence, he has stayed humble.

"I'm just an average person here in town," he said. "What I did, I did the right thing, in my opinion, with the help of the other people who thought it was the right thing. So we approach it as a team. And the legacy as the founder — the group of people who founded the VIM, and I'm honored to be one of them."

Raj and Darlene have packed up their things and plan to move to Chapel Hill, North Carolina, next month.

"We've loved our time here — we couldn't have asked for a better place to raise our children," said Darlene.

Raj and Darlene said they look forward to spending time with their grandchildren and being closer to the ocean.



Haddawi leaves legacy of generosity

Feb 8, 2015

You May Like

Sponsored Links by Taboola

Charlize Theron's Vogue Cover Drops Jaws

Vogue on The Scene

You're In For A Big Surprise in 2016 If You Own A Home in Indiana

Comparisons.org Quotes

23 Unreal Photos Taken Before Most Tragic Moments In History

Your Daily Dish

The Wedding Photographer Wasn't Expecting To Capture This

WorldLifestyle

3 Billionaires Say: Something Big Coming Soon In U.S.A.

Stansberry Research

Only 1 In 50 Americans Can Name These Iconic Women. Can You?

Topix Offbeat