

Laila El-Amin, First Islamic School Educator to Receive Golden Apple Award, Recognized by Bridgeview Mayor Landek

BRIDGEVIEW, ILL., - While Seniors at Aqsa School prepare to graduate from the intimate, all-girls high school, one of their most memorable teachers will also be receiving special recognition of her achievement – the first Islamic school educator to ever receive the prestigious Golden Apple Award, presented by the Golden Apple Foundation to teachers who contribute to “building a stronger, better-educated society.”

Laila El-Amin, a foreign language and religious studies teacher, has been a teacher at Aqsa School for 30 years, growing with the institution since its inception in 1986. On Saturday, June 4 the Mayor of Bridgeview, Steve Landek – also an Illinois State Senator – will be recognizing El-Amin for her efforts. Landek made an official proclamation on the Illinois State Senate floor and will be present to bestow the honor on El-Amin at the school’s graduation ceremony.

The Golden Apple Award is given to Illinois’ top educators as chosen by the Golden Apple Foundation. The process involves observations, interviews with students, parents and colleagues along with an evaluation by the Golden Apple Committee. Across the state, 30 educators were nominated from a pool of over four hundred and only 10 were chosen as final awards recipients. El-Amin, affectionately referred to by all as Sit Laila, had an outpouring of support from Aqsa School students, both past and present, in response to her achievement.

“It was the values that she taught us... the excellence she embodied,” said Azkar Hussein, an Aqsa School alumna from the class of 2008. “She treated her job not just as a job... but as a trust given to her by God. She motivated me to be the best version of myself.”

El-Amin has been an inspiration to many in the community with her work not only at Aqsa School but with local organizations. Her ability to push students to excel in all aspects of life is commonly cited as the defining feature of an uplifting teacher. El-Amin herself speaks of working to advocate for the education of girls so that they can go on to become leaders in society.

Each Golden Apple Award recipient receives a tuition-free, spring quarter sabbatical to study at Northwestern University. Each recipient also receives a \$5,000 cash award. With this award, El-Amin hopes to be able to continue learning and perfecting her craft so that more generations of Aqsa School students will be able to benefit from her expertise.