

The Albert Schweitzer Leadership Award is presented to individuals who have distinguished themselves through their service to mankind and have contributed significantly through their leadership to the education and motivation of youth.

SIMA DELAFRAZ

FIRST QUALITY HEALTHCARE



Sima Delafraz is Executive Leader for Sales and Marketing for North America at First Quality, and in the past 23 years rose from receptionist to one of the top leaders in a 4,000-employee enterprise. For her, it is truly the American Dream come true.

Immigrating to the United States from Iran with her family at age 12 in 1984, Delafraz endured tremendous hardship getting out of her home country. Bomb explosions were a daily occurrence, as Iran had been at war with neighboring Iraq. As the new hardline Iranian government came into power, there was severe religious persecution, and the Delafrazes feared for their safety: they paid smugglers an exorbitant amount of money to help them escape from Iran. The journey to freedom for Delafraz, her mother, and her three siblings followed a long, difficult route through mountains and deserts, upon camels and the open bed of a speeding pickup truck. The family went days without food throughout the perilous trek. They eventually found a new place to call home in San Jose, California.

Once here, Delafraz went to school, learned English, and became a U.S. citizen while her mother worked minimum wage jobs to support the family. Through hard work and the loving support of her mother, Delafraz was able to earn a nursing degree from the University of Southern California. The family moved to New York after her graduation in search of better opportunities, and she took a temporary job as a receptionist with First Quality until she could find a nursing position. From day one, Delafraz embraced the excitement and challenges of business and has never looked back. Her dedication and persistence delivered her to the company's top ranks. She pioneered the growing company's administrative capabilities and helped build the sales and marketing teams, making her an instrumental player in turning First Quality into one of the healthcare industry's leading manufacturers of patient care products. In 2013 she joined the Board of Directors of the HIDA (Health Industry Distributors Association) Educational Foundation.

Delafraz balances her impressive career commitments with family: she and her husband, Hamid, are celebrating 20 years of marriage and have two boys, Brandon (13) and Bradley (11). They live in New York with her extended family close by. As a role model for young women, Delafraz advises them to reach for the stars with one caveat: "There is no such thing as the perfect anything: marriage, family, or career. You work hard and do the best you can, and if you stumble, you learn from it and keep going." She and her family arrived in this country with nothing; through hard work and strong morals, Sima Delafraz has since inspired everyone around her to become their own leaders.



ALBERT SCHWEITZER
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