

QATAR FOUNDATION AND QATAR AUTISM FAMILIES ASSOCIATION JOIN FORCES TO PROMOTE QATAR'S NATIONAL AUTISM PLAN

Partnership a Result of Programs Organized by World Innovation Summit for Health

Doha, Qatar, December 5, 2017: Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF), the World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH), and Qatar Autism Families Association (QAFA), have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The partnership is aimed at providing socially inclusive opportunities at QF facilities, particularly sports and leisure activities, for those with autism and their families, advancing the Qatar National Autism Plan.

The agreement was signed by Mrs. Machaille Al-Naimi, President of Community Development, QF, and Ms. Fatima Al Sulaiti, Chair, QAFA. Also present was Sultana Afdhal, acting CEO, WISH.

Mrs. Al-Naimi said: "We have been working with QAFA for some time now, particularly over the summer months when we hosted a number of hugely popular activities initiated by WISH. The signing of this MoU is the culmination of that work and provides the framework for these and other events to continue on a year-round basis, thus providing much needed opportunities for inclusive sports and leisure participation. We look forward to working together to co-create programs and events that will help to promote a healthy and active lifestyle within the wider special needs community in Qatar."

WISH, in partnership with Qatar Foundation's Community Development, introduced a number of activities, primarily for QAFA, during 2017, to address the growing need for social and sports facilities to be made available to children with autism. These included swimming classes, horse riding lessons, and special football sessions with coaches from the Liverpool Football Club Foundation.

Beyond sports and leisure activities, the agreement also provides an opportunity for WISH and QAFA to collaborate towards the advancement of autism spectrum disorder research in Qatar.

Ms. Afdhal said: "Through this MoU, we are keen to collaborate in a number of important areas beyond the sports and leisure initiatives that have already been initiated, including lectures and workshops, research awareness through community outreach events, and conducting studies to capture families' experiences with national healthcare services. WISH's collaborative work forms part of its commitment to helping to establish a sustainable program that supports Qatar's National Mental Health Strategy, 'Changing Minds, Changing Lives 2013-2018'."

To date, WISH has worked with its global community of healthcare experts to create two evidence-based reports; 'Mental Health and Wellbeing in Children' and 'Autism: A Global Framework for Action'.

Speaking on behalf of QAFA, Ms. Al Sulaiti expressed her appreciation of QF's continuing efforts to support children with autism and other complex needs.

“We are delighted and grateful that Qatar Foundation is opening up its recreation facilities for our families so that children, as well adults, with autism and other complex needs, can enjoy the health benefits of sports activities all year round. The summer activities organized by WISH were a great way to integrate children with autism into activities that they are often marginalized from, in a free and interactive learning environment.

“Following the success of those summer programs, we are delighted to formalize our relationship with Qatar Foundation and are confident that this agreement will foster a healthier lifestyle among families and promote a greater understanding of the needs of those with autism and other additional needs,” said Ms. Al Sulaiti.

The WISH autism report can be accessed via its website: www.wish-qatar.org/wish-2016/forum-reports

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About the World Innovation Summit for Health:

The World Innovation Summit for Health (WISH) is a global healthcare community dedicated to capturing and disseminating the best evidence-based ideas and practices. WISH is an initiative of Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) and is under the patronage of Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, its Chairperson.

The inaugural WISH Summit took place in Doha in 2013 and convened more than 1,000 global healthcare leaders. Through international summits and a range of ongoing initiatives, WISH is creating a global community of leading innovators in healthcare policy, research and industry.

Together, they are harnessing the power of innovation to overcome the world’s most urgent healthcare challenges and inspire other stakeholders to action.

Qatar Foundation – Unlocking Human Potential

Qatar Foundation for Education, Science and Community Development (QF) is a non-profit organization that supports Qatar on its journey to becoming a diversified and sustainable economy. QF strives to serve the people of Qatar and beyond by providing specialized programs across its innovation-focused ecosystem of education, science and research, and community development.

QF was founded in 1995 by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, the Father Emir, and Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, who shared the vision to provide Qatar with quality education. Today, QF’s world-class education system offers lifelong learning opportunities to community members as young as six months through to doctoral level, enabling graduates to thrive in a global environment and contribute to the nation’s development.

QF is also creating a multidisciplinary innovation hub in Qatar, where homegrown researchers are working to address local and global challenges. By promoting a culture of lifelong learning and fostering



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social engagement through programs that embody Qatari culture, QF is committed to empowering the local community and contributing to a better world for all.

For a complete list of QF's initiatives and projects, visit <http://www.qf.org.qa>