

TURKISH COALITION of AMERICA

Fostering Understanding of Turkish American Issues through Public Education

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IN THE COMMUNITY

As the nation's first state university, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC-CH) was chartered in 1789 and it was the only public university to award degrees to students in the 18th century. On May 19th, 2008 (Turkish National Youth Day) it also became the only university in the United States with a Turk Evi for its students and the community at large.



In North Carolina, both the university and the entire state uses the nickname "Tar Heels" in good grace, meaning that they 'stick' to what they start, and leave their mark... At the heels and following the path of the successful ATA-NC Turkish House in Cary, another Turkish House called the Carolina Turk Evi, is now ready for occupancy. Located on the main avenue of this popular college town, it will serve both as a boarding house for graduate students and a Turkish center.

A lifelong dream project for Drs. Aziz and Gwen Sancar, two professors at UNC-CH, the idea of a Turk Evi by a university campus goes back many years. "The day I stepped off the airplane in Dallas-Texas, I essentially saw the need for such a house on college campuses and promised myself to eventually dedicate my resources to a project of this kind" said Dr. Sancar, proudly after the purchase of the property.

The Carolina Turk Evi is owned by the Aziz & Gwen Sancar Foundation (AGS Foundation) of Chapel Hill. The mission of AGS Foundation is to establish a permanent Turkish Center in close proximity to the campus of UNC-CH. The center will provide graduate housing for Four Turkish researchers at UNC-CH, as well as short term guest services for Turkish visiting scholars. UNC-CH currently hosts approximately 100 Turkish students and scholars. These individuals often initially have difficulty adapting to American culture. Carolina Turk Evi will facilitate their transition.

Furthermore, its proximity to a major university will ensure that future leaders of this state and country are knowledgeable about Turkey and its people. "It is a well thought out endeavor that will cultivate better understandings and promote further dialog by allowing our young, bright minds to build bridges and experience intercultural exchanges, here at home, without having to travel abroad" said Congresswoman Virginia Foxx from North Carolina's Fifth District. An alumnus of UNC-CH, Ms. Foxx is also a member of the Congressional Caucus on Turkey and the Turkish Study Committee.

The AGS Foundation is a non profit organization funded through private donations from the Sancars and others, contributions and grants from agencies and foundations interested in international education and relations. Dr. Sancar was recently recognized by the prestigious Vehbi Koc Award from the Koc Foundation. The monetary award amount was the seed for this dream project, a way for the Sancars to give back. "I constantly advise my graduate students from Turkey that each of us have to do the best research we can in our own chosen fields. That is the only way we can represent and serve our beloved home land, by being successful individuals and citizen ambassadors. There's nothing we can not do, as long as we set our minds, share our success stories and inspire one another. I am proud of my heritage, my culture and my country. This is a life long dream come true for Gwen and I" said Dr. Aziz Sancar.

About Prof. Aziz Sancar:

Aziz Sancar, MD PhD is Sarah Graham Kenan Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of North Carolina School of Medicine. He was born in Savur-Mardin, Turkey in 1946. He obtained his primary and secondary education in Savur and Mardin, and then received an M.D. degree in 1969 from the Istanbul University School of Medicine. After practicing medicine in Savur for two years he attended the University of Texas at Dallas and obtained a Ph.D. degree in Molecular Biology in 1977 with his work on DNA repair. Dr. Sancar conducted postdoctoral work at Yale university on molecular biology of DNA repair in the period 1977-1982. He joined the

Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics at UNC Chapel Hill in 1982 where he has been conducting research on DNA Repair, Cell Cycle and cancer treatment, and the Biological Clock. He has published 288 research articles and 33 book chapters. Prof. Sancar is a Member of the National Academy of Sciences USA, a Member of The American Academy of Arts and Sciences, a Member of Turkish Academy of Sciences and the recipient of the Vehbi Koc Award from the Koc Foundation of Turkey in 2007. Aziz Sancar lives in Chapel Hill with his wife Gwen Sancar, also a professor at UNC-Chapel Hill.

About Prof. Gwen Sancar:

Gwen Sancar, Ph.D. is Professor of Biochemistry and Biophysics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, School of Medicine . Born in Waco , Texas , she attended public schools there, and in 1972 graduated with a B.S. in Biology from the Waco campus of Baylor University . Dr. Gwen Sancar entered the graduate program at the University of Texas at Dallas in 1972 and, after 4.5 years of study on the mechanism of DNA replication in *Physarum polycephalum*, she was awarded the Ph.D. in 1977. She performed postdoctoral research at Downstate Medical Center in Brooklyn , New York , for three years, during which she elucidated the arrangement of globin genes in alpha-thalassemia in African Americans and Ashkenazi Jews. In 1980 she joined her husband, at Yale University , where they collaborated on studies on the regulation of DNA repair genes in *E. coli*. Dr. Gwen Sancar joined the Department of Biochemistry and Biophysics at UNC Chapel Hill in 1982. In addition to carrying out research in DNA repair enzymology and on the regulation of genes in response to DNA damage, and publishing over 40 original articles and book chapters on these topics, she has been very active in graduate and undergraduate education and in promoting research experiences for undergraduate student. Dr. Gwen Sancar hopes that Turk Evi will be a catalyst to promote understanding of Turkey , its people , and its contributions to the cultural heritage of the world by her fellow Americans.

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