

A boarding “lifer” from Stone Mountain, GA, Mariam Abdullah attended TFS from sixth grade through graduating in 2008. “Mo,” as she was affectionately known, was an impactful leader, an inclusive friend, a mature thinker, an entrepreneur, a poised, competent, and championship competitor, a diligent preparer, a bright light, a respected communicator, a joyful character with inspiring character, a positive presence.

Mo is so much more than her accomplishments, which are many, varied, and ongoing. Athletically, she was a Co-Captain in volleyball, played basketball, and excelled as a four time state qualifier, three time Region long jump and triple jump champ, numerous school record holder, Captain and four time MVP in track & field, and three time Indian of the Year Award recipient. She received the Outstanding Boarding Student award, was a TFS Student Ambassador, was the Junior Class and the Senior Class President, and was in the Tri Music Honor Society. TFS honored her with an Outstanding Former Student Award.

Mariam competed four years in sprints, relays, and jumps at Winthrop University while earning a degree in Business Administration with a concentration in Entrepreneurship. Enterprising at the core, Mo honed creativity and marketing skills to sell goodies in the TFS dorm, to create WI Rock tees to sell at the University of Wisconsin, and to design a monetary system as a Playworks coach for inner city youth to fully explore, understand, and utilize important economic and relational skills.

Excellence and calculated risk are fundamental to all Mo undertakes. After graduating as a Winthrop Eagle in 2012 with a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration (Entrepreneurial emphasis), she received the City Year Long Walk Excellence Award in 2013 and the Playworks Rookie Coach of the Year Award in 2014. She led games on the White House basketball court in 2016 as the Head Program Coordinator at the White House Bring Your Kids to Work event. WUSA-9 CBS Morning Show and Playworks Americorp of Greater Washington DC highlighted Coach Mo and her role in harnessing play as an integral educational tool. Her school was spotlighted in PBS Education Week.

Founder of Culture Energized, a team building and consulting business that provides dynamic diversity and inclusion training using games and engaging discussions, Mariam is also a Regional Pro Trainer for Playworks Colorado, delivering professional development for creating a safe and inclusive recess program across the midwest. Future goals include “growing Culture Energized, traveling, volunteering, eating good food, and being a great role model to my nine nieces and nephews.”

Mo’s poignant memories range from “selling snacks and my own sports drink in the dorm

room during study time, the entire track and field team running to the dining hall for the annual steak dinners, pushing a minibus up basically a mountain during a Please Coach Neal workout, signing up for cross country in the 6th grade because I thought it was track, injuring my knee in a mole hole and having to jump off a different foot at region, going on every trip possible so my mom blocked my account, brunch being amazing, trying bacon for the first time, and the dorms being remodeled. I remember that MS. Bogan, Mr Loder, and Ms.Jensen had the best decorated rooms of all time. I broke or lost my glasses six times a year because I got hit in the face playing volleyball and basketball. I fell asleep at every prom I attended. I can still hear Mr. Franklin laugh from a mile away! I remember false starting at my first state meet and hiding from coach behind a trash can for 30 minutes.”

When asked “What does being inducted into the TFS Athletic Legends Hall of Honor mean to you?” Mariam said, “It is such a honor to still be recognized for my past achievements. Not many people know that when I was younger I was labeled as a child with learning disabilities and a speech impediment,. Before coming to TFS, I never participated in any school sports or activities and because I never saw success in the classroom, I didn't have a lot of self confidence. Over the years I have learned that being myself has been my greatest accomplishment. I had to quiet the noise of other people telling me I had all these barriers and had to learn how to create my own way of being successful. It's easy to just go with the flow of what everyone is doing but you do yourself a disservice. Legends are suppose to stand out and create their own paths. I was never the straight A student or the smartest person in the room but the fact that even after all these years, people still remember me shows how far I have come.”

“Being honored is a testament to hard work, focus, and courage. I wouldn't be the person that I am today without the TFS family, my family, mentors and belief in myself. Even as a student I thought a lot about the type of legacy I wanted to leave behind. It has always been bigger than the awards and accolades that I have received from my athletics here. There is a famous quote by Maya Angelou that says, ‘People may not remember exactly what you did, or what you said, but they will always remember how you made them feel.’ I'm not perfect. The numerous dorm counselors that I terrorized will tell you that but I hope that when people see my name, or here my story it puts a smile on your face! That's what the Hall of Honor means to me.”

Track & field coach Scott Neal wrote this about Mariam in 2007, “I admire so many things about you. People think you're just magically mature or “just good,” they know not the countless hours, the ownership, the depth in which you own you.” He adds today, “Mo was a GREAT leader even before we created the acronym. She dared to be unique, strove to be

considerate of everyone, chose to train with a purpose, competed fiercely, and lived with integrity and courage. She took risks, unafraid to fail in hopes to defy odds. Success to Mo was her attitude toward any venture. Rare is her focus, flair, and finesse in influencing the lives of others. During her time here, she was a light in the mountains that brought attention to TFS through the impactful influence of her athletic achievements and her proactive choices to celebrate other people. Her legacy at TFS still reverberates.

<https://www.playworks.org/greater-washington-dc/2015/10/15/playworks-dc-on-washington-w-usa-9-live-cbs-morning-show/> Coach Mo on WUSA-9 CBS Morning Show

“Coach Mo Spreads the Power of Play” article in Playworks of Greater Washington, DC.

<https://www.playworks.org/greater-washington-dc/2014/05/02/coach-mo-spreads-the-power-of-play/>

From Coach Hammock - The first word that comes to mind when describing Mariam (Mo) Abdullah is dynamic. Whether it's watching her breath-taking sprints or jumps in track competition, or simply encountering her infectious smile and laughter in a first-time greeting, Mo is an individual that one remembers. Mariam is a leader and a trend setter. She carves her own path in life and leaves countless records, and memories in her wake. When discussing Mariam Abdullah, the first word that comes to mind may well be dynamic, but the second, and more lasting, word which surfaces is...unforgettable. TFS will not soon forget the legacy of a young lady called "Mo."

From Coach Cyndy Campbell - “She was in the middle of a match and I noticed she was missing the ball on a regular basis. Finally called time out to talk to her. Asked what's wrong, are you feeling ok, are you hurt, etc. She told me she forgot her contacts and was blind as a bat! Not funny then but we laugh about it now. Mariam was a dedicated athlete with a tremendous drive for excellence!  
So proud of who she is today!”

A few words can be left to conjure up the magical memories of Mariam Abdullah...

Creative Entrepreneur

Trendsetter (even if it is just her in the trend)

Undaunted (by risk of failure) and Courageous

Inclusive

Rare

In conclusion, Coach Neal exclaimed, “Mo has that ‘It factor,’ that desire and ability to influence positively, the intense passion to develop the skill sets required to truly have a ripple effect, the personality forged through adversity and humble success, the inclusive personal standards that stand by universal principles, and the maturity to realize she can be a legend without the pitfalls of striving to do so. She is truly one of a kind and I have been privileged to coach her and to learn from her.”