

## **The Fourth Annual Rutgers-Persian Cultural Awards Ceremony of November 4, 2009**

**2:30-4:00 Followed by Reception**

**232 Robeson Campus Center**

Every year Dr. Ghahary, President of the Persian Cultural Foundation and Chairman of the Encyclopedia Iranica, sponsors a ceremony in which two students are granted monetary awards of 500 dollars each for the best papers that they have written on Persian literature and culture. This ceremony has originated from Dr. Minoo Varzegar's Persian Course, which was established by Professor Virginia Tiger, Chair of the English Department, in 2005. This year Dr. Ghahary, Scientist, activist, benefactor and philanthropist offered three awards to the three best papers on Persian literature and culture. Dr. Ghahary has been sponsoring this ceremony for four consecutive years.

The Rutgers -Persian Cultural Awards Ceremony was well attended and well-received by American professors, students, and staff of Rutgers and Iranian dignitaries and professionals. At first Dr. Minoo Varzegar, Director of the Program in American Language Studies at Rutgers and the Organizer of the event thanked the audience and paid her tribute to Chancellor Steven Diner for his inspiring opening remarks, Vice-Chancellor Gary Roth for his constant inspiration, Dean Philip Yeagle, Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, for supporting the Persian Courses and proposing to establish a Persian cultural center with the financial contributions of the Iranian community and Dr. Virginia Tiger for having initiated offering Persian literature courses at the English Department as Special Topics and Dr. Asela Laguna for starting Persian Literature and Persian Language courses in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages. She saluted Dr. Akbar Ghahary for his continuous and generous contributions to the ceremony to present, promote and publicize our Persian heritage, culture and literature.

The ceremony started with Chancellor Steven Diner's valuable remarks and recognition of Persian Cultural Awards Ceremony as another sign of diversity on the most diverse campus in the United States for thirteen years in a row. Then, Dr. Maboud Ansari delivered an eloquent speech about Second Generation Iranians. Rudi Bakhtiar mesmerized the audience with her enchanting talk on "How Iranian-Americans contribute to the Fabric of America." She introduced some Iranian achievers which stunned the guests. Her speech was applauded by the people present there. Indeed her talk was impressive, creative and informative. Her down to earth character made her presence even more welcoming. Her talk was followed by the awards ceremony. Initially, Ali Karbaly, a student of Dr. Varzegar, read a poem by Khayyam and another by Saadi in Persian and English which was extremely admired by the audience. Then Dr. Varzegar elaborated on Dr. Ghahary's philanthropic achievements and humanitarian deeds in a PowerPoint presentation. Since Dr. Ghahary was sick, she granted the winners of 2009, Adrienne Jensen, Shabeer Wali and George Login (Rutgers-Newark students), their awards. The winners talked about their papers for a few minutes. Then, Mr. Amir Sabouri, Mr. Kavous Shirzadian and Soheila performed their musical performance, which penetrated into the hearts of the Iranian as well the American guests. Mr. Sabouri performed a magnum opus with his santur and zarb in this event. At the

end, the ceremony was dedicated to the late Dr. Tahereh Saffarzadeh, poet, writer, activist, professor, dean, translator and author of many books and articles and the Late Dr. Tooraj Negahban, Father of Archeology in Iran, professor, dean, and author of numerous books and articles, for their lifetime achievements and services to Persian literature and culture. After that, Persian dinner was served in a beautifully decorated room at Robeson Campus Center at Rutgers and many Rutgers guests enjoyed their dinner and interactions with the Iranians present there. There were also two book exhibitions on Persian books.