

## CLASS XII



### **Aisha Jadran Ayazi**

I was born in Rome, Italy, to an Afghan father and an American mother. Both of my parents worked in the United Nations, giving me the opportunity to grow up among people from different countries and cultures. I have always considered this to be a great gift.

I attended the European Institute of Design in Rome, Italy, where I acquired my BA in photography. I then attended the International Center of Photography in New York, NY, and specialize in photojournalism. This was a remarkable opportunity for several reasons, including the opportunity to attend with students from all over the world, and study under professors that were also world-renowned photographers. After completing my education for the following ten years, I worked as a freelance photographer for NGO organizations and agencies such as the Red Ribbon Association.

The opportunity to work with such organizations and visually help deliver their message to the public was both a humbling experience and an honor. I stopped working to be a stay-at-home mother. In the last three years, I have resumed working at Mussa and Associates and have resumed my own photographic career. I have had the opportunity to photograph both in the US and abroad. In 2015, Photo Pri de Paris awarded me for my photography documenting the poverty in Havana, Cuba.



### **Brandi Bateman**

I was born in West Covina, California and moved to Cornville in 1979. I graduated from Mingus Union High School in 1991. For the next several years I took classes at Yavapai College and NAU, not sure what I wanted to be when I grew up. Once I had the first of three children I knew what I wanted to be...a Mom. I spent many of the next years working only part-time jobs to afford myself as much time as possible with my kids.

Once my children were in school I began exploring new options. I opened my own restaurant, Brandi's Kitchen in 2007. In 2013, I closed my restaurant due significant health concerns and began working for Mingus Union High School District as the Executive Assistant to the Superintendent.

My new position has given me the opportunity to become involved in many other organizations such as the Kid's at Hope Steering Committee, Partners in Education, Matforce Steering Committee and Kiwanis. I look forward to continued growth through Verde Valley Leadership Group Class of XII.



### **Brandon Iurato**

While in U.S. Customs, seeking more meaning in his life, he embarked on a serious self-exploration quest which eventually became content for his book, Mind Karate: How to Kick Your Own Butt, which demonstrates how the mind ultimately determines your success, as it did his.

After nearly a decade with the U.S. Customs Service, a Fortune 200 company recruited him for a position as their corporate sales trainer, delivering training to sales professionals nationwide. In 13 months he was promoted to Director of Training & Development, responsible for motivating and training more than 400 sales reps.

Realizing the tremendous need for helping others in the area of self-development, Brandon left corporate America in 2003 to officially launch Success Strategies, a training and development company he founded in 1997. As founder and president of Success Strategies, Brandon helps people in transition create a more abundant and fulfilling life.

Brandon transferred his skills and passion for helping others achieve more by helping establish CrossFit Can-Do as a managing partner and CF-L1 Coach. His enthusiasm for helping others set goals and realize their potential is evident in his coaching style...positive, encouraging and high-energy. He challenges his team and athletes, inspiring them to take action!

Favorite quote:

*Come to the edge he said. They said, we are afraid.*

*Come to the edge he said.*

*They came. He pushed them...and they flew.*

*-Guillaume Apollinaire*



### **Felicia Filep**

Felicia Filep was born in Southern California in 1968 and was fortunate enough to have traveled the world extensively by the time a Bachelor's Degree in Communications and Art History took up her time at UC San Diego. Her experiences in radio station promotions as an independent deejay, and helping plan concerts, events, parties and weddings for friends, family and businesses eventually led her to a career in conference and event planning. First, however, several jobs in investor relations and marketing saw her assist taking Advent Software public in San Francisco, and then overseeing all event and roundtable planning at The Leadership Institute (a healthcare industry think-tank). Working internationally was a long-term goal, so as heading an overseas office was not in her future with this firm, she applied to get her Master's Degree in Oxford in International Hotel and Tourism Management. At the culmination of this intense year-long program, she was given the option to work with her favorite hotel company, The Four Seasons, and be a part of their pre-opening team at their first country house hotel in Hampshire, England.



### **Hezekiah Allen**

Hezekiah was born in Valdosta, Georgia to a military family. After Valdosta, he, along with brother, and parents hit Hawaii, and then to Ohio. Eventually, Cincinnati became home. He attended Preble-Shawnee High School and was a member of the debate team, football, and many other extracurricular activities.

Transition occurred when Hezekiah attended Ashland University a private school ranked in the top 200 National Universities by *U.S. News & World* and just one of three private institutions in the state awarded. AU lies just south of Cleveland, OH and he received an art scholarship to attend. As a walk-on after an injury in High school he quickly worked his way up within AU's NCAA Div. II football program. He would later switch over to Rugby, and founded the Sports Management Club. Upon graduation he received a bachelor's of science in Parks & Recreation Administration with a minor in Commercial Art/Marketing. During this time period he, along with brother, and best friend joined the Coast Guard after 911. He served a combined 8 years on the Great Lakes and the Port of Los Angeles.

After interning with the City of Beavercreek within their Parks & Recreation Dept. and prior, with two YMCAs he landed a job with the City of Cottonwood. Thus, he loaded up his then Doberman puppy and drove across the country in pursuit of adventure and warmer weather.

With the City of Cottonwood since 2006, he started out as a Rec. Coordinator II and now holds the title of Rec. Services Supervisor. He is a Certified Parks & Recreation Professional, Aquatic Facility Operator, USCG "A" School Grad, and holds a Masters of Public Administration from Cal. State University a NASPAA accredited program.

Dear to Hezekiah is his wife, son, and now second Doberman. They together enjoy the outdoors, and currently potty training. They can regularly be seen together on family trips to Colorado.



### **Jamie Hausaman**

My name is Jamie Hausaman, and I have been a resident of the Verde Valley for 23 years. I moved from sunny San Diego, California when I was 7. I graduated from Mingus Union High School in 2006 and attended Yavapai College from 2006-2009. I am currently working towards finishing my credits to earn my Associate's Degree in either Arts or Business. I have been happily married to my high school sweetheart for 8 years. I have two wonderful children, my son Cameron, is seven and loves sports. My daughter Brooke, is four and is as girly as they come. I love reading, photography, movies and spending time with my family.



### **John Carter**

John grew up in Kingsport, Tennessee. After graduating from high school, he enlisted the United States Air Force, serving from 1987 until 1993. During his enlistment he served at military installations in San Antonio, Texas; Biloxi, Mississippi; Ramstein, Germany; Wiesbaden, Germany; and Gwynn, Michigan.

After his time in the USAF he earned his BA in History from the University of Southern Mississippi. While in Mississippi he was lucky enough to marry his beautiful wife, Nancy Ross. He and Nancy moved to Rhode Island in 1997 and have made their home in Rhode Island and Massachusetts for the last 19 years. John attended Bryant University where he earned his Master Degree in Information Systems in 2008. In 2015 and 2016 he and Nancy travelled around the U.S. for 9 months in a camper, visiting family and friends.

John has worked for entities such as the Petal School District in Petal, Mississippi, Measurement Computing and National Instruments in Massachusetts and Austin, Texas, and S & P Global Market Intelligence in Charlottesville, VA until he and Nancy moved to Cottonwood in 2016. They always wanted to retire in the area and after discovering the IT Manager position with the City of Cottonwood, they couldn't resist moving sooner.

He enjoys biking, hiking and soccer, and raising pastured organic chickens.



### **Madisen Westcott**

Madisen was born in the Verde Valley in 1988. She attended Yavapai College in Clarkdale, Arizona and graduated from Grand Canyon University with a Bachelors degree in Elementary Education and Special Education K-12. Madisen is currently attending the University of Phoenix in pursuit of a Masters degree in Education/Administration and Supervision with plans to graduate in the fall of 2018.

Madisen is a third generation educator and currently teaches 5<sup>th</sup> grade at Cottonwood Elementary School. She loves building relationships with her students and empowering them to take ownership of their learning through engagement and exploration. Madisen mentors students in an after school club, called The Ladies and Gentleman Club, where students are given the tools needed to create healthy relationships and build leadership skills.

Madisen is married with four young children. She is a volunteer AYSO soccer coach for her daughter Kamryn's team and also teaches classes for Yavapai College, College for Kids summer program. She is following her passion for education and leadership and is continually pursuing opportunities to help grow both personally and professionally.



### **Mike Gray**

The oldest of four boys, I grew up with my father leading the pack to our summertime camp, a short hike out of Lake City, Colorado, where we lived from April until October every year. Hauling water and gathering firewood lent to my respect for limited resources and the environment, while life in simple structures (tipis) gave me a deep appreciation for domestic comforts, like porcelain bathroom fixtures, etc.

During my adolescence, I discovered a gift of mechanical ability, and found my professional niche in construction and automotive pursuits.

By the late 1980's my entire immediate family was involved in some aspect of EMS, the Fire Service and/or Search and Rescue. I was the last of the family to succumb, but after becoming a paramedic, I enjoyed a two-decade career serving the sick and injured on ambulances, fire trucks, helicopters, and Lear jets.

Enter 2008 and the associated economic crash. I watched as the world's middle class took a staggering economic hit, while my colleagues and I watched our own retirement packages evaporate onto Wall Street. Those in professions like mine still had a steady income and at least some shred of stability, but so many others had lost everything. A walk in those people's shoes showed me much that I had taken for granted, and I adopted an attitude of deep gratitude.

The next several years, revisiting my artistic and construction roots, I became fascinated with the beauty and practicality of natural architecture. I explored straw bale, rammed earth, cob, earth bag and cord wood - all kinds of construction techniques, both modern and ancient. I visited tangible examples of these homes that were not only beautiful, they were independent of infrastructure, and sacrificed nothing in the way of modern comfort. I heeded a new calling, and I started planning my escape from suburbia, Front Range winters, and the physically abusive career I had loved for so long.

In 2013, I left the fire service in good standing, sold my Colorado home and settled in the Prescott area of Central Arizona. Here, I've continued the learning curve with college courses, workshops, employment, apprenticeships and finally with self-employment. My goals are to bring Net-Plus structures into the mainstream, by making them affordable to average wage earners, and also to positively impact water table preservation, especially sources feeding the Verde River.



### **Ron Rux**

Ron moved to the Verde Valley in 2007 to take a journeyman lineman position with APS. He is married to his wonderful wife, Amy, of 34 years and has two grown daughters that both graduated from Mingus Union High School. Heather, 26, graduated from and now works for Western New Mexico University and Alyson, 24, graduated from GCU and is beginning her 3<sup>rd</sup> year teaching high school math in the Phoenix area.

Ron's career in the electrical industry has spanned a little over 3 decades. Beginning after graduation and living in the small community of Walden, CO, he obtained a position as an equipment operator for an electric contractor in Fort Collins, CO. From there he hired on as an apprentice lineman with the City of Loveland and earned his journeyman lineman certification in the spring of 1991. Wanting to be closer to relatives, he and his family relocated to Western Colorado where he worked for a Rural Electric Cooperative in the Delta/Montrose area for 6

years. During his time with Delta Montrose Electric he held the position as Union Steward for the IBEW and served on a Human Rights committee investigating allegations of workplace violations such as sexual violations and discrimination. Due to a back injury, he decided to seek other employment opportunities landing an Instructor position at a Vocational School in Grand Junction teaching the lineworker program. He had great success with high graduation rates and job placement for his students and enjoyed passing on the trade to the younger generation. As with most teaching positions, income needed to be supplemented and he acquired employment during the summer months with local electrical contractors. After 4 years of teaching, the desire to be back on a line crew won out over teaching and he took a full time position with an electrical contractor as the crew foreman. After working for 3 different electrical contractors and trying to work close to home and family during the down turn of the economy in 2007, the contract work began to fade and the opportunity to work for a more secure utility in a warmer climate became available and drew him and his family to Cottonwood.

Ron currently holds the position as the Inspector/Planner with APS. His role is making sure new electrical construction is installed to current specifications, and that the guidelines of the National Electric Safety Code are adhered to for services across the Verde Valley. His job allows him the interaction with many excavation contractors, home builders and residents of the area while taking in the sights of the Verde Valley, which he really enjoys.

In his spare time he likes spending time with family, four-wheeling, working on home improvement projects and exploring the beauty of Arizona.