



Photo by Mehdi Karami

## The Bonds That Serve

Shabeh Jomeh brings Iranians together and together they serve their communities

by Rose Nadali

It's Thursday night, 8pm. You're walking into a dimly lit bar with your best friend, who you dragged along because you weren't "going to go by yourself". You're nervous. *Who will be there? Will they be cool? Will they be friendly?* As you're about to turn around and go home to your TV, you spot a group of Persians in the center of the room. They are definitely enjoying themselves. Your friend whispers, "seems ok, let's have a drink and see how it goes."

The event is "Shabeh Jomeh" and it occurs on the third Thursday of every month in a dozen cities around the globe. Five years ago, Tamilla Ghodsi, Payman Bahadoran and Bijan Sohrabi started monthly gatherings to bring New York's Iranian-American professionals together for community building, exchanging ideas and socializing. Their events were so well-attended that they inspired friends from other cities to form their own chapters.

Neda Nabavi, currently the organization's Executive Director, established the second Shabeh Jomeh in Chicago in 2003. Her responsibilities include working with new city leaders to promote chapter growth. She also ensures all chapters uphold Shabeh Jomeh's philosophy of inclusion; they are strictly non-religious, non-political and non-discriminatory. Shabeh Jomeh and its organizers strive to maintain a reputation of class and cool, which is defined as being "hassle-free." There are no name tags, no RSVPs and no entrance fees. People simply show up and mingle in a relaxed, friendly environment.

In some cities, organizers have leveraged their professional network to give back to their community through philanthropy. Fundraising efforts have benefited numerous charities such as: Child Foundation's Bam Earthquake Relief Fund and Backpack

---

In some cities, organizers have leveraged their professional network to give back to their community through philanthropy.

---

Program, Mercy Corps Tsunami Fundraiser and the Walter and Connie Payton Toy Drive. Most recently, Shabeh Jomeh's first annual Skiathon raised \$16,000 for the Razi Health Foundation, which provides medical services to those who cannot afford them.

For new participants, showing up may be a departure from their regular Thursday routine, but it is a rewarding experience. The new friends, professional contacts and community bonds that are forged at Shabeh Jomeh gatherings are invaluable to building a thriving Iranian community no matter where Iranians live throughout the world.

Find out where your city's Shabeh Jomeh meets at [www.shabehjomeh.com](http://www.shabehjomeh.com).

Photo: During their second anniversary party, Seattle Shabeh Jomeh participants held a live charity auction and collected donations totalling just over \$9,000 for the Child Foundation.