

Zaki's vision beginning to take shape

SPECIAL TO THE ENTERPRISE

HIGH POINT – To many Americans, the Islamic faith is associated with terrorism or the turmoil in the Middle East. But in High Point, Zaki Uddin Khalifa has taken it upon himself to set the standard of community welfare and corporate citizenship in the true spirit of his faith.

Born and raised in the progressive tradition of Islam, faith has played an important role in Khalifa's life. Beliefs in the core values of moral and social integrity, honest dealings and compassion for those who are less fortunate have guided his life and relationships.

In 1976, when Khalifa came to High Point, he had only \$500 in his pocket and a suitcase with just the bare essentials. At age 31, he had reached a decision to follow his dream of starting an Oriental rug business in the United States.

Khalifa was raised in a family of government officials, professors and diplomats. His grandfather helped negotiate Pakistan's independence from Great Britain in the 1940s and later became the speaker of the legislature.

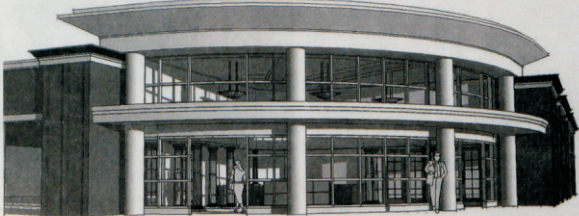
Khalifa was educated at Forman Christian College, Lahore, a Presbyterian institution, and Islamia College, Lahore, an Islamic institution. During his college years he witnessed Christians and Muslims – students and professors – working side by side in harmony. He realized that different cultures should not only be accepted but also genuinely appreciated.

"At a very young age, I learned that every person has great value and that true friendships are built on honor, integrity and a genuine caring for others and with total respect for cultural differences," noted Khalifa. "We are all, each one of us, a vessel of untold worth."

One of his professors at Forman, Dr. Carl Wheelock, was teaching at High Point University when Khalifa arrived in the United States and convinced him that High Point was the



Khalifa



Zaki Khalifa donated 23,000 square-foot building at the corner of N. Main Street and State Avenue, valued at \$1.6 million, to the High Point Chamber of Commerce.

place for him to open his Oriental rug business. Khalifa struggled early on in the business. He packed, shipped and delivered his own products. But his work ethic paid off.

Twenty-eight years after opening the doors of his business, Khalifa's current location on S. Main Street has more than 100,000 square feet and has more than 14,000 rugs.

Zaki Oriental Rugs has been honored by the Better Business Bureau for promoting ethics in business and recognized in national publications and the New York Times as a must stop destination in North Carolina to shop for home furnishings.

Kate Gladchun, author of "The Fine Furnishings Discount Shopping Guide," cited variety, price, customer service and a willingness to guarantee customer satisfaction among Zaki's virtues. She said she knows of no other store that compares. Today, Khalifa still

purchases each rug personally and guarantees customers' satisfaction.

After reaching this level of success, Khalifa wanted to do something significant for the community. In September of 2004 he donated a 23,000 square-foot building to the High Point Chamber of Commerce valued at \$1.6 million.

"To Khalifa it was a way of 'giving back' to the community and people that had embraced him and helped him develop one of America's leading Oriental rug businesses. The gift came as a surprise to chamber officials, and when asked what his vision was for the new facility, Khalifa responded, "My vision is that this new facility will be the place where all the dreams of High Point are made. I have been blessed in my business beyond anything that I could have ever imagined when I came to this country 28 years ago. I am honored to share this blessing with our chamber and my community."

"In 25 years of chamber experience, I have never even heard of a gift of this magnitude," noted Tom Dayvault, president of the High Point Chamber of Commerce. "We pledge to make Zaki's vision a reality. He has forever changed our chamber and our community."

On Jan. 28, the chamber announced that Khalifa was to be the recipient of the BB&T Distinguished Citizen of the Year Award. The award is given to an exceptional individual who has achieved excellence in his profession, has served the community in meaningful ways and has assisted the community in reaching its potential.

"Zaki is the prime example of a corporate citizen who cares about his community and is taking action to back his beliefs," commented Leah Price, chairman of the High Point Chamber of Commerce. "His efforts have ensured the growth of our chamber and the city of High Point."

