

Home at last: Afghan boy adapts to life in South Florida after long adoption process, evacuation from country and greeted with gift from POMP, SNOW & CIRQUEumstance author

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PUBLISHED 5:18 PM ET Sep. 23, 2021

FORT LAUDERDALE, Fla. -- A month after being evacuated from Afghanistan and embarking on a journey that included stops in Qatar, Germany, and Washington, DC, Noman, 10, is adjusting to life in South Florida with the couple who have been trying to adopt him for five years.

"The biggest challenge has been trying to find him foods that he would like," said Dr. Bahaudin Mujtaba, who, along with his wife, Lisa, is still in the process of officially adopting Noman. "He's basically, so far, loving chicken nuggets and crispy chicken sandwiches."

Noman has also started school. This is just one of the places Mujtaba said the boy has received a warm welcome.

"Not only the teachers and the administrators and the students in his class at Flamingo Elementary have been very good to him in terms of helping him with lessons so we're understanding different assignments, but also the community in South Florida," said Mujtaba. "Even friends, colleagues, and those who I do not even know have e-mailed me and have sent him presents and gifts, puzzles, games, all kinds of other things."

Noman received a very special delivery on Wednesday. Video shows him standing in his driveway as a man with blue skin, a shock of orange hair, and an emerald green suit wheeled a brand new bicycle up to him. The bike was a gift from Broadway director and Cirque Dreams founder Neil Goldberg. Goldberg was on hand as the bike was delivered along with a copy of a new children's book he's authored, Pomp, Snow, and CIRQUEumstance. The man in blue was Pomp, one of the book's characters.

"It was wonderful to see his eyes light up when he saw the blue bike," said Mujtaba. "Blue is his favorite color, so they basically got him exactly the right gift."

Mujtaba said Noman's story has moved people in other ways. He's gotten a number of inquiries about how to adopt a child from Afghanistan.

"I don't have a good answer for them right now because it took me five years to get to this point," said Mujtaba. "I'm hoping that in the years to come, the Taliban government and other leaders in Afghanistan make it easy for Afghans who are abroad, as well as others who are willing to adopt a child from Afghanistan, that they would make the process easier and more transparent so those young children who need someone to take care of them can be helped in the process."

Mujtaba said he and his wife are currently working with two adoption agencies to officially make Noman part of the family.

