



Council on American-Islamic Relations-Newsletter

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PEARLS OF THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD (PBUH)

The Prophet PBUH once said, “The best of companions with Allah is he who is best to his companion, and the best of neighbors with Allah is he who is best to his neighbor.” (Tirmidee).

As we come up on another glorious month of Ramadan I think of our communities and see how far we have come- how very far we have to go. Since that earth shattering day 5 years ago on the bustling streets of New York the American Muslim community has grown so much. Many have seen the ever present need to live the life that the Prophet Muhammed SAW had taught us to live in order to be true role models to humanity.

Many have put this into practice. For example, a small Masjid in North West Philadelphia running a soup kitchen once a month from their building is one great example of a community living as the Prophet did. This same Masjid runs a food assistance pro-

gram and delivers food to the needy-door to door.

The Prophet SAW had said, “If one believes in Allah and the Last Day, then let him not harm his neighbor.”(Bukharee). He (SAW) also said, “ The best of companions with Allah is he who is best to his companion, and the best of neighbors with Allah is he who is best to his neighbor.” (Tirmidee).

As a community we need to strive more than ever to live by the example set by the Prophet SAW with our neighbors. It is only in this way that the American Muslim community will define our-

CAIR-PHILLY- THE STATE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION IN PHILADELPHIA
BY ALIYA Z. KHABIR

Ibn Majah reported this Hadith as follows” Anas Ibn Maalik reported the messenger of Allah (SAAW) said:

“Seeking knowledge is incumbent on every Muslim; he who offers knowledge to those who do not appreciate it, is the one who decorates pigs with precious stones, pearls and gold.”

The Foundation

Islam has thrived in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley area since the early 1950’s. Communities have been developed throughout continuous efforts of previous generations. Establishing mosques, businesses, civic and humanitarian organizations the ummah has tried to adjust to its ever changing needs. Madressah programs in local mosques have been successful in educating our children in Arabic and Islamic Studies, providing a much needed Islamic foundation.

It is well known and often stated in khutbahs and conversation that to seek knowledge is incumbent of every Muslim. I can’t help but to think that Allah would not all be disappointed in his servants if the Muslims progressed in what is thought to secular academia and professional skill sets as well as the Qu’ran, lives of the beloved Prophets, the Sahabas, etc. However,

there seems to be a shortage of institutions that offer the full package: college preparatory curriculums accompanied by Islamic principles, morals and values.

Public School

The School District of Philadelphia currently services thousands of Muslim students and that number continues to grow each year. As Islamic schools face money woes, staffing and accreditation issues, Muslim parents are forced to consider other options including public school. As with everything in life, public school has its pros and cons. On the affirmative, public school provides, in theory, a free, quality education for every child regardless of ethnic or economic background. However in practice, public schools fall short due to various factors including lack of parental support and participation, diversion of resources to manage disciplinary problems, the pressure for teachers to comply with “No Child Left Behind” legislation and to boost test scores. Although legally separate from the church or any religious affiliation, Muslim children have special needs. Unless parents are active in securing halal lunches, prayer areas quiet alternatives to the cafeteria during Ramadan and permission to attend Jumah each Friday, these necessities are not provided. And as in private schools, uniforms can also become an issue, especially for our young Muslimahs.

(cont’d on page 2)

CAIR-PHILLY- LET’S DEFINE OURSELVES AND SHARE RAMADAN, BY KAREEM AFZAL

and not be characterized and stereotyped by the violence and barbarism that un-Islamically plagues the world today. By simple, local grassroots acts of kindness the American Muslims of this area and elsewhere can show their communities, neighbors and locales that we care deeply.

In this light CAIR-Philly is calling on all Islamic centers and Masajid of the area to host “Sharing Ramadan”, an outreach effort designed to enhance understanding of Islam and to help Americans of all faiths meet their Muslim neighbors by taking part in a Ramadan “iftar,” or fast-breaking meal. For a step by step guide please visit www.cair.com/pdf/Sharing_Ramadan_06.pdf for details.

CAIR PHILLY HOLDS IT'S 5TH "KNOW YOUR RIGHTS" SEMINAR AT THE NORTH PENN MOSQUE IN LANSDALE, PA



CAIR-Philadelphia recently held its 5th know your rights seminar at the North Penn Mosque in Lansdale, PA in early July at their first annual "Wellness Day" a celebration of healthy lifestyles, healthy food and exercise education.

John Vandenberg, CAIR-Philly's civil rights committee chair person and retired Philadelphia Police Officer Brother Latif of UMM conducted the seminar.

During the seminar attended by 50+ community members, John highlighted 5 key areas and our rights as citizens/residents of the United States as outlined in the Constitution. These areas were:

If stopped or questioned by Police, the FBI or any other law enforcement official

As an employee of a company

As a student in an educational institution

The session was concluded with a question and answer session and a discussion on how everyone can become involved.

To have CAIR-Philly conduct a seminar in your community please contact our office at cairphilly@cairphilly.org

CAIR PHILLY- SPONSORS EID BASKET PROGRAM FOR THE NEEDY IN THE AREA

Philadelphia-

This Ramadan, CAIR Philly will be co-sponsoring the greater Philadelphia Eid Basket drive for the needy. The goal of the program is to have potential donors sponsor one or more baskets consisting of a \$120.00 VISA check card and \$5.00 worth of goody and food items to brighten the day of the needy in the area. In years past the program has worked in collaboration with the North Penn Mosque in Lansdale, Masjidullah on Ogontz Ave, Community Housing Services of Montgomery county and the Foundation for Islamic Education in Villanova to set up a distribution network to reach those recipients.

Last Eid-ul-Adha 31 baskets were distributed. Inshallah (God Willing) our goal is to increase this number by 10 each Eid. The prophet Muhammad, peace be unto him, has instructed us to be mindful, dutiful and charitable to our neighbors as we are required to know their situation. It is with this universal Islamic principle that CAIR-Philly wishes to help those in need share in our joy during the Eid celebration. To donate the \$125/basket cost to this cause to contact Kareem Afzal @ 267-808-4906 or keem-bo6@yahoo.com. We thank you for your generosity in advance and may Allah reward you.



"Last Eid-ul-Adha 31 baskets were distributed. Inshallah (God Willing) our goal is to increase this number by 10 each Eid. "

THE STATE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION (CONT'D)

Local Trends

There are over 500 Muslim students in Philadelphia that attend schools operated by the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Rather than place their children in public schools, or place them in sub par Islamic schools, some Muslim parents are choosing the Catholic School system as a solution.

Sister Foolana chose to enroll



"My son is now very well rounded and enjoys going to school with other Muslims." Foolana plans to enroll her youngest son at TIES once he enters kindergarten, Inshallah.

her then, 4-year-old son, in Catholic school for a year until space became available at the Islamic Education School in West Philadelphia. "Public school was not an option, and some of the Islamic schools did not meet my expectations." Foolana was disappointed at what she called a "one-sided curriculum," she observed at several local Islamic elementary schools. "They concentrate on Islamic Studies and

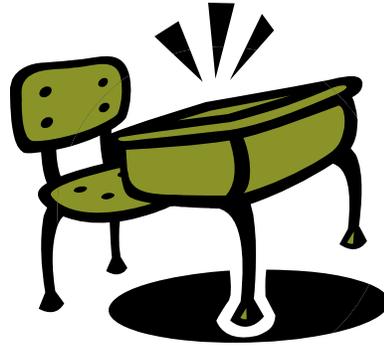
Arabic, which is great. I want my children to know their religion and speak Arabic. But my son should know how

to count as well. He should be learning all the things students who live in Bucks County are learning." Other Islamic schools were just too far away, and did not provide busing. Sister Foolana then transferred her son the Islamic Education School, one of

Although Catholic schools have a great academic reputation, and focus on discipline, something most parents and teachers will agree is missing from public schools, the non-Islamic environment can take a toll on a young mind. Foolana noticed the difference in her son when he began to ask questions about Jesus and why people at school pray to him

THE STATE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION (CONT'D)

and not Allah. (con't on pg 3)
Foolana quickly saw that although her intentions were pure, the end result was complicated and could scar her child. She quickly moved him to the Islamic Education School (TIES) in West Philadelphia. TIES is one of 10 schools in the United States and Canada under the umbrella of the Association of Islamic Charitable Projects (AICP).



The organization has 17 learning institutions world-

wide including facilities in Germany, Australia, France, Switzerland, Canada and the United States. The location at 44th and Walnut Streets in Philadelphia serves as AICP's North American headquarters. Foolana is pleased with her choice. "My son is now very well rounded and enjoys going to school with other Muslims." Foolana plans to enroll her youngest son at TIES once he enters kindergarten, Inshallah.

CAIR-PHILLY WELCOMES ITS NEWEST BOARD MEMBERS

Taalibah A. Kariem-White has been an active member in the Islamic community since September 1992. She is known in both Islamic and secular professional communities for her work to bridge interfaith relations and increase awareness of Muslim culture and has presented numerous workshops for social service providers. A past columnist for the *Philadelphia Sunday Inquirer*, her articles on Islam was published on the *Religion Page* as part of a series, "Word and Deed". She shares her expertise with local Islamic organizations including: the Council on American-Islamic Relations Philadelphia (C.A.I.R.-Philly), the Islamic Heritage Foundation, the Muslim Youth Association and the Islamic Cultural Preservation and Information Council (ICPIC). Sister Taalibah is a Manager of Training and Performance Improvement with the Family Planning Council's regional training center serving reproductive healthcare providers in six mid-Atlantic states.

Aliya Z. Khabir is currently a consulting communications specialist at Reach Communications Specialist, Inc. in Center City Philadelphia. The public relations professional has a diverse background in marketing, advertising, event planning and management, public relations and development. Aliya is an active member of United Muslim Masjid in Philadelphia where she is co-chair of the fashion show committee, co-host of *Islam Today* a weekly radio broadcast on WHAT-AM 1340 and a member of the education committee. Aliya is a published author, contributing to the Philadelphia Daily News as well as AZIZAH Magazine, an international magazine focused in Muslim women. She a native Philadelphian, receiving her early education at Sister Clara Muhammad School and the Philadelphia High School for Girls. In 2001, Aliya received her Bachelors in Business Administration, with a concentration in Marketing from Temple University. She is now enrolled as a candidate for a Master's degree in Public Relations at LaSalle University.

10 Steps to a Successful Ramadan!

Make the Proper Intention. As with everything in Islam, it is the intention that makes everything halal or haram. Start Ramadan with the proper intentions, to serve Allah; to receive blessings or to increase your knowledge of Islam. Ramadan is not an opportunity to lose weight.

Focus on something you want to change about yourself. Perhaps you have a bad habit, like biting your nails or backbiting. Ramadan is the perfect time to focus on

Go out of your way to do good deeds. Offer to give your fellow sister a ride home from the evening salat. Or help some one with their packages, small simple deeds reap the greatest rewards.

Remember Allah. Increase the salat whenever possible.

Give Dawah whenever you can. Many of us work in corporate America and often encounter curiosity from non Muslims about Ramadan. This is a perfect time to give Dawah to co-workers, neighbors, friends and family.

Watch your Temper! Remember, Shaitan is locked away for the month, so the behavior you exhibit is your own and not the influence of

Shaitan. Anger can break your fast, so be aware of your actions. Patience is a virtue we all can improve upon.

Feed the less fortunate. For brothers and sisters that are in a condition that keeps them from observing the fast, feeding the needy is great way to participate in Ramadan. Make a paper bag lunch for the homeless person you see on your way to work everyday or host a soup kitchen at your local mosque.

Improve Your Knowledge of Islam. Ramadan is a perfect time to learn a difficult or new Surah, or to study a particular Sahaba and his impact on Islam.

Increase your Saadiqa: Dig deep into your pocket and give for the sake of Allah. Try to give more than usual in saadiqa.

Be observant. Sit quietly for a few minutes per day and observe your surroundings. It may help to give you clarity on things that may weigh heavy on your heart or mind.



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CAIR-PHILLY- THIS RAMADAN, HELP CAIR PHILLY MEET OUR CRITICAL FUND RAISING GOALS

Since its inception in late 2004 CAIR-Philly has become a leading advocate for mutual understanding, Muslim empowerment and a leading voice for the promotion of justice.

From the cartoon controversy and its aftermath to our trademark 10 week course entitled "Understanding Islam and Muslims throughout history" CAIR-Philly has reached out across traditional barriers to provide a needed voice for the

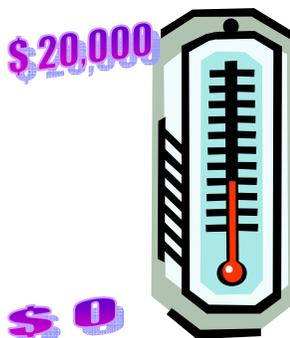
American Muslim community. CAIR-Philly has become the source that the press turns to for comment on news stories in the area and around the world. When CAIR-Philly calls a news conference every major city network is right there to cover the story.

But, the sad news is that this work cannot continue without the monetary support from our community. This Ramadan our goal is to raise \$20,000 to further our effort and expand our capabilities.

From adding additional staff to hosting critical events and seminars CAIR-Philly needs your support. And we have made it easy. From automatic checking account withdrawals

to one time donations CAIR-Philly will work with you to find the best solution.

Please contact Dr. Ribhi Shawar at rshawar@comcast.net to set up a donation. May Allah Bless you for your generosity.



Area Islamic Schools
Overbrook Farms Preparatory Academy (Formerly Direct Connection)
2039 Upland Way
Philadelphia, PA 19131-1226
(215) 477-0FPA

Quba Institute Day School
1860 West Montgomery Avenue
Ardmore, PA 19003
(610) 520-2223

Al Aqsa
1501 Germantown Avenue
Philadelphia, PA 19122
(215) 765-6660

The Islamic Education School
4431 Walnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19104

THE STATE OF ISLAMIC EDUCATION (CONT'D)

Private Schools

In 1994, Nikkita Shoatz-Ahmed did what many thought was unthinkable and others thought was a progressive move to teach tolerance. Shoatz-Ahmed moved her modest school, NSA, to the basement of a synagogue in Overbrook, a diverse area of West Philadelphia. Shoatz told the Jewish Exponent in 1994 that the opportunity presented itself when she answered an ad in the local newspaper. The school thrived until its closing in 2005. NSA is one of many Islamic schools forced to close its doors due to funding troubles. These schools have good intentions, because they tend to the students in regardless of the family's financial situation, never turning away students. But it also places a burden on the school to stay afloat.

This fall, the Overbrook Farms Preparatory Academy in Overbrook will open an annex at Masjid Muhammad in the Olney/Germantown area. Thirty-year education veteran Sister Zenobia Shah, M.Ed. will head the school as well as its headquarter facilities in Overbrook. OFPA was formerly known as Direct Connec-

tion, a popular and successful school Shah founded upon her exit from what was Sister Clara Muhammad School.

The school focuses on "empowering academic, technical and environmental education." OFPA offers small, classroom settings, project based learning, tutoring and transportation, a very important factor to most parents when selecting a private school for their child. Sometimes transportation or lack thereof can be the determining factor in whether or not a Muslim child has the chance to take advantage of an Islamic education.

The Annex at Masjid Muhammad is an example of what is now a widespread practice, Masjid's establishing small schools and learning centers and forgoing the oversized school experience. These small schools have been a staple in the Christian Church, from day care to high school and are now just becoming a real option for Muslim families. Again, it has its pros and cons. But if the intention is to provide quality Islamic education in a wholesome environment these schools, get the job done. Similar projects are underway at Germantown Masjid.

Home Schooling

Many Muslim families choose to home school their children, rather than expose them to children in public and charter schools and sparing what can be a financial burden if they were to enroll their child in an expensive private school. Many families operate on a dual income, meaning the both the wife and husband work outside of the home. This may save money, but it can also scar the child. Every child needs social interaction. When home schooling is implemented a part of that social experience is lost.

Higher Education

If the Muslim community in the Delaware Valley seeks to increase its numbers and its economic state, the Believers must invest in education. We must now realize and acknowledge the importance of Islamic as well as secular development, not just for the child but for the benefit of the community. It is imperative for the American Muslims to adapt a survival mentality based around education and competitive preparedness.