

Islamic Center Newsletter

Volume 9, Issue 7
July 15, 2003
Jumaad al-Thaany 15, 1424

ICNEF, St. John's Bluff Road S., Jacksonville, Florida 32246

CALENDAR

**MONTHLY GATHERING
TOWN HALL MEETING**
Saturday, July 26, 2003
5:30 pm

HOST FAMILIES
Mohammad & Sameena Shahid
Dr. Muhammad Anwar
Murshid Al-Awady
James Abdur Rehman

AUGUST 2003 HOST FAMILIES
Shakur & Nailah Bolden
Aatif & Hope Barbari
Abdel Ali Bedri
Saddiqa & Kaleem Khan

ICNEF BOARD MEETING
Sunday, July 27, 2003
After Zuhr Prayer

“The believers are a band of brothers and sisters. Let there be peace among them, and let them honor God with one voice. Thus, God will show them mercy.” Surah 49:10

Articles News Announcements
FOR NEWSLETTER
Please submit by
Friday, August 1, 2003

ICNEF WEBSITE
<http://www.ICNEF.org>

BECOMING AN IDEAL MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Sadida Athaullah

There are many ways of expressing what a community is but the best example of the term is the community established in the light of Qur'anic directions by our beloved Prophet Muhammad, peace and blessings on him, more than 15 hundred years ago.

This first Islamic community had people who spoke many different languages, belonged to different ethnic groups, had different social status, and were so diverse in their world views that it took the miracle of the revelation of the Holy Word of God to unite them all in the Belief in One God, that all humans are created equal regardless of their race, language, and social status.

Today, all we need to do is stand in prayer at the Islamic Center in Jacksonville, or anywhere in the world, and see that when we start making the lines for prayer, all our differences are forgotten: we are toe to toe, shoulder to shoulder, with neighbors who may speak a different language, have a different skin color, may earn more money in a week than we may see in a year, and who have come to believe in one God from a different route than we have, but none of those differences matter as we all, as a COMMUNITY say ALLAH HU AKBAR and offer our prayers to God.

It is every Muslim's dream to live in such an ideal community, which seems momentarily within our grasp while we are standing toe to toe and shoulder to shoulder, but no one seems to know how to translate this vision into reality, and being American and into instant gratification, we want it right here and right now.

Is it even possible to have such a community these days? If it is possible, what are possible ways of striving for and setting realistic goals to build such a community? Are there any viable examples of such communities in cities and towns across America? If there are successful examples, what makes these communities function better than other places that do not function so well?

Many successful communities are supported and funded by Muslims who see and use the Prophet (PBUH), and his companions, as their model. Many people, including Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and his wife Khadijah, may God be pleased with her, made their livelihood from trade and today many a research paper in American and Western universities is written on the Islamic roots of capitalism.

It is the Muslim business community who, with prosperity, fund many projects, yet in Jacksonville we lack a strong Muslim business base. We need a Muslim Business Bureau that will nurture, mentor, and work to make Jacksonville a friendly place for Muslim owned businesses and to guide both business owners

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FIRST ANNUAL ICNEF AWARDS APPRECIATION DINNER

Homa Mojadidi

The First Annual ICNEF Appreciation Awards Dinner took place at the Adam's Mark Hotel in downtown Jacksonville, on June 17, 2003. The reception was at 6:00 pm followed by dinner at 7:00 pm. The program commenced with the recitation of Surah Fatiha by Imam Zaid, followed by the English translation by Jonathan Ballard.

Br. Shukur made the opening remarks and welcomed everyone. He said, "our aim is to recognize those who have helped bridge communication gaps" between the Muslims and those of other faiths. Joanelle Mulrain, from Senator Bill Nelson's office, conveyed the Senator's congratulatory note to those present (and the greater Jacksonville community) on the success of building greater tolerance and "being a credit to our state and nation."

Mr. Jim Price of BKM Architects, Inc., was the first to be recognized for his valuable contribution towards the actual building of the Islamic Center. He had also made a special trip from Orlando to be there that night. Br. Ashraf Sheikh, while presenting the recognition plaque to Mr. Radhe Mittal with the same firm, said "even though we may not have the same religious preferences, we are honored to have you among us." Mr. Gul Paryani of Paryani Engineers, PE PA, Mr. Namir Haddad of Haddad Engineering, Inc., and individuals from Tenant Contractors, Inc. were also presented with recognition awards.

Unfortunately, due to a knee injury, Mayor John Delaney could not attend the dinner to receive the ICNEF Civic Service Award. However, Mike Miller, his liaison to the City Council, conveyed the Mayor and his wife's deepest regrets on being unable to attend "an evening they were both looking very forward to" and recounted the story of how the Mayor injured his left knee while climbing the Grand Canyon. While accepting the recognition award on the mayor's behalf, Mr. Miller said, "if he (Mr. Delaney) were here tonight, he'd accept this award in your name and in the name of everyone who has helped make this city a great place to live." He thanked everyone for their love, support, and standing by Mr. Delaney for the last eight years and mentioned how much the mayor has enjoyed serving us and the rest of the Jacksonville community.

Reverends Tom Borland and B. Fred Woolsey of the Interfaith Council of Jacksonville received the ICNEF Religious Understanding Award. Pastors Wiley & Jeana Tomlinson from the New Covenant Ministries located across from the Islamic Center, who have been kind and gracious enough to allow us to use their parking lot for Friday and Eid prayers, were presented the ICNEF Community Support Award. Br. Ashraf aptly expressed the sentiments of the ICNEF community when he said that "we couldn't have asked for better neighbors and supporters than those we have across the street."

Dr. Muhammad Mona received the ICNEF Humanitarian Service Award for being a tremendous asset to the community.

Br. Shukur recognized Br. Ashraf for his efforts in putting together this event and said "it is your driving will that has allowed all this to come together - you've been doing this for the sake of God but we'd like to recognize you for putting this event together." Br. Ashraf, in his turn, thanked Br. Zahid Choudhry for his help.

Our previous Imam, Zulfiqar Ali Shah, gave the closing speech titled "We, The Children of Adam (PBUH)". In his introduction of Imam Zulfiqar, Br. Shukur jokingly mentioned how once Imam Zulfiqar received his PhD he left the Jacksonville community. He added, "but that's ok because he brought us Imam Zaid Malik in his place."

Here are some excerpts from Imam Zulfiqar's speech:

"What an evening, Christians, Jews, Hindus, Muslims, Bahais, even the politicians...everyone's here together now," were Imam Zulfiqar's opening comments. He said the he applauds and appreciates the efforts of the Interfaith Council of Jacksonville and ICNEF members for working so closely together and the efforts of all those who have "contributed so much to building this house of worship for God...and it wouldn't have been possible anywhere else besides the United States."

Imam Zulfiqar continued his speech by saying "God's design and purpose can be easily understood when we look back across the centuries and see how much wisdom, compassion, and beauty has flown out of these religions, it's logical to assume divine wills associated with them. On the other hand, huge massacres and horrible crimes have been committed in the name of these religions but they simply prove that human beings, in their weakness, are capable of distorting God's message and not that any of these religions are false."

"There's beauty in this diversity, we share a common father and mother, Adam and Eve," continued Imam Zulfiqar. He quoted verse 13, chapter 49 of the Quran: "O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you may know each other (not that you may despise each other). Verily the most honored of you in the sight of God is he who is the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted with all things."

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UNDERSTANDING ISLAM

Submitted by Ashraf Shaikh

Broadcasted on Channels 24 and 29.
Aired Sundays, 4pm and 7pm.
Here is the schedule for July and August:
July 20th: "History of Muslims, Part 1"
July 27th: "History of Muslims, Part 2"
August 3rd: "History of Muslims, Part 2"
August 10th: "History of Muslims, Part 2"

2003 ISLAMIC CALENDAR NOW ONLY \$5

If you still have not been able to purchase your own 2003 Islamic Calendar, it's not too late! They only cost \$5 and all the money raised will benefit the Islamic Center and AFA. This makes for a great gift for your Muslim and non-Muslim friends. Please drop by the Imam's office to purchase yours today.

TOWN HALL MEETING

Remember that July's Monthly Gathering is also our second Town Hall Meeting. This is a great opportunity to ask questions about ICNEF or to voice your concerns. Please keep the following in mind:

- the office bearers of the ICNEF Managing Committee will form the panel
- the Chair will open the floor for comments; the audience will be provided with notecards to jot down their questions & a volunteer will collect the questions and hand them over to the Secretary, who will direct the question to the relevant panelist

TEACHERS WANTED

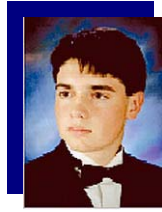
AL-FURQAN ACADEMY 2003-2004 SCHOOL YEAR

Minimum qualifications: a bachelor's degree from an accredited university and teaching experience. Individual must be dependable, patient, team oriented, committed to the educational needs of children, and have the ability to work in a diverse environment.

Please forward your resume for immediate review to:
Al-Furqan Academy
2333 St. Johns Bluff Rd S
Jacksonville, Florida 32246
Fax: (904) 645 0810

VALEDICTORIAN

Submitted by Shakur Bolden



Did you know that in our community, one of our Muslim students graduated "summa cum laude," at the top of his class? That's right, he was the valedictorian of his Senior Class. This student was also a regular attendee of the Islamic Center Sunday School. May God continue to bless him and his parents and grant him success in all his endeavors. This Muslim brother attended Bartram Trail High School in St. Augustine. His name is Ghulam Tariq Khan.

FIRST ANNUAL ISLAMIC FAMILY REUNION AND MUSLIMS IN HIP HOP CONFERENCE AND CONCERT

Submitted by Tahirah Abdullah

The First Annual Islamic Family Reunion and Muslims in Hip Hop Conference will be held, July 24 – 27, 2003 in Orlando, FL. Sponsored by the Islamic Crisis Emergency Response Team, the Family Reunion features speakers including: Imam Siraj Wahhaj, our former Imam-Dr. Zulfiqar Ali Shah, Imam Talib Abdur Rashid, and Minister A. Akbar Muhammad, and comedian Azhar Usman. Workshops, a "mini mall," separate Brotherhood and Sisterhood Breakfasts, Islamic competitions, a barbecue, and a semi-formal Awards Banquet are some of the activities included in the Family Reunion.

The Muslims in Hip Hop Conference consists of a variety of lectures, panels and discussions, and features a Muslims in Hip Hop Concert. Conference topics include A Challenge to the Muslim Hip Hop Generation, Tajeed (Revival) in the Use of Urban Art, and Reflecting on Hip Hop and Its Significance to the Ummah. The concert features performances by various Spoken Word artists, MCs, DJs, and groups including Ali Shaheed Muhammad (of A Tribe Called Quest and Lucy Pearl), Pop Master Fabel (of the Rock Steady Crew), Everlast, Native Deen (featured on MYNA Raps), DJ Kidragon & DJ Omega, Yaya J. Fanusie, and Eloquence.

This promises be an outstanding event for all ages, so it would be wonderful if we showed our support. Participants stay, for a discounted rate, at the Peabody Orlando Hotel, conveniently located within walking distance of the Orange County Convention Center (where most events will be held). The registration fees are \$50 per person/\$100 per family (includes parents and children UNDER 16)/\$25 for students. The registration fee includes all Islamic Family Reunion workshops and events EXCEPT the awards banquet, and all Muslims in Hip Hop Conference lectures, panels, and discussions. The Muslims in Hip Hop Concert costs \$25 per person, and the Islamic Family Reunion Awards Banquet costs \$50 per person (includes Halal dinner). For information, go to www.OrlandoMeetingInfo.com/IFR.

FIRST ANNUAL ICNEF AWARDS PICTURES



Mike Miller, accepted award on behalf of Mayor Delaney



Along with the awards, special plaques were awarded to various individuals for their efforts in helping to make the Islamic Center a reality



Dr. Muhammad Mona received the first ICNEF Humanitarian Service Award



Some of the guests included Andy Johnson, and his wife Mary

PLAQUES AWARDED

James F. Price, Architect
BKM Architects, Inc. (Radhe Mittal & Khalil Khan)
Suresh Patel & Associates (Suresh Patel)
Paryani Engineers, PE PA (Gul B. Paryani)
Haddad Engineering, Inc. (Namir Haddad)
Tennant Contractors, Inc. (William Griffin, Joseph Hodgins, James Gearhart)

ICNEF AWARDS

Civic Service: Hon. John Delaney
Religious Understanding: Interfaith Council of Jacksonville
Community Support: New Covenant Ministries
Humanitarian Service: Dr. Muhammad Mona

IMAM'S DIARY

Imam Muhammad Zaid Malik

June 4th: We had the Interfaith Council meeting at Southside United Methodist Church. Br. Ashraf, Br. Parvez, and I attended the meeting. It is a quarterly meeting of the Council members, which include Jews, Christians, Muslims, and Baha'is. Br. Parvez presented the idea of having joint educational meetings, open for the public, under the title, "Children of Ibrahim."

June 6th-9th: I was invited to an Imams Conference in Alexandria, VA. I drove there and it was very informative. Some officials from the FBI, the media, and various human rights organizations were invited to give lectures. On the last day we toured Capitol Hill, where we visited some Congressmen and discussed our concerns about certain crucial issues, such as the Patriot Act, INS cases, and human rights violations. Br. Mahdi Bray, a civil rights activist, had arranged the tour. Before our visit, Br. Mahdi briefed us about the issues we were going to discuss and accompanied us. We met many people around Capitol Hill, most of whom were lobbyists. It was a new experience for me and the other Imams. I thought that was the most important day of the conference.

June 10th: I was driving back to Jacksonville from the conference when I looked at my calendar and realized I had a program at the Columbia Correctional Institute in Lake City, some 60 miles away from Jacksonville, that same evening. The program was about awarding the volunteers who visited the inmates the previous year. We were four volunteers: Br. Is'hak, Br. James Abdur Rahman, Br. Abdullah Bin Laden, and myself. Br. Shakur also occasionally visited the Muslim inmates on Eids. I did not know when I would reach Jacksonville, so I called the other volunteers to see if they could go in my place. I was only able to reach Br. Bin Laden. He did not want to go alone and would go only if I went. I told him to wait until I reached Florida. I didn't reach Florida until 6pm and the program was at 7:30pm. I called Br. Bin Laden and asked him to meet me in Lake City. Instead of coming home, I continued driving to Lake City, changed my clothes in a rest area and made it to the program. There was a large gathering, which included all of the Christian denominations. Br. Bin Laden and I were the only Muslim representatives there. I wished there were more of us. We really need more volunteers for da'wah work in the prisons. Alhumdulillah, several of the inmates accepted Islam last year. On the way back from Lake City, I received a call from a Bosnian brother saying that his father was sick and had been admitted to Baptist Hospital. He asked if I could visit him that night. I visited his father and recited some Qur'an for him. By the time I got home it was midnight.

June 12th: I visited Mr. Ralph Marcello at the Beaches HabiJax to see the procedure for acquiring homes. He showed me around the area and the places where Beaches HabiJax has built homes with the help of religious groups

and the community at large. Most of these homes are built around Mayport Road. Beaches HabiJax is one of the organizations that does not charge interest. Instead they require the person interested in owning a home to put in 400 hours of physical labor.

June 17th: We had our first Annual Appreciation Awards at the Adams Mark Hotel. Br. Ashraf took the lead in arranging this program. The purpose of this program was to build bridges between the Muslims and the community at large. Four awards were given to: Mayor John Delaney (ICNEF Civic Service Award); Rev. Tom Borland and Rev. Fred Woolsey of the Interfaith Council of Jacksonville (ICNEF Religious Understanding Award); New Covenant Ministries (ICNEF Community Support Award); and Br. Muhammad Mona (ICNEF Humanitarian Service Award). Br. Zulfiqar Ali Shah gave the keynote speech. The program was very well attended. I was honored to begin and end the program with du'a.

Thanks to all the brothers and sisters who helped in making this program a success.

June 18th: I taped the weekly interfaith TV program: "Faith to Faith." I was the facilitator this time. The rule is that the facilitator has to suggest a topic and inform all the participants ahead of time. I chose "thankfulness" as the topic. Please tune in, this program is broadcast every Sunday at 4:30pm and again at 7:30pm.

June 22nd: I was invited to the Hodges Boulevard Presbyterian Church by Pastor Reverend Tom Borland, who is also the President of the Interfaith Council of Jacksonville. Rabbi Michael Matuson was also invited. There was no lecture, but a question and answer session during which the three of us answered questions on our respective faith and beliefs.

June 25th: Br. Ashraf, Br. Parvez, and I taped our weekly TV program: "Understanding Islam." Br. Ashraf is the host for this program. The topic was: "The History of the Muslims." We started with the short history of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), followed by the history of the four rightly guided Caliphs.

June 30th: We had our monthly lecture at the Southeast Branch Public Library. Br. Parvez gave a very informative lecture entitled, "Islam between Rejection and Extremism." The turn out was good, Alhumdulillah. We had a question and answer session after the lecture. This program could be utilized for da'wah purposes more effectively if we invite our non-Muslim friends. A schedule can be obtained either from Br. Ilyas or Br. Parvez. The next program will take place at the Regency Branch Public Library, on July 15th at 7pm. The topic will be "Creation, Science, and Revelation." Please bring your non-Muslim friends with you.

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and consumers to be aware of the rules and regulations involved in conducting a lawful business.

Yes, we need funds, but a community does not need to be rich to be a Muslim community. It is the religious duty of each and every Muslim to contribute and participate in community affairs and make improvements in the community they live in. To help community members become active members, we need a community forum where we can become participants, a place to discuss and map out our vision for an Islamic Community.

My vision for Jacksonville includes a Muslim Business Bureau, Muslim Art Consortium to develop Muslim artists and Islamic art, Muslim Cultural Development Co-op, Muslim Writers Association and all sorts of social welfare programs.

Let us not waste time in re-inventing the wheel. The Muslim community that has lived here for the past 25 years has done an incredible and commendable job. Alhamdulillah, thanks to them, today we have an Islamic Center, more than three smaller masajid, an elementary school on par with public schools, a well-attended Sunday school and a Muslim burial ground. I moved to Jacksonville because this community had a Muslim burial ground, many others move here because of the great job this community has done so far.

The very first verse of the Qur'anic revelation begins with IQRA (READ)! Literacy is stressed so often in the Holy Qur'an that 13 different terms have been used to describe a writing implement. Literacy and education for children and adults makes for a better community. Let us build on that and focus our energies on maybe starting an after-school Madrassah for children who attend public school, an adult education program that offers everything from GED to Grant writing workshops, and building on the programs that already exist. And may God Almighty accept our strivings for Him.



Imam Zulfikar Ali Shah, Guest Speaker

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"Now globalization's brought nations closer together but this closeness has not been commensurate with greater spiritual or mutual understanding, as violence and hatred threaten various nations across the world."

"When the world's standing at a conflict of universal magnitude it is time for people of conscience to have outreach programs, to build bridges, and extend hands of friendship and mutual understanding, it is time for us to come out of our isolationism...no more medieval hatred, religions are not based on bigotry, they are supposed to serve humanity."

Imam Zulfikar's parting advice to the community was "Please continue enhancing mutual respect and understanding among people of different faiths as we are doing here, exalting the name of one God. I hope this can be transmitted from here to other parts of our beloved country, the US, where bigotry and hatred may be common."

Imam Zaid offered the concluding du'a: Dear God, we all ask you to give us the ability to live in this beautiful city and country of ours with dignity, honor, and respect, and the courage and ability to embrace followers of other faiths, to respect and understand them, and live with them in love and respect. Give us the ability to reach out and transmit the message of truth and humanity to the other parts of the country.



MESSAGE FROM MAYOR JOHN DELANEY

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

JOHN A. DELANEY
MAYOR

June 19, 2003

ST. JAMES BUILDING
117 WEST DUVAL STREET
SUITE 400
JACKSONVILLE, FL 32202

Shakur A. Bolden
President
Islamic Center of Northeast Florida, Inc.
2333 St. Johns Bluff Road South
Jacksonville, Florida 32246

Dear Shakur:

I just wanted you to know how sorry I was to have missed being with you all Tuesday evening. I am so pleased that Mike Miller of my staff was able to attend and accept this most prestigious award on my behalf.

Receiving the ICNEF Civic Service Award is a great honor for me, and I want to thank you and all those involved for making this award possible. The Muslim community plays a vital role in the overall well being of our city, and this award belongs in part to each of you for your many contributions in making our city such a great place to live.

Thank you again for your kindness and your friendship and may God continue to bless you.

Sincerely,

John A. Delaney



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To

In This Issue

Ideal Community, Awards Dinner, Message from the Mayor...

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The opinions expressed in the articles and other editorial material are those of the authors and are not to be construed as opinions and/or recommendations of the Islamic Center.

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ICNEF's Groundbreaking Ceremony
(circa 1983/84)