

## Lend a helping hand

By Akbar Hossain

With the blessings of Allah and the assistance of the Norristown community (Muslims and non-Muslims alike), Alhamdulillah my family and I are here today. My family's journey is just as much about Islam and its teachings, as it is about the power of a community.

A few years after I was born in Bangladesh, my family moved to Saudi Arabia. There, among other migrants, my father melted iron in a factory. We could not afford schooling, so my mother taught my siblings and me what she knew at home. Just when the threat of deportation became imminent, our family's fortunes reversed: we won the US Diversity Visa lottery. Hardly believing our luck, we packed our bags on September 9th, 2001, and boarded a plane for the United States.



Arriving in New York as a Muslim family from Saudi Arabia in the midst of the September 11 attacks proved to be difficult. My father worked three minimum-wage jobs to support our family in Norristown. Unfortunately, three years after we arrived, my father passed away from a heart stroke. We contemplated returning to Bangladesh, but the Norristown community assisted my family in reorganizing our life. My mother (who barely spoke any English at the time) took up a job in a local factory and I took up a part-time job at a gas station when I was thirteen.

During these difficult times, Alhamdulillah, my family never felt alone. Our neighbors were there in every aspect you can imagine: rides to get to our doctor's appointments, help with homework, babysitting when needed, and even assisting financially.

Note that I did not describe those who assisted my family as Muslims or non-Muslims, because they were of all different backgrounds. They did not care about what made me different or how I worshipped. They only cared about one thing: a family's need. This is exactly the type of society that Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) has advocated for, and left us with clear instructions to follow.

Often, we tend to get lost in the details of how we worship, and forget some of the most basic principles of our faith and what makes us human. One of the most important requirements of Islam is to help others. One of the basic principles of humanity is also to care for those in need. We can be the greatest reciters of the holy Quran or we can be the most learned people of our faith, but if we go about our days ignoring the plight of those around us, we are missing the core of what makes us human- compassion.

According to Abu Hurairah (RA) the Prophet (PBUH) said, "Whosoever removes some difficulty of a believer in this world, Allah shall remove some difficulty from him on the Day of Judgment. Whosoever provides some comfort to the sufferer, Allah shall provide him comfort here and in the hereafter..." As long as a person is busy helping his brother, Allah keeps helping him."

If we as a community truly want to replicate the ways of the Prophet (PBUH), then we need to recognize that our community matters, especially those who are in distress. The definition of our community is more than the people who attend our mosques and our halaqas. Our community includes our neighbors who attend Church down the street, it includes the missionaries who visit our town, and it includes all those who we often forget matter -the homeless, the mentally handicapped, and the elderly.

Let's start where it matters the most. Let's start at home – in Norristown. While we continue to invest in learning and reciting the holy Quran, let's also act on what we learn and use our resources to alleviate the distresses of those who are suffering in our community. I am here because of a community that believed in the basic principle of compassion and in the Prophet's words without even knowing it. What excuse do we have to NOT act?

# Programs at the Norristown Islamic Society

	Program	Time	Instructor
	<b>Quran Memorization:</b> Read and memorize the Quran within a group rather than individually. Members of groups help each other in correcting mistakes and providing tips thus make the task easier. Separate sessions are held for brothers and sisters.	Every Tuesday after Magrib prayer	Dr. Ali Omran
	<b>Understanding the Quran:</b> This program focuses mainly on the interpretation of the Quran. This session is followed by Biography of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and the Biography of one companion of the Messenger PBUH.	Every Sunday after Magrib prayer.	Dr. Abdul Safi
	<b>Khatirah:</b> A short reflection by a community member after the Fajr and Isha prayers.	Everyday after Fajr and Isha.	Dr. Ali Omran
	<b>Family Halaqa:</b> The community gets together for an Islamic lecture by a guest speaker followed by a potluck dinner. All the community members are encouraged to attend this event with their children.	Every Friday after Magrib prayer.	Various local and guest speakers
	<b>Arabic Class:</b> Learn Quranic Arabic and grammar.	Every Tuesday after Fajr prayer.	Dr. Abdul Safi
	<b>Sunday School:</b> Quran and Islamic studies for children/youth.	Every Sunday at 10:00 am.	Sunday school staff.

If you would like to contribute or have any announcements, please send your articles to [norristownmasjid@gmail.com](mailto:norristownmasjid@gmail.com)

## Announcements

-Starting the second Friday of March, the NIS will have **two Jummah prayers** Insha Allah. The first one will be as always from 1:15 pm to 1:45 PM and the second one will be from 2:15 to 2:45 PM. Please do your best to attend the second prayer.

-**Quran Competition** for Sunday School students will be held on April 19th 2015 at NIS.

- NIS has leased a guest house to accommodate volunteers and visiting scholars. **Please donate generously to support this effort.**

-NIS members are invited to the **NIS General Assembly** meeting that will be held on April 4th, 2015 at 7:30 PM Inshallah.



## Community News

-Congratulations winners of the **Khutbah and Dars competition:**

Level 2: Aman Irshad Awan

Level 3: Boubacar Diawara

Level 3: Hira Irshad Awan

-Congratulations Br Syed Afzal Abdul and Sr Sameena Yasmin on being blessed with a baby boy, Ibrahim Tahir Abdul.

-Please make dua for Br. Taleb's speedy recovery Inshallah.

## NIS Program to visit the sick at Einstein Medical Center

By **Ammatullah Ettienne- Bey**

Norristown Islamic Society, (NIS) has a volunteers program to visit sick muslim patients at Einstein Medical Center in East Norriton, PA. The primary focus of this program is to provide spiritual care to muslim patients at Einstein Medical Center. The idea for muslim volunteers program was suggested by Sister Amatuallah Ettienne Bey to Ms. Stephanie Sylvester, Coordinator for Volunteers Service at the Einstein Medical Center. Secretary of the NIS, Abu Hasan Bey, and Stephanie Sylvester worked out the structure, purpose and manner in which the volunteers would operate. The present volunteers are Brothers Justin Peyton (Team Leader) and Muhammad Irshad Awan, and Sisters Amatuallah Ettienne Bey (Elizabeth Ettienne) and Nabila Baqai and the coordinator is Br. Abu Bey.

The team focuses on providing services that are conducive to the patient's well-being and recovery. It includes physical, psychological and spiritual care. Firstly, physically, patients are allowed to express themselves on any ongoing issues that they are facing. If any help is needed they are referred to the NIS for further assistance. Note that this has nothing to do with the illness that they are experiencing and the reason for them being hospitalized. Second, psychologically, volunteers treat patients with much kindness in the same way they themselves would like to be treated by others, and listen attentively so the patient can see and know that their visit is of much value and care. Third, spiritually volunteers make duas and quote from Quran and Hadith and ask Allah to help the patient improve spiritually and physically. The patient is also allowed to participate in the prayer and dhikr.

The most distinguishing characteristic is the remembrance of Allah by prayers and recital of dhikr. Volunteers provide an environment for the patient to keep close to Allah and to remember his favors unto them even though they are hospitalized. With our volunteer services, I personally believe that those patients receive a better outcome with their health and their relationship with Allah, because Muslims remember and visit them in their time of need. That is one of the main reasons why our team is encouraged to provide this volunteer service. As volunteers, we really want to provide them with that support and do anything that would help them heal and have the best recovery. Volunteers speak very politely to patients and with care, respect their rights to privacy, and keep all aspects of the visit confidential, ensuring their love and dignity.

Before arriving at the hospital, volunteers get the information about the muslim patients from Brother Abu Bey, the Coordinator, as given to him by Ms Stephanie Sylvester. The team member(s) goes to the hospital and sign in as an accredited volunteer. That head nurse would be asked to contact the patient and convey a visitation request. The patient can choose to accept or reject the offer.

If permission is granted, the head nurse would first go into the room to announce the volunteer's presence. We wash our hands, identify ourselves as a volunteer from the Norristown Islamic Society and begin the encounter. Firstly, we check patients identification by verifying their bracelets. Then, we pull the curtain in the patient's room at the bed for privacy. After the visit concludes, we pull the curtain back to the open position. Thereafter, we wash our hands after the encounter with the patients before leaving the room.

As Muslims, we all have a duty to visit the sick. There are lots of benefits in this action as reported in many hadiths. All in all, the things that the NIS volunteers do at the Einstein Medical Center are for the pleasure of Allah. If all of us continue working closely together we would be successful in giving hope to a lot of Muslim patients, Inshallah.

I would encourage more sisters and brothers to join the NIS volunteers team.