

Stepping Up to the Task

Written by Administrator

Saturday, 03 January 2009 07:28

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For ISWA Community, It's All Hands on Deck for New Masjid

This past Spring in April of 2008, the Islamic Society of the Washington Area (ISWA) broke ground for its new masjid. A uniquely designed, three floor community center that is being built on the footprint of the house which served as ISWA's masjid since the early 1990's, the community is eager to re-establish juma' prayer and community services on the property. So eager, in fact, that many community members dedicate each weekend – Saturday and Sunday – to helping the construction along. With hammers, power tools, and hearts eager to build a house for Allah, ISWA members are stepping up to the task in front of them. This photo essay tries to capture only one day of community building – pun intended – on December 28, 2008.

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ISWA President Dr. Fazil Alie (right) and Brother Hemal Mustafa inspect work being done by ISWA volunteers. Brother Hemal works for Montgomery County and donates his time to help ISWA make sure the County's strict building standards are met. (All photos by the Muslim Link).

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Volunteers mostly do framing work and drywall. Experts are called in for electrical and plumbing work. The foundation, roof, and building skeleton were installed by subcontractors. Even in that case, ISWA volunteers provided labor support. Ahmed Ali, 49, a policy specialist with Montgomery County (back to camera) said "we are donating time to solicit the ajr from Allah". He described how the construction company unloaded huge piles of cement blocks and plywood on the property. "We carried it all in" he said. So, the foundation of the community is being built – literally – on brotherhood.

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Volunteers come from many backgrounds, reflecting the diversity of ISWA. Not only are many nations represented, but many fields of expertise. Some volunteers work at Verizon, the World Bank, and others have their own businesses. Many regular volunteers purchase their own tools. One volunteer purchased a compressed air hammer for about \$400. The air at the site is filled with sounds of grating wood, sliding sheet metal, banging planks, and the occasional but startling bang of compressed air tools. And of course, there is laughter. The construction site is a treasure trove of ajr.

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Both young and old community members participate regularly in the construction. Pictured above is a regular volunteer who is 89 years old, masha'Allah! His 5 sons are also volunteers. The elderly brother did not want to be named or recognized.

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Standing on what will be the top floor of the masjid with the steel frame of the dome in the background are (from right) ISWA Board member Firoze Deen, ISWA President Dr. Fazil Alie, Project Manager Hafeez Hassan, and Brother Sayeed.

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Even the architectural design and drawings were done by ISWA volunteers a few years ago. Montgomery County's refusal to let ISWA build anywhere else on its over 5 acre property except on the foot print of the existing house drove the vertical design, which uses virtually the same land area as the house but is much larger. The house was 2,800 square feet and the new masjid will be 14,000 square feet, insha'Allah.

Letter from ISWA's President

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I pray for Allah's mercy and blessings and hope this letter finds you and your family in the best of health. I would like to take this opportunity to update you about the progress of our construction and our short term plans. Alhamdulillah, construction started in August 2008 after several years of planning. Demolition, grading, foundation work, steel framing and building enclosure are now mostly completed. The HVAC, electrical, elevator, sprinkler, fire alarm, roofing, and dome and minaret construction are ongoing and contracted. The construction committee is aware of the magnitude of this project. In order to manage costs, the carpentry, drywall, enclosure, and most of the labor will be done by volunteers from the community.

We have done very well so far and I am excited to see our beautiful new center taking shape. This should serve as a wonderful reminder of what we can do as a community. The cost of the center is \$1.25 million, which will provide the community a new place to better serve our needs. There will be new classrooms, bigger prayer halls, a library, a gift shop, a media center, facilities for counseling, as well as the usual family events and much more. Our hope is to finish this project by this upcoming Ramadan in

August 2009, Insha'Allah. The plan is to finish the first floor, landscaping, and the parking lot for occupancy. We will continue to work on the second floor depending on our financial situation.

At this time, we have to raise \$300,000 to finish this project. Since we have eight months until our goal, I am optimistic we can build this beautiful facility as planned. This two phase approach will be less of a burden on our community. We will continue to work and do what we can to fulfill this beautiful goal, insha'Allah. On February 28th, 2009, we will be having our fund raising dinner at M.C.C. Please mark this date on your calendar as we are hoping to make this

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a special I.S.W.A. event. Once again, I thank you for your continued patience and prayers. I have faith that our community can unite together to make this dream for the future of our children a reality. May Allah bless you for your continued support.

Jazak Allah Kharum,
Your brother,
Fazil Alie
President – I.S.W.A

Please send your contributions to: 2701 Briggs Chaney Rd. Silver Spring, Md. 20905. Or donate online at www.iswamd.org