

# ICNF News

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## From the Chairman

Dear Brothers and Sisters:  
*Us-Salaam Alaikum. It is with great pleasure I share with you this premier issue of the Islamic Center of North Fulton's Newsletter. Masha'Allah, I want to congratulate Br. Zia Khan for taking the lead in putting this very first issue together. You will find this newsletter informative as well as useful. Inshallah, as our community continues to grow at a rapid pace we will use this as a tool to share with you information that is essential about the various developments, issues and activities that are taking place at our masjid and school, in our community, and around the world. I hope this newsletter will galvanize your energies and you will come to the Islamic Center with your families to enhance your spiritual strength, meet with other muslims, develop lasting friendships and reap the full benefits of the Islamic Center. By seeing all that is going on at the Islamic Center, I hope, you too will be inspired to help out by volunteering your time and become part of the activities. And last, but not least your generous donations are much needed. There is no doubt that it is with Allah's (SWT) grace, mercy, and help that we have come this far. But it is truly with your kindness and effort that the center will continue to develop. Please feel free to contact any Board Members or me, if you want to provide suggestions or comment on the Islamic Center activities. See you at the Masjid Jazak'allahkhair*

## Feature Story

# Current Construction to be Completed by Ramadan



LEFT: Masjid property in 2001 prior to any development.



ABOVE: The recently constructed parking facility for 105 cars was made possible with generous donations by members of our community.

Insha'Allah the current construction that you see on our property will be completed in time for Ramadan activities.

## RAMADAN ANNOUNCEMENTS:

The holy month of Ramadan is just around the corner. As in past years, the Islamic Center of North Fulton is planning many activities for this special time of the year. Please plan to participate, and those who can please volunteer your services – as much help is required with our ever growing community. Here are some planned activities:

- Tarahwee prayers will be held in the masjid in Ramadan. At least two Huffaz will be present every night to lead the prayers.
- Iftaar and dinner will be served every fasting day of Ramadan. Iftaar and dinner for women will be in the School building, and Iftaar and dinner for men will be in the Masjid building.
- Volunteers are needed for arrangements, serving and cleanup and during these nights. Please arrive early before Iftaar and stay after dinner to help out.
- If you would like to contribute by providing food for Iftaar and Dinner, please contact Br. Mohammed Iqbal at 770-752-0551 immediately. Bookings have started already.

**DONATIONS NEEDED:** Our Masjid, the School and the Islamic Center cannot continue to develop and progress without your generous donations. For your convenience, monthly automatic withdrawals or payment using PayPal (no membership required) can be made for donations as little as \$5. Please download the automatic withdrawal form at: [www.alpharettamasjid.com](http://www.alpharettamasjid.com) and start making your donations today!

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Islamic Student Poetry

# Islamic School Enrollment Up to 150 and Climbing!

New Level 5 added – to teach Tajweed, Tafsir, etc.



Asalamu' Alaykum Dear Parents and Respected Elders,

I hope this message finds you in great health and iman. I would like to take this opportunity as your sister in Islam and as your child's teacher, to introduce myself and outline my goals for the upcoming school year. My name is Sumaira Akber. I have been teaching at the Islamic Center of North Fulton for a little over 2 years now. I am very passionate about having the opportunity to educate and inspire your child to learn about the deen. I am a recent college graduate and currently work for a school that caters to children with language/learning disabilities. I believe that children need personalized instruction, along with an efficient learning environment to enhance their academic experience. I would like to request that you assist your child in their learning experience by creating an environment that enhances their knowledge, more specifically, their Islamic knowledge.

It is vital, especially in this day and age, to seek sacred knowledge, which facilitates worship. As a community we should succeed in knowledge in pursuit of attaining paradise. Knowledge precedes faith. How can one have faith without knowing what they have faith in? It is crucial that we all seek knowledge with the intention to build taqwa, practice and implement what has been learned, and share it with others.

This year, The Islamic Center of North Fulton's Islamic School program has shifted its structure and has created a new Level 5 class. This higher level learning class is designed to focus on topics such as tajweed, tafsir, self-reflection/purification, Islamic history, women's issues, life after death and many more topics. Students will also be asked to take tests, do a minimal amount of work throughout the week, and participate in special tasks such as community service projects intended for the school year.

Insha'Allah, please do not hesitate to contact me throughout the semester if you have any questions. I am planning to conduct parent-teacher conferences to keep the lines of communication open and progress your child's needs. I am very much open to working together. If there is anything you feel that should be an improvement or would like to offer some helpful suggestions, I would greatly appreciate it.

I pray that I have conveyed the present need for making Islam a priority to young Muslims. Insh'Allah, let us all make the intention now to try to do everything that we can to implement the deen in our daily lives and help our kids understand and practice Islam. Jazakh'Allah Khair.

**Sumaira Akber**, Level 5 Girls Teacher, Curriculum Committee Member  
sumairaakber@yahoo.com

## Children Experience the Meaning of Being a Muslim

Assalam Alykum.

My name is Ayesha Wilson. I am the lead teacher for our Sunday school Level K program. This will be my second year teaching at this school. I taught at Woodland Hills Montessori in Colorado for 2 years and also worked at the YMCA in childcare for 3 years. My mother, who I have also volunteered with for almost 4 years, has been teaching Kindergarten for 25 years and is still teaching. With what I have learned about teaching Early Childhood from my experiences, I decided it was time to use my knowledge and techniques for our Muslim youth. My goal is to help our next generation to have a strong Muslim identity, Insh'Allah.

We have planned some wonderful and fun activities for the children to truly experience what it means to be a Muslim. Our goal is to put pride and love for our beautiful faith right from the beginning in our little ones. Along with proper etiquette of a Muslim and love of Allah, we will teach the basics of the faith as well. Our children will learn the Arabic letter sounds with proper Tajweed, inshallah. Basic everyday Dua's are also taught including the teachings of the major prophets. I also touch on the Five Pillars of Islam and how to perform the various positions of Salaat, Insh'Allah.

We hope that our children will love coming to Sunday school and love us as well. We want this learning environment to be a loving one Insh'Allah.

– Sr. Ayesha Wilson, Level K Teacher,  
Curriculum Committee Member

## Tajweed: What

**Bismillahirrahmannirraheem.**

Young children of today are taught the English language using the phonics method. Emphasis is laid on pronouncing the English alphabet in the right phonetic way. We spend a lot of time and energy ensuring that our children learn the English language with extreme accuracy.

On the other hand, how much time do we spend in learning and teaching Allah's words?

The Holy Quran contains the actual words of Allah (Subhanawata'la) revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (pbuh) through the Angel Jibreel. This is a well known fact indeed. But only a select populace are aware of the fact that the Holy Quran was revealed to the Prophet with Tajweed.

# No Time to Volunteer?

## Do I really have the time to volunteer on the weekend at the Islamic school?

It's a good question and especially relevant to our present day life style. It seems there's never enough time to accomplish the umpteen tasks we are forced to add to our "to do" list. How many times have you heard people saying "I am so busy that I don't have time to even sit down for a minute". There's never enough time in a 24-hour day to achieve the goals that we set for ourselves. It seems time is forever fleeting and evasive.

Or is it? Is it a fad to portray how busy we are or are we truly pressed for time? I think we are, but we should take a moment to ponder on where we are spending our time. If we look around us we would notice that the shopping malls, movie theatres and restaurants are always crowded. I am sure we've all seen people waiting for 2 hours to get a table at the Cheesecake Factory or any other popular restaurant. When a new retail store opens in town, we eagerly make time to be there to check out the latest products in the market even if we don't have a need for them. The number of channels keep on increasing on cable TV. There must be enough viewers and a demand for the newly added channels otherwise they wouldn't get created. A sale at Dillard's, Nordstrom or Macy's draw all of us looking for a bargain. Many a times we tend to get into fruitless discussions or gossiping on the phone. We must have extra time on our hands to be able to do these things. So, what it comes down to is that it's a matter of choice. We choose to fill our 12 hour day with some tasks as opposed to the other. Unfortunately, most of the time, volunteering at the Masjid or the Islamic school becomes a lower priority and seldom makes it to the "list".

Is it entirely a matter of choice? It is, to some degree. But the motivating factor is our intention. What is our purpose in life? Our intent is to worship Allah (swt) and do deeds that please Him. Having this "big picture" so to speak, puts everything else in perspective and ultimately, our intention influences the choices we make. If we re-organized our "to do" list motivated by the intention to please Him, Insha'Allah, we may be pleasantly surprised to see that we actually do have the time!

We pray that, volunteering our time and effort in the path of propagating deen and sharing our knowledge of the Quran and the sunnah of our beloved Prophet Mohammed (pbuh) with our Muslim children, may reward us in this life and the Hereafter.

- Sr. Tanvir Sarmast, School Administrator

## Imam Abdul Malik Ali Speaks to Youth at Rally



Imam Abdul Malik Ali of Berkeley, CA, visited ICNF during its fundraising dinner earlier this year and had a session with Atlanta Muslim Youth at the Hilton Hotel - Norcross. About 50 youth from major metro Atlanta masajids participated. The youth ended up forming a formal organization called YMGA (Young Muslims of GA). Imam Ali is expected to visit the group again this Ramadan.

## Is the Problem Too Much Islam?

By Yusuf Islam

In the West, where Islam is denigrated and prejudice abounds, where headlines designed to shock and mesmerize dominate people's minds, the real teachings of the faith are left for people to fall upon by chance.

Today Muslims are being challenged to face up to the fact that crimes are committed in the name of their religion. Like many, I am finding it hard to accept. One of the crucial factors about the London bombings, I think, goes right back to school: where did those who carried out the attacks get their teachings from? What curriculum were they following - or not following - when they decided it was OK to blow up themselves and people they didn't even know? What background have the bombers come from and who taught them? As a new Muslim - I wasn't born a Muslim and didn't have the customary upbringing - receiving an English translation of the Qur'an as a gift in 1976 was a wonderful chance to learn from scratch what the teachings of this misunderstood religion really proclaimed. You may or may not know that the word Islam is rooted in the word 'peace'. Yes, some have claimed that there are verses in the Qur'an which endorse violence and fanaticism. But all that proves is that, when you quote out of

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# is it and why bother?

It has been conveyed to us in all its entirety, without any changes.

The word Tajweed literally means excellence and precision. Reciting every letter of the Holy Quran from the right point of articulation with the right attributes and rules would be the definition of the science of Tajweed.

Reciting the Holy Quran with the proper Tajweed is obligatory (Fard) on every muslim. Thus falling under the category of Fardu Ayn.

Reciting the Holy Quran with the proper Tajweed and in a pleasing tone has been recommended by our beloved Prophet (sallallahu alayhe wa sallam).

Reciting the Quran in merely a pleasing tone without adhering to the rules of Tajweed is forbidden.

Another important reason to adhere to proper Tajweed while reciting the Holy Quran is to refrain from changing the meaning of the divine words. When one recites the Holy Quran without using proper Tajweed one can commit the sin of mispronouncing the words thereby changing the entire meaning.

After inferring the importance of Tajweed, it is crucial to put it into practice. When a child embarks upon his/her journey to learn the Holy Quran, it is essential that they use proper Tajweed. We as parents, must strive Insha'Allah to inculcate proper Tajweed with Quranic Recitation. Ameen.

- Sr. Sophy Shabana, Level 4 & 5 Teacher

# Spiritual Journey of an Ideal Muslim

By:

SHAREENA REHMAN, AMBREEN SARMAST,  
& MALIHA FAROQUI

*What embodies the ideal Muslim?*

*There is always remembrance of Allah in him  
Devotedly does he thank and pray  
That Allah may bless him everyday*

*Acts of kindness are never ignored*

*For helping someone in need, he is never bored  
Never too boastful or too proud  
His humble heart shines through any crowd*

*Of his sacred knowledge, he loves to share*

*So that his peers he may spare  
With sincere belief, hardships endure  
There can be no doubt that his soul is so pure*

*However he did not become like this overnight*

*It took patience and strength and all of his might  
To stay away from the wrong path and only do good  
To do only the things an ideal Muslim should*

*One time, though, he fell into Shaytan's trap*

*Whenever it was time for salat he "needed" a nap  
Shaytan did everything, everything to mislead  
This Muslim man from acquiring any good deed*

*The struggles continued for him as he went astray*

*He "forgot" to read the Quran and never did he pray  
He became infatuated with power and  
became very greedy  
He was always angry and gave no money to the needy*

*There came a time when his wife fell ill*

*Both life and death, in Allah's will  
He braced iman, praying night and day  
A promise to Allah that he'll not go astray*

*The wife recuperated bringing joy to her spouse*

*Qurans and nashids now fill the house  
For every night, he gives thanks to Allah  
Following both actions and words of Rasulullah  
(SAW)*

*A jihad-al-nafs has just been resolved*

*Through dhikr and repentance,  
something new has evolved  
A healthy heart now thrives in his chest  
A journey of faith. Iman has progressed.*

context to further your own particular brand of extremism, you can choose any book on the shelf. Islam is not alone. The message I picked up from the Qur'an was quite different. I found the light of knowledge and godliness shining from the verses and stories, linking mankind together as one family, regardless of colour, status or nationality. It told me of the wondrous universal teachings of peace and unity advocated by the greatest of educators, people such as Abraham, Moses, Jesus and others. Yet the followers of these messengers, in defiance of their noble teachings, have indulged in countless wars. You can't blame the teachers. You have to blame the distortions and ignorance of their followers. Again, Islam is not unique in this. At the end of every Friday sermon around the world, in every mosque, the imam usually recites the following words from the Qur'an: "Verily, God commands justice and kindness and giving to relatives and He forbids indecency, objectionable actions and extremism. God instructs you that you may be reminded." Yet no matter what the teachings convey, some listeners will be selective, and may choose not to be reminded. It's uncomfortable but easy to imagine youths today – many of whom are fugitives from the mosques in the first place – growing up against the backdrop of the injustices lambasting the Muslim world, being

impressed by the fiery rhetoric of the sharp-tongued dogmatists. Youngsters are naturally attracted to short-cut solutions. This is where many of the problems start. Education is crucial. Here in Britain, the education system has been slow, at best, in allowing Islamic teachings to be taught in their full breadth. There is a lack of commitment to the rigours of traditional learning. In the West, where Islam is denigrated and prejudice abounds, where headlines designed to shock and mesmerize dominate people's minds, the real teachings of the faith are left for people to fall upon by chance. In terms of spiritual and moral nourishment, it has been left to largely irregular and inadequate models of religious education to deliver the

goods. An hour-long mosque sermon, once a week – which most Muslims attend – or a lecture by a visiting scholar who barely speaks English and has little understanding of British and European life, are never likely to deliver the balanced curriculum necessary to build the conscientious believer, one who not only knows his duty to God but also to the society and world he lives in. The July 7 bombers attended state schools in Britain, not faith-based schools. Some of them, we are told, briefly visited madrasa schools in Pakistan. This may or may not be relevant, but it suggests that they felt they had had insufficient Islamic education in Britain. By going abroad, they laid themselves open to influences outside normal scholastic parameters. If we fail to provide authentic and traditional spiritual values within everyday schooling, we allow rogue ideologists to distort the essence of religious concepts. We also exclude invaluable wisdom and repress the strong spirit of devotion that many believers naturally feel. The teachings of Islam have nothing to do with the recent barbarities. The problem, to oversimplify, is not too much Islam but too little. In the same way, Christianity didn't produce Hitler; but the absence of true Christian teachings and a lack of strong spiritual role models must have contributed. Faith-based education produces major benefits. At, Islamia Primary, the first Muslim school to be granted aided status by the British government, by conforming to and delivering the national curriculum, we are able to balance society's needs with the aspirations of Muslim parents. The results are not perfect, but they are encouraging. Children and particularly those disposed to disaffection, need spiritual support and firm moral borders when confronted by the pressures of modern life. We aim to provide these in a context of learning. Historically, Islamic civilization nurtured the development of science and spurred the arrival of the European Renaissance. "Seek knowledge, even if it is in China", is a much quoted Islamic proverb attributed to Prophet Muhammad. An uneducated Muslim is a dangerous entity to himself as well as to others. Ignorance contradicts the very essence of true Islam, which is based on the love and search for knowledge. So without knowledge, please don't blame Islam.



Yusuf Islam is chairman of the International Board for Educational Research and Resources. In 2004 he was honoured with the 'Man for Peace' award by a committee of Nobel peace laureates.