

Serving the Community

Aaminah Hernández*

Muslims are called upon to care for the needy, orphans, widows, and the wayfarer. In our fast-paced lives we can become overwhelmed and neglect this duty, or think it sufficient to pay our zakat and be done with it. There are many ways that we can serve our community and sometimes we overlook the simple opportunities.

Care for our community is not limited to Muslims only, nor does it require large acts to make an impact. When we open ourselves to helping the non-Muslim needy, we are engaging in daw'ah, even without lecturing on Islam, just by our kind actions. Certainly there are plenty of needy Muslims near to us and far that we can help. Rather than being overwhelmed by the need, we can engage in simple and small acts that help others and accept that it is beneficial. When many of us are committing seemingly small acts, those acts add up to many and accumulate into something large.

Some examples of easy ways to help others are:

- Set up a clothing drive and distribute the clothes in your local homeless area, to a shelter, or through the masjid to Muslims in need.
- Get together with several friends, neighbors and/or family members and pay the cost to support an orphan for a year. The average annual orphan sponsorship is around 300 USD. Split between 10 people, this is only \$30 each. Split between 20, it costs each person only \$15. Alternatively, those who can pay a bigger portion could do so to offset those who can only pay a smaller portion. All partners in the sponsorship are receiving the reward for sponsoring the child, and the child's life is touched dramatically.
- Do you know of a neighborhood family whose father has just lost his job, or where the mother has just been in for surgery?

Perhaps you know of a single Muslimah struggling to raise her children alone. Put together a bag of staple food items and leave them anonymously at the door of a family you know is in need.

• Do you have extra Islamic books that you no longer reference? Perhaps your children have outgrown books that you had bought for them. Donate them to your local school, childcare center, neighborhood library, masjid library, or to refugee or convert families.

• Help an immigrant learn to read English. Or help a non-Muslim who has never learned to read to do so.

• Offer to run errands for your neighbors. If you are on your way to the pharmacy, grocery or corner store, or farmer's market, ask your neighbor if they'd like to go along or if you can pick something up for them. If you are on your way to pay a common bill, such as electricity, offer to take the

payment for a neighbor who is elderly or finds it difficult to get around with their children or due to health issues.

There are many simple, seemingly tiny, actions we can take to help others around us. As Muslims, we are setting an example not only of good character, but also of what Islam is really all about, when we look out for the needs of others. This is what we are called to do.

**Aaminah Hernández is an American Muslim convert. She is a freelance writer out of Michigan and is active in promotion of the Islamic arts. Her blog is at: <http://aaminahhernandez.wordpress.com> She writes as well with a multi faith at <http://sharedspiritualreckoning.wordpress.com>. She is also writing a weekly blog post at *Illume Magazine*, one of the very best American Islamic magazines right now. You can see the magazine site at www.illumemagazine.org and her blog on their site at http://www.illumemagazine.org/magazine/publish/aaminah_hernandez/index.php*

Islamic Education of our Children: Whose Responsibility?

Abdullah Khan*

Everyone knows that our society is full of moral ills. This is an undisputed fact that needs no proof. Modern society is infected with violence, pornography, greed, racism, homosexuality, drugs and alcohol. The list goes on and on.

These social and moral ills are very infectious and our children are exposed to them in this society. In the early stages of their childhood they accept as the truth without question whatever they are told by Mum or Dad. But then at a later stage, the situation is different. They can hear and see what goes around them in the street, at the school, on the TV, the radio, the cinema, the newspapers and everywhere else. They become exposed to all the vices and ills of the society. They become exposed to peer pressure from their friends in the street or at school. At this stage, the maximum influence on the child would then be his peer group, his mates and friends, in particular, his school environment, and not his parents. They will influence his thinking, and provide the food for his thought. Unless the child had an opportunity to inculcate Islamic manners and teachings into his early development, he may catch some of these horrible diseases. The love and care we give our children should be for their well-being in this life as well as the hereafter. This is why the moral aspect is very important and should not be neglected. If we really care, then we should make sure that in the narrow window of time that we have, which is early and middle childhood, we do our best to protect our children from such moral diseases. This is when the parents need to spend more quality time with their children trying to plant the seeds of goodness in them. Providing a good example is

extremely important. Children learn more by imitating their parents and teachers, than merely by being told what is right. So instead of pressuring them and forcing them to pray, you must set an example and they will follow. If they see you helping the poor and the needy, they will be interested to do the same later. If you train them to fast gradually and reward them for their effort, they will grow up, ready for Ramadan. It is no good lecturing our children about honesty and telling the truth, if we fail to do the same, ourselves. Many parents lie to their children by using the phrase "Insha'Allah" as a cover, so "Insha'Allah" becomes in their minds synonymous with insincerity, lies and dishonesty. No doubt, parents play a vital role in the education and Islamic training of their children but a Muslim child absorbs the Islamic values from his teachers, peers, friends and the environment besides parents. Otherwise once the Muslim child develops undesirable habits and unethical values, it becomes extremely difficult to make the child into a good Muslim. Therefore it is very crucial that our children attend an Islamic school to avail the opportunity of development in an Islamic environment in the first place. *Enrol your child in a well reputed Islamic school (excellent in Government Curriculum as well as Islamic Education) before it is too late.*

** Abdullah Khan is the Principal of Al-Hidayah Islamic School. He is an experienced, well motivated and a dedicated teacher as well as an educational leader. He holds a degree in Education from Pakistan, a Diploma in Office Management and Administration from UK and a Master's Degree in Education from Murdoch University. He delivered numerous seminars on various Islamic themes as well as on various educational issues for teachers' professional development during his teaching career."*

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Al-Hidayah Islamic School - Positions Vacant

1) Receptionist / Assistant to the School Secretary

Fulltime position commencing on the 19th of January 2009.

Applicant Requirements: Australian residency, Responsible, competent in MS Word and MS Excel, Punctual, An ability to deal confidently and courteously with people.

Applications close Wednesday the 14th of January 2009

2) Two vacancies for Teacher of Religion (Female)

Fulltime positions commencing on the 2nd of February 2009.

Applicant Requirements: currently residing in Perth, Western Australia and registered with the West Australian College of Teaching (WACOT), or who would be eligible to attain Limited Authority to Teach, who believe they are capable of teaching Primary level Islamic Studies competently using English as the medium of instruction.

Applications close Friday the 16th of January 2009

3) Bus Supervisor / Bus Driver

Fulltime position commencing on the 19th of January 2009.

Applicant Requirements: Australian residents, currently residing in Perth WA, with an LR Class Driving License who can demonstrate a capability to supervise a small fleet of 8 buses and vans, including 2 spares, and their drivers. Duties will include, but will not be limited to, ensuring that the buses are maintained in a safe and mechanically sound condition and the bus routes are economically efficient.

Applications close Friday the 16th of January 2009

Prospective candidates for these positions should be aware that it is the basis of the School's operation that: the Islamic nature of the School takes precedence over all other considerations.

Please forward a written application addressed to: The Principal, PO Box 761, Victoria Park WA 6979 or by email to ahschool@iinet.net.au.

Should more information be required, the Principal can be contacted on 93518593. School website: www.IslamicSchool.com.au