



Email address:
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Do you have any
news or suggestions
for us? Please
contact us at
570-524-2273 or email
to care@dejazzd.com

Recent Events

Children's Tour of Religions Visits Williamsport Islamic Center

On Saturday, April 14th, the Children's Tour of Religions made a stop at the Williamsport Islamic Center. The Islamic Center recently moved to a new building on Memorial Avenue in Williamsport. We were cordially greeted by the assistant amir, Ahmed Abdul-Hakim, and another assistant. Ahmed (as he likes to be called) shared many interesting things about Islam, including discussion of the five pillars of Islam (declaration of faith, prayer five times per day, pilgrimage to Mecca, Ramadan- a month long fast once per year, and charity). He discussed the Muslim concept of God, Muslim relationship with war (will fight if absolutely necessary but only if threatened or if religious practice and belief is threatened). Ahmed also answered questions about Islam:

Q: Why do women wear the hijab (head scarf)?

A: To be modest, and so that men are not distracted during prayer

Q: When do girls start wearing the hijab?

A: When they achieve puberty

Q: When did Islam come to the United States?

A: Muslims were here as early as the 15th and 16th centuries. In the 1920's and 30's, the Nation of Islam was formed and led by Elijah Muhammad. Louis Farrakhan was famous in that circle. However, Ahmed does not consider the Nation of Islam to be practicing true Islam. In his opinion, "true Islam" began in the U.S. in the 1950's.

Q: Why do people wash before prayer?

A: In order to purify themselves before Allah

After answering questions, he took us on a tour of the Center. He explained that it is a work in progress, as they recently purchased the building (the old Webster School). It is an old building and requires much renovation. He showed us the rooms where they will have daycare (non-denominational), fitness room, Islamic schools for adults and children, and several areas for prayer. He also showed us the kitchen where there will be a soup kitchen that anyone in the community can come to in the winter months. There will also be a year-round pantry for the community.

Last, we were brought to the main area where there is prayer. After removing our shoes, he and his assistant prayed the afternoon prayer. Once that was done, they went over two parts of the prayer again, once in Arabic and once in English. They also brought out the Koran for the



children to see. On the left side of each page was English writing, while the right side of the page was in Arabic.

We ended with thanks on both sides. They were grateful that people were interested in knowing them, rather than treating them as a violent stereotype. They welcomed us to come back any time, and to have others visit if desired. We expressed our gratitude to them for opening their spiritual home to us, stating how important it is for young people to have a positive experience of Muslims as caring human beings who are diligently pursuing their spiritual ideals just as much as someone of any other religion.

If you are interested in visiting The Williamsport Islamic Center to observe prayers and/or simply learn more about Islam, contact CARE at 524-2273 or care@dejazzd.com. We will contact the Williamsport Islamic Center on your behalf to arrange a visit.

Lois Passi

Upcoming Events and Announcements

The African Children's Choir at Susquehanna University

Wednesday, May 2nd

7:00 p.m.

Weber Chapel Auditorium



The African Children's Choir™ features delightful African children ages 7 through 11. Many have lost one or both parents through the devastation of war, famine and disease. Their voices sing out on behalf of Africa's 12 million AIDS orphans. They represent the future of the entire continent, demonstrating the potential to become strong leaders for a better future in their homeland.

(The choir has recently appeared on The Tonight Show with Jay Leno and featured on the soundtrack of the highly acclaimed film Blood Diamond)

For more information, contact the Office of Multicultural Affairs at 570-372-4302 – Brian Johnson.

A free will offering will be received to support the choir's outreach.

CARE Seeks Your Feedback About Proposed Policy

The purpose of the policy is to prevent situations in which people take up a position with the steering committee without fulfilling any of the responsibilities for a very long time.

We welcome your thoughts about this policy. You may give us your feedback by e-mail (care@dejazzd.com), phone (524-2273) or by mail

Please come hear
the African
Children's Choir
on May 2 at 7pm!



The service is open to all. Look for more details in next month's newsletter. In the meantime, mark the date on your calendar. We hope you will join us in celebrating our community's GLBTs

(P.O. Box 250, Lewisburg, PA 17837). After receiving feedback, the steering committee will take a vote on this policy in its June meeting.

CARE Seeks Nominations For Offices

It's time for CARE to have its annual elections. The first step is to prepare a slate of nominees.

If you would like to nominate yourself or anyone else for any of the following offices, please contact us by June 1, 2007 (see contact information in previous article): Co-Chair (2 positions), secretary and treasurer.

PLEASE NOTE: If you plan to nominate someone other than yourself, we ask that you make sure the person you are nominating is willing to serve if elected.

A slate of nominees will be presented in the June newsletter, along with information about how to vote.

Bengali New Year Celebration in Bloomsburg on May 6th

On Sunday, May 6, the seventh annual Bengali New Year Celebration will be held in the Town Park of Bloomsburg PA. As advertised, the festival will include song, dance, music, food. Music will be performed by local and professional guest artists. The event is open to the public without charge. Hours: from 1:00 to 6:00 p.m.

This annual event is sponsored by the Bengal Association of the Bloomsburg Area, a "non-political, secular organization whose mission is to promote cultural and artistic expressions of the Bengali community (especially persons of Bangladesh, West Bengal and Assam) and to create a cultural harmony and awareness within Columbia and surrounding counties." Current President of the Association is K. Mushtaq Elahi. Further information about the Association and the New Year Celebration available at the website: <www.babaweb.org>.

Interfaith Service to Celebrate Gay Pride Month

The clergy roundtable of CARE will celebrate Gay Pride Month (June) with an interfaith service on Sunday, June 3rd, 7:00 PM at St. John's United Church of Christ near Lewisburg (on Route 192). Approximately 10 local clergy will lead the service.

We hear a great deal from local clergy who condemn gays in our community. We feel that it is important to also hear from clergy who do not feel that gays are inherently sinful. We feel it is important for people to know that there are spiritual homes in which GLBTs (gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgendered people) are welcome and can feel safe. Additionally, we wish to highlight spiritual teachings that encourage us to forego discrimination.

The service is open to all. Look for more details in next month's newsletter. In the meantime, mark the date on your calendar. We hope you will join us in celebrating our community's GLBTs



Thank you for
your generous
support!

Community Scholarships at Greenwood Friends School

We recently received an email from Dena Salerno of Greenwood Friends School to be shared with CARE members and friends.

We at Greenwood are in the process of widely advertising Community Scholarships for the greater Milton/Lewisburg areas, and we're extending down to Sunbury as well. Applicants submit answers to a few questions about the importance of community to them and their desire to be a part of Greenwood's community. We will select at least 10 new families to receive 1/2 tuition off - a sizeable chunk. An Open House will be held on May 1 from 9-11am and 6:30-7:30pm. This will include details of the program and a tour of the school.

In the News - from the desk of Doug Sturm

On Interracial Marriage

In "World Report" (April 18), we learned that four decades ago (1967), the Supreme Court declared a Virginia statute prohibiting whites from marriage with nonwhites was unconstitutional. Since that landmark case, the number of interracial marriages in the US has increased well over 600%.

Remarking about this change, a Stanford sociologist, Michael Rosenfeld is quoted as saying, "The racial divide in the US is a fundamental divide....But when you have the 'other' in your own family, it's hard to think of them as 'other' anymore. We see a blurring of the old lines, and that has to be a good thing, because the lines were artificial in the first place."

In his estimation, in 2005 over 7% of all married couples in the US were interracial. Harvard law professor, Randall Kennedy, who recently published a book, "Interracial Intimacies: Sex, Marriage, Identity, and Adoption," affirmed, "Malignant racial biases can and do reside in interracial liaisons. But against the tragic backdrop of American history, the flowering of multiracial intimacy is a profoundly moving and encouraging development."

On the "State of Black America 2007"

The National Urban League has just released its annual report on the "State of Black America." An executive summary is available on the internet: <www.nul.org/thestateofblackamerica.html>.

Using an "equality index" comparing conditions among African Americans and White Americans, the NUL concludes that as of 2007, the state of the former stands at 73.3% of the latter, up only slightly from 2006.

The index measures five relative conditions among five categories: economics, education, health, social justice and civic engagement. Blacks measure worst in economics, at only 57% of Whites.

Essays in the whole report this year focus especially on Black males, who are more than two times as likely to be unemployed as White



males, and whose income is only about 75% of their counterparts.

CARE has copies of the full report on order, scheduled to arrive near the beginning of June. To contact the National Urban League: 120 Wall Street; NYC 10005; (212) 558 5300.

On federal budget proposals and Native Americans

In its most recent issue of its “Indian Report” (Spring 2007) the Friends Committee on National Legislation poses questions about the adequacy of President Bush’s current budget proposals for meeting the desperate needs of indigenous peoples.

Following an itemization of points, the report concludes: “Before Congress accepts the president’s proposal for less money for sanitation projects, it should consider facts about remote areas. On Native American lands, 11.7% of residents lack complete plumbing facilities. Instead of flushing toilets, residents in some [Alaska] villages have to use a device called a ‘honeybucket’, a large bucket with a toilet seat on top. Dispensing with vital programs or cutting back their scope will make daily life even harder for many First Americans.”

Senator Byron Dorgan quotes from a tribal leader: “My two daughters are living in rehabilitated trailers....They heat those trailers with wooden stoves. The trailers have no plumbing. There is no running water and no indoor toilets.”

On same-sex marriages in New Hampshire

Carol White, long time activist in CARE, currently in New England, sent a remarkable news story about a dramatic speech of New Hampshire state representative Carol Estes at the end of March.

The issue at hand: a proposed amendment to the NH constitution to ban same sex marriages. Estes who is Black (with a White husband) compared the current proposal to laws now defunct prohibiting interracial marriages: “in comparing the discrimination against same-sex couples to the discrimination she faced as a black woman under segregation, she sent the message to her fellow lawmakers that same-sex marriage is a civil rights issue.”

Estes, 68 years old, drew on her own experiences in the Jim Crow South to sketch the kinds of suffering and pains that legalized discrimination inflicts. She herself and her husband were forced to postpone their marriage for six years--which even then was only made possible given the Supreme Court’s action in 1967, declaring bans on interracial marriage unconstitutional.

Her speech was so powerful, the entire house arose, bursting out in applause. A vote of 233 to 124 defeated the proposal. Afterwards, she noted, simply, that she spoke with no concern for political gain, only out of her conscience.