

Muslim Community Center for Human Services: A REAL ANSWER TO SERIOUS ISSUES FACING OUR COMMUNITY

Interviewed by Kacem Ayachi

It became a custom for Community Voice to publish in every issue a small article about an activity, a meeting or a conference organized by the Muslim Community Center for Human Services. This organization's interest to deal with various social issues that have been long ignored by the Muslim community, prompted us to contact Dr. Basheer Ahmed, Chairman of the organization, and ask him few questions to find out about the status of their work and whether they see any achievements since they started dealing with such issues.

Q1: Please introduce yourself as well as your organization?

A: I am Dr. Basheer Ahmed, Chairman of the Muslim Community Center for Human Services. This organization was established in April 1995 to meet the social, psychological and medical needs of the Muslim community in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.

Q2: What prompted you and the brothers in charge to establish the Muslim Community Center for Human Services?

A: A significant number of people in our community are having personal problems ranging from emotional disturbances, substance abuse, unemployment, marital discord, teenage suicide, to a variety of physical illnesses. Few of us acknowledge their existence, and when we do, it's too late. The reasons for this are many and probably include the stigma attached to these problems, denial, and lack of awareness and unavailability of information, help and support. There might be fear that their problem may not elicit supportive responses from their fellow Muslims.

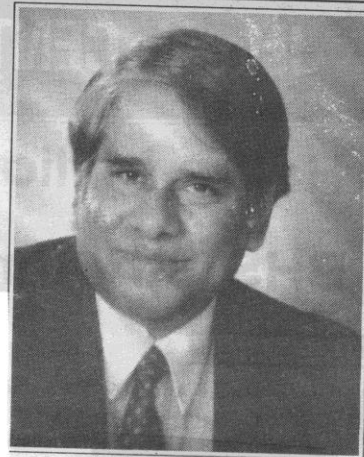
In order to meet the needs of the community, a group of individuals started working to establish the Muslim Community Center for Human Services. We have gone through hard work of developing the objectives and goals for this organization. A Corporation was established, and after a great

struggle, the IRS approved a "non-profit" status. The members of the Executive Committee, the Advisory Council and the volunteers worked hard to ensure that the idea and vision for the Muslim Community Center for Human Services this organization became a reality.

Q3: What have been the major achievements of this center?

A: The first successful project organized by the Center was a Health Fair, which was held in September 1995 in Arlington, Texas. Over 500 individuals attended the fair, they received a physical exam, a general checkup including dental and eye check-up, lab work (blood, cholesterol screening and sugar levels tests), blood pressure checkup and some educational material. The Fair was made possible by the voluntary work of 28 physicians, 12 nurses, technicians and area hospitals, health agencies and over 40 volunteers. Based on the tremendous success of the first Health Fair, MCC organized a second fair in November 1997 in Dallas/Richardson, which was equally successful in providing free medical services to the Muslim community.

In January 1996, we established a 24-hour telephone counseling and referral service "Help Line", with a Metro number (817) 461-8300. It is primarily for non-emergency calls and we try to respond within 24 hours and make appropriate referrals for various health professionals, health and social service agencies. Several physicians and psychiatrists in the Dallas/Fort Worth area are giving voluntary time to see indigent patients.



Dr. Basheer Ahmed.

Q4: Can you give us an idea about the nature of issues that your organization is involved in,?

A: MCC for Human Services offers various programs and services for the benefit of the community:

As mentioned above, for non-emergency medical problems, we provide information about Muslim physicians in the area and make appropriate referrals. Indigent patients will be offered services free of

charge. For family and marital problems and problems with children, we refer to psychiatrists in this area for counseling services. We offer limited services for job opportunities by referring to local business owners.

For immigration and legal issues, we refer to attorneys in the area. We also offer regular educational seminars on family issues for adults and youth. MCC also publishes a quarterly newsletter, which includes information on health and social issues related to the Muslim community. Special programs are offered on regular basis for senior citizens. We are in the process of developing a resource directory and information about foster parents. MCC is actively moving towards setting up a Medical Clinic for the community members who can not afford to go to a physician for their health problems. Many physicians have offered voluntary services. A Center For Abused Women is also being proposed to be setup in the near future.



A Real Answer to Serious Issues Facing our Community!

A Full interview with Dr. Basheer
Ahmed, Chairman of the Muslim
Community Center for Human Services.

Q5: What are the major problems the Muslim community in DFW is facing from your prospective?

A: Several issues are coming to surface that our organization is trying to address:

The conflicts between the parents and their children, teen years are difficult but the turmoil can be much worse for the youngsters who have to balance being brought up in the western culture with parents who adhere to the eastern values. The problems facing our youngsters and their parents to hold on their Islamic values has been the subject of our ongoing seminars in which parents and children are both actively participating to have a meaningful understanding of the issues.

The other serious issue is Marital

Conflicts and the increasing number of divorces among Muslims resulting in turmoil in Muslim families. A second educational program was offered on April 18, 1998 to discuss various factors contributing to the conflicts and specific recommendations were made to resolve them. Muslim Community Center for Human Services has recently established an Islamic Institute of Human Relations to deal more effectively with pre-marital counseling, marital counseling and divorce counseling.

MCC has been trying to establish a list of Muslim Foster Parents where to place abused Muslim children. If we do not have Muslim Foster Parents, there will be no option but to place Muslim children with non Muslim foster parents. Unfortunately, this has been happening in several parts of the country, we are sincerely making an effort to raise the conscience of our community to help achieve our goal. The next serious

project is to establish a Home For Abused Women. The incidence of abuse among Muslim families is coming to our attention and we have no facilities to offer any help. Starting this month, we are launching a serious effort to help establish a registered home for abused Muslim women. We need community's help to achieve our goal.

Q6: How do you handle the financial needs to implement your programs?

A: Our financial needs are enormous but we do not have a source of steady income. We have been raising limited funds to carry our special functions like Health Fairs, Clinics, etc. Once we establish the Medical Clinic for indigent Muslims and get the approval from the authorities for the Home of Abused women, we will definitely need more funds to carry out these programs.

Finally, let me remind everyone who would like to make a donation for Muslim causes to contact us at the following address:

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Human Services**

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