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The Muslim Link



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Calligraphy Simplified

Ahmad Luqman

On Sept. 12, the Ottawa Community had the rare treat of having knowledge from China come seek them out in the form of the world-renowned calligrapher Haji Noor Deen Mi Guangiang. Br. Haji Noor wowed audiences as he exhibited and shared his talents with members of the community.

Over thirty people of all ages crowded into a classroom at Abraar School for Br. Haji Noor's first presentation. Surrounded by beautiful pieces of artwork that he put up for display around the room, the attendees were treated to an introduction into the art of calligraphy and some live demonstrations as well.

Armed with no more than some Chinese-ink and a spatula-like wooden brush, Br. Haji Noor took to the canvass – actually it was just some normal flipchart paper – and beautiful artwork seemed to just flow onto the paper.

It was interesting to witness the different reactions around the room.

"Ooohs" and "ahhhs" were the popular responses from the children gathered at the front of the room. Some people had smiles of utter disbelief across their faces, and others were rendered motionless – wide-eyed and slack jawed.

Communicating through an interpreter (he only speaks Mandarin and Arabic) Br. Haji Noor, probably accustomed to these types of responses, turned to the audience and assured them that Arabic calligraphy really isn't that difficult to do.

Sceptical? Most people probably were at this stage of the game.

Br. Haji Noor reloaded his brush and began to demonstrate



Haji Noor demonstrates an example of his amazing work at an event at the Abraar School

the simplicity of the Arabic alphabet. He illustrated step-by-step how to create all 28 letters using a handful of basic strokes.

Some nods of the head in the crowd seemed to indicate confidence was building in the room.

The demonstration ended with some participants bravely trying their hand at the art. Some didn't fare as well as others, but one or two of them showed the natural skill that, with enough practice, could garner them the title of Ottawa's own calligrapher-extraordinaire.

Born in 1963 in China's eastern province of Shandong bordering the Yellow Sea, Br. Haji Noor has been practicing the art for over 20 years now. Presently, he is the lecturer on the art of Arabic Calligraphy at the Islamic College in Zhen Zhou. He was the first Chinese Muslim to receive the Egyptian Certificate of Arabic Calligraphy and was inducted as a member of the Association of Egyptian Calligraphy. His work is showcased online at <http://www.hajinoordeen.com>.

Knowledge for here and for the hereafter

Noman Bajwa

Human Concern International held an inspirational community lecture session combined with powerful entertainment/educational material on the evening of September 25. The event had a dual purpose: to educate the community using the key theme of "Knowledge is Power" and to raise funds to support HCI's humanitarian work in twenty two countries. The two keynote speakers this evening were Dr. Munir El-Kassem and Sheikh Faisal Abdur-Razak.

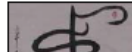
Sheikh Abdur Razak, President of the Islamic Forum of Canada, compared our earthly homes to the homes we will inherit in the hereafter. His message was that one should strive to build and take care of one's home in the best possible way and use maximum effort in order to secure one's place in the next life. In underscoring the nature of HCI's efforts, Abdur Razak said they were analogous to a well known hadith of Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him), which stated "Whoever takes care of the needs of a believer in this world, Allah will take care of his needs in the hereafter."

Kaleem Akhtar, the executive director of HCI, then provided a slide show presentation documenting the assistance that HCI has given to needy people around the world. Akhtar stated that HCI's primary focus now is on education. The goal is to provide 10,000 children with a grade 10 education. HCI has built two schools in Afghanistan-one each for boys and girls. HCI also contributed \$29,700 to IRFAN-Canada for its recent fund-raising dinner. In Palestine, HCI has contributed \$150,000 for an environmental action plan, and have helped build two elementary schools. Some of the other nations HCI is assisting include Somalia, Ethiopia, Bosnia, Lebanon, Pakistan, Kosovo and Chechnya.

Mr. Akhtar's presentation was followed by what was perhaps the highlight of the evening, a thought provoking and poignant play performed by several Muslim youth. The play had a simple but powerful message: in order to prevent Muslim youth from going astray in Western society, adults must properly and fully educate children about Islam.

The final speaker of the evening, Dr. Munir El-Kassem, an assistant professor in the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry Department at the University of Western Ontario, relayed to the audience the story of two men whom, as a young man, he considered to be the most important people in his life. The first was his father, who had no formal education whatsoever, but he was self-taught and had a wealth of spiritual knowledge.

Muslim doctors offer Pre-Ramadan Health Care



Muslim doctors offer Pre-Ramadan Health Care

PMNET

The Prophet, may peace be upon him, said: "Ask Allah for forgiveness and health, for after being granted certainty, one is given nothing better than health." (Tirmidhi and Ibn Majah)

Ottawa Muslims will soon have the chance to gain valuable knowledge about Ramadan-related health matters just in time for the holy month.

Several Muslim doctors will offer the community important health information to prepare Muslims for a month of fasting. The public health seminar is being organized by the Professional Muslim Network (PMNet) in cooperation with the Muslim Students Association (MSA) at the University of Ottawa.

Dr. Asma Amjad, a family physician and the seminar's chairperson, believes the Muslim community should be more educated and informed about health issues. "[The goal] is illness prevention and anticipatory guidance," she explains.

Fedwa Choudhri, an Ottawa-based registered dietitian, will discuss healthy eating and drink-

ing habits, keeping physically active during Ramadan, and other practices which are easy to neglect during this special time.

And Dr. Yamen Chamiyan, a graduate from McGill University, will discuss the science behind, and the benefits of *miswak* (a special branch or stick used to clean teeth). One brother has generously donated individually wrapped, sterilized *miswak* for this seminar. Proceeds from the sale of the *miswak* will go to charity.

For more details and directions, please visit the PMNet website at: <http://www.jivaana.com/pmnet/>

What: Pre-Ramadan Health Seminar (snacks will be provided)
When: Sunday October 3rd
Time: from 2 PM to 4 PM
Where: Univ. of Ottawa, Rm UCU 125.
Suggested donations: \$2 and 2 cans of food for the Ottawa Food Bank



In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Merciful. Allah is Great.

first was his father, who had no formal education whatsoever, but he was self-taught and had a wealth of spiritual knowledge.

The second man was a childhood friend who acquired several degrees, including a Ph.D., but somewhere along the way, El-Kassem's friend lost his faith and became an unbeliever. El-Kassem's rhetorical question to the audience was "Which man was actually more educated?"



Dr. Munir El-Kassem

El-Kassem added. "There is a real crisis in defining what Islamic education should be all about. El-Kassem went on to say that Muslims must combine "ilm" (knowledge) with "amal" (actions) in order to be truly effective in society.

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