

## **As Winter Approaches, Neighbors Raise Money for Coats for Needy**

**By Jackie Alder**  
**Observer Staff Writer**

At the Al Fatih Academy in Herndon, the group of kindergartners excitedly chatted about their most recent fundraiser: raising \$300 to help purchase winter coats for local day laborers and other needy residents.

As Mukit Hossain, a Loudoun County resident who organized the coat drive, dubbed Warmth for Winter, thanked the students, they gleefully shouted out other items they could donate to their less-fortunate neighbors.

"Glasses," a bespectacled girl shouted. "Shoes," inquired one of her classmates. "Can we buy a house for them?," inquired an ambitious young boy.

Afeefa Syeed, director of the academy, said the children started raising money during Ramadan and decided as a class that they wanted to donate their money to Warmth for Winter.

"We want to teach them that you give to your own community and neighborhood first," Syeed said, explaining the numerous ways they incorporated the fundraiser into their education. The children, for example, practiced counting the coins and learned how to identify them, too.

More than that, though, they learned about how it feels to contribute to their community. "Nice," "happy" and "good" were adjectives the children used to describe the way they felt about helping.

The children's donation will help Hossain purchase about 10 coats, adding to the over 200 coats that Hossain and other volunteers have distributed to local day laborers.

Hossain organized the Warmth for Winter drive about two weeks ago during a meeting of the Project Hope and Harmony, an interfaith group organized to remedy the day labor situation. At the meeting, Amy Langrehr, Reston Interfaith's day labor coordinator, told Hossain about Reston Interfaith's coat drive for the day laborers.

While they had about several hundred dollars for coats, their need greatly exceeded that. So Hossain asked local Muslim organizations, businesses and individuals for donations.

His plea resulted in a collection of over \$10,000 in just a few hours, with many of the contributions from the All Dulles Area Muslim Society in Sterling and the Dar Al Hijra Mosque in Falls Church.

With the money, Hossain has purchased hundreds of coats. Kohl's department stores in Sterling and Herndon also showed their holiday spirit, giving the group discounted prices on their purchase of more than 150 coats.

Last Sunday, Nov. 28, after collecting a list from day laborers, the Warmth for Winter drive distributed about 120 of the coats to day laborers at the temporary day labor site at 7-Eleven.

Just a few days earlier, Hossain and the Foundation for Appropriate and Immediate Temporary Help (FAITH) organized a Middle Eastern dinner at Zuhair Cafe specifically for the day laborers. FAITH helped establish the Project Hope and Harmony.

At the pre-Thanksgiving dinner, students from Al Fatih and ADAMS served over 160 meals to the day laborers and their families. This dinner was planned after a coat distribution Saturday, Nov. 20, at which Hossain and volunteers gave out 30 coats and learned more about the great need for winter coats.

Despite the numerous coats they have provided, there is still a great need for warm winter coats as the temperatures drop. To participate in the Warmth for Winter drive, contact Hossain by phone at 703-507-7223 or by e-mail at [shoma@prodigy.net](mailto:shoma@prodigy.net) or contact Ellen Kaminsky at the Herndon-Dulles Chamber of Commerce.

Hossain said the Warmth for Winter drive will also provide coats to homeless people in the county.