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PEARL OF THE ISLANDS FOUNDATION

Inc.

Newsletter Issue Number : 10

P E A R L S O F W I S D O M N E W S L E T T E R



PIF Director Taner Basar receives his Auckland City Peace Award by Auckland Mayor Len Brown

Welcome to another edition of the Pearl of the Islands Foundation newsletter!

Our foundation continues to be very active in a number of social projects and we are delighted to produce this edition earlier due to content that is available. The month of Ramadan passed in a quick fashion, and the workload was just as anticipated. We held numerous Iftar dinners throughout the month, carried out our annual Food Parcel project, held an Eid ul-Fitr celebratin, witnessed our director Taner Basar receive Auckland Council Peace Award for 2015 and many more! Please have a read through our newsletter, visit us online and connect with us on social media. We would like to hear from you.

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Ramadan Iftar Dinners 2015

Education Iftar

In a series of Ramadan Iftar Dinners, the Turkish community organised several events that gathered individuals from different social groups and communities.

The Education Iftar Dinner saw education-based individuals join us in our dinner to break fast. Teachers from Little Pearls Educare and teachers that attended our recent ANZAC Tour group came along to reinforce existing bonds between our communities. PIF staff and volunteers helped prepare and serve the food on the night.

Papatoetoe Intermediate principal Ms. Cornwell, who also serves on the foundation's board, spoke highly of the role (early) education plays on a child's development. She thanked the community on their positive commitment to providing education within our communities.

We thank all our guests for sharing this wonderful night with us and look forward to further events together.



Ramadan Iftar Dinners 2015

Little Pearls Iftar

Little Pearls, the education branch of Pearl of the Islands Foundation, continues to add diversity and strengthen bonds between the teaching staff, students, families and wider community.

Mr. Basar, Managing Director of Little Pearls, organised two Ramadan Iftar dinners at the Educare centre in an effort to increase mutual understanding of one another. Mr. Basar invited the children's wider family, teachers, PIF volunteers to both events held in the first 2 weeks of Ramadan.

Guests were exposed to informative speeches by Little Pearls staff informing the attendees of the importance of Ramadan and why Muslims fast on this special month.

The call to prayer allowed those fasting to break their fasts, and guests to begin dinner.

A friendly environment flourished at both events where individuals and families from different backgrounds experienced the sharing and love Ramadan had to offer facilitated by the local Turkish community.



Ramadan Iftar Dinners 2015

Auckland VIP Intercultural Iftar

The VIP Intercultural Iftar Dinner was planned to bring together respected individuals from different communities at the same table, and share the special task of breaking a fast and by doing so, contribute to New Zealand public's greater understanding of cultural diversity.

Mayor Len Brown delivered a message full speech. He acknowledged the Maori Culture and ANZAC spirit, and emphasised the role of tolerance, embracement, and harmony in economic growth, without which prosperity of a city and a country cannot be created. He also acknowledged the role of organisations like PIF in promotion of peace and understanding, in sharing culture and serving the community, and in celebrating the diversity of culture, faith, and ethnicity in New Zealand.

MP Kanwaljit Singh Bakshi, MP Su'a William Sio, MP Tim Barnett, Brian Henry, Rakish Naidoo, Jo Brookbanks, and Paul Wilton delivered speeches. They shared stories around a theme of how to build a peaceful society and reflected a common collective consciousness which leads people to observe and respect the value of diversity and to



Ramadan Iftar Dinners 2015

Wellington VIP Intercultural Iftar

On the 4th of July, Pearl of the Islands Foundation organized its 7th annual Intercultural Iftar Dinner in Wellington.

40 attendees were welcomed at the Iftar, representing diverse communities, community leaders, and representatives of different faiths of Wellington.

High Commissioner of Malaysia Her Excellency Dato' Lim King Eng, second Secretary from the Embassy of Iran, representatives from the Abrahamic Council and Interfaith Council from Wellington, FIANZ associates and executives from PIF shared this special evening with us.

PIF Intercultural Director Mr. Caliskan commenced the event with a speech themed around the importance and meaning of Ramadan. Sister Catherin Jones from the Catholic Bishops Committee offered a blessing for the food that was being offered on the night.

We thank all our guests for accepting our invitation and sharing the Iftar Dinner with our foundation.



Heart to Heart Journey - by Jack Wood, PIF Advisory Board Member

When the invitation from the Pearl of Islands Foundation (PIF) arrived to attend a concert in Melbourne, Australia, of young performers from different parts of the world, my heart went 'great' at such a cross-cultural opportunity, my stomach went 'yes' with the prospect of Turkish hospitality and food, but my mind questioned, as did my time management conscious PAs, the investment of time against other priorities in my own community, work and charities. Because of the limitation of time, the trip planned would be in two parts with one day of visits to receive an overview of the work of the Selimiye Foundation (the Melbourne sister to PIF in Aotearoa New Zealand). The following day would be attendance at the *Colours of the World* international youth concert, being part of the International Turkish Language and Culture festival. Consequently, for me, this trip (while peripheral) would provide an introduction to the work undertaken by the Australian-Turkish community in Melbourne and consequently a better background understanding of the work currently undertaken and future proposals of PIF in Aotearoa New Zealand.

As with Turkish cultural tradition, after arrival formalities, we were immediately taken to the first of many home welcomes, accompanied by wholesome food and heart-to-heart talk – shoes left at the door, women doing the cooking and eating separately to men, the hosts' male family members bringing the food from the kitchen to the table where the guests are treated as if they are royalty. These modest but full of heartfelt warmth homes we visited were of the hierarchy of the Selimiye Foundation ('Selimiye' I presume is synonymous with the Selimiye mosque in Edirne, Turkey – a masterpiece of Islamic architecture). Between our rounds of home visits with the abundance of delicious food (my belt had to expand a few knots as the day progressed) we undertook on our first day, visits to the Selimiye Foundation's publication centre (Lotus Publishing), Fountain Bookshop, Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia (ISRA) and two campuses of Sirius College. Lotus Publishing (linked to *Zaman Australia* ("Zaman" means 'time / era') produces weekly news covering motherland Turkey as well as local activities occurring around and / or influencing the Australian-Turkish communities.

Next on the tour was a visit to a newly established Islamic Sciences and Research Academy of Australia (ISRA) branch offering in-class and online Islamic studies. It was good to note that even in its first year of operation, ISRA is attracting students from a number of different faiths as well as its own Islamic faith. ISRA also offers a once a week open forum which members of the public may attend and ask any questions that they wish (academic or non-academic), providing openness and sincerity about the Islamic faith. As part of the tour, our group made a visit to two schools as representative of the seven campuses under Sirius College, the first of which was established in 1997 with just 28 students. These campuses, under the governorship of the Selimiye Foundation, have grown to 2 800 students with 209 teachers some of whom are past students of Sirius college. The name Sirius aligns with the college motto of 'reaching for the stars'. The stated values of the schools are excellence, achievement, integrity, respect, commitment and diversity. The values of respect, integrity and commitment are embedded through the traditional family values of the Turkish community who largely dominate the student numbers in the campuses. The college can be proud of the various campuses' academic achievements especially in literacy and numeracy with most campuses being in over the 90% percentile illustrating the working towards excellence as stated in the college values.

Early evening was a change of clothes, a quick robust meal at the shopping centre then off to the concert. Originally these concerts were held as an Olympiad in Turkey, but this year, for the first time, it was extended to the regions, which gave the opportunity for such a concert to be held in Australia. Each youth performer (mainly 13-15 year olds) was accompanied by a teacher from their home school to ensure that during the week-long hosted stay, the teenagers involved still continued their studies while undertaking rehearsals. The performers, dressed in their country's national costume undertook solos, duets and large group performances which were supported by a professional technical and production crew. The result was an almost three-hour non-stop, toe-tapping performance, where these performers sang their hearts out with a balance of modern ballads interlaced with traditional Turkish folk songs and dances. These latter performances resulted in many of the men in the audience dancing in their seats and along the aisles. As noted with one of the performances by Dr Ashraf Choudhary (PIF Advisory Board Chairman), that it is positive to see a young lady wearing traditional Islamic costume singing a modern love ballad and being so warmly applauded by all members of the audience. To me this illustrated great generational progress, with modernism marching beside tradition, beautifully executed without one's principles and values being lost.

After the concert the PIF Advisory Board Chairman and I were privileged to meet some performers from the countries where I have current charities and development projects. For me, my heart swelled with pride with these youth as for example a young lady whose father works in a very low socio-economic grouping in what we term in the west as a developing country with its dominant faith being Christianity. In normal circumstances, this teenager would have by now have dropped out of education because the family would not have been able to pay for any type of education – whether state or a private school. Through the Sirius education system, not only is this young lady receiving full board at her school but, according to her accompanying teacher, she is taking advantage of her opportunity and academically is a high achiever. With this educational opportunity coupled with this teenager's ambition and high principles, and re-investment back into one's family and community. For me, this meeting alone, showed the need and the investment value of the Sirius college system as undertaken the Selimiye Foundation in Melbourne, Australia, and other sister organisations.

Jack Wood is an independent member of the PIF Advisory Board, and paid for his own travel to and from Melbourne. The PIF in Aotearoa New Zealand arranged free accommodation and free local transportation in Melbourne. Jack Wood has not, and will not, receive any remuneration for his visit to Melbourne nor for the writing of this article which remains the copyright of the author. As such, any entity - individual, organization, institute, media and / or business - wishing to use all or any part(s) of this article, must first obtain the permission of the author.



Ramadan Food Parcel Campaign 2015

Pearl of the Islands Foundation Inc (PIF) would like to make a positive change in people's life who are in need. PIF organises a project to deliver Food Parcels to the people for whom any support is essential for their daily lives. This project is organised during each Ramadan.

Ramadan, the Islamic Holy month, is a period of time of fasting, charity-giving, inner reflections and self-accountability for Muslim people all around the world. PIF takes this opportunity to play a role as a bridge between who is in need and who can offer help. Therefore, it is a project about bringing communities together for communities in need. PIF works together with individuals, communities, organisations to help those families in need by means of Food Parcels preparation and distribution. In last year's project alone 200 Food Parcels were distributed. Food Parcels include various everyday essentials including sugar, oil, rice and etc.

A similar number of food parcels were delivered this year as well. Volunteers and the willingness of individuals from within our community and generous individuals from the public have donated kindly to defray the costs and contribute to our cause.



Auckland City for Peace Awards 2015

Organised by The Peace Foundation and Auckland Council, the Auckland City for peace honours youths, adults, and businesses that support the principles of peace.

Pearl of the Islands Foundation director Taner Basar was nominated for his contributions in education and intercultural dialogue. He ultimately won and was presented the Adult Peace Award.

These awards will recognize those that act toward peace services and leadership in a way that benefits the community and the environment.

Taner Basar is the current Managing Director of the newly opened Little Pearls educare in Mt. Albert. He is also frequently involved with intercultural and education events.



PEARL OF THE ISLANDS
FOUNDATION INCORPORATED

Eid Mubarek - Ramazan Bayrami

Following the end of Ramadan, our Foundation held a Eid ul Fitr breakfast at the centre.

In the aftermath of a busy schedule during Ramadan with a number of Iftar Dinners and food parcel deliveries, PIF hosted a breakfast to congratulate all volunteers and staff for their efforts.

Friends and family were invited to the breakfast. Among those were teaching staff from the Little Pearls Educare Centre. We also invited our chef Gokan who prepared our meals on certain nights during the month.

Ramazan bayraminiz kutlu olsun. Eid Mubarek.



We thank Chef Gokan for his contributions during the month of Ramadan with meal preparations.

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