



Project Downtown

Friday was once a day that students would bend over backwards to make sure they were not stuck in a classroom and listening to a lecture. It's the day that even the most studious students will relax and anticipate their plans for the weekend as they unfold. Now, Fridays hold a much higher meaning

for numerous college students across our vast nation. Instead of sitting back, Muslim students are actively participating in a unique service project in which the primary staple of distribution is neither water nor bread, but instead love.

Project Downtown is a new MSA National initiative that began with a few Muslim students that were dissatisfied. Dissatisfied with the plight of homeless and needy individuals in cities and dissatisfied with the blind eye that society has turned toward them; they decided to not be dissatisfied with themselves and committed to taking an active stance in improving such conditions.

These students gathered what little resources they had and made 30 sandwiches to pass out downtown. Those people downtown were surprised that their gift was not contingent upon reading a pamphlet or listening to a sermon. And when

one finally asked, "Why are you doing this?" the answer of the Muslim students was none other but the Qur'an's answer: "We feed you for the sake of God alone, no reward do we seek, nor thanks (76:9)."

The students continued to visit their new friends in their city every Friday to offer whatever modest, unconditional gifts they could offer, to lend an ear to listen to their plight, and to offer words of support. On multiple occasions, the downtown friends remarked "when other people come here they feed us like we are animals. But when the Muslims come, we feel the love. We feel that you truly care."

Since the giving of that first unconditional gift, Project Downtown has grown to various cities across the nation. MSA National hopes to continue to expand this project by ensuring that any group that wants to take on this initiative

will be supported. Through your generous gifts, MSA National is able to reach cities all over the United States and Canada and further develop this unique project.

Do not let dissatisfaction overtake you; we all are capable of bringing great change to our communities. It all begins with the realization that we are the ones that must initiate it.

Please visit www.project-downtown.org to find out more on how your support can bring great change!



STRENGTHENING THE FOUNDATION.

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In the Spotlight:

MSA National Annual Zonal Conferences

Each year MSA National holds several student-run conferences. The annual Zonal Conferences give students the opportunity to learn from North America's foremost speakers, share solutions to common MSA problems, and build the bonds of brother and sisterhood. To highlight this year's theme, "Renewing Hope: Seeking God, Serving Society" the Zonal Con-

ferences will feature "Action Hour" where students will be encouraged to join members of MSA National's Community Service Task Force and Project Downtown to serve society by feeding the homeless.

The MSA East Zone USA has traditionally held the record for being one of the most active zones with the largest zonal conferences. This

year's conference is heading south to Orlando, Florida. Florida is a first for the East Zone Conference, and it seems promising. With a head-start on planning and sunny prospects, this East Zone Conference looks to be a good one. Not to be outdone, the MSA Central Zone

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In Review:

The 43rd Annual MSA Continental Conference

By Lena Albibi

As an attendant of ISNA since childhood, I can unquestionably say that this year had to have been one of the best programs I have experienced. The theme, "Achieving Balance In Faith, Family and

Community" was pertinent to the life and times we are facing daily as American Muslims. The speakers played a pivotal role in making this experience truly significant. The groundbreaking change within ISNA's

board by appointing the first female President, Ingrid Mattson, was an inspiration to all the attendees. As an American Muslim woman I was

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MSA NATIONAL
P.O. Box 1096
Falls Church, VA 22041

Asma Mirza
P.O. Box 1096
Falls Church, VA 22041

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USA Zonal Conference has taken publicity and activism to a new level. Hosted in Dearborn, Michigan, the Central Zone USA Zonal Conference is filled with inspiring speakers and enthusiastic volunteers. This year the MSA West Zone USA Zonal Conference comes to Berkeley, California. Hosted at the University of California, Berkeley by the Cal Muslim Students' Association the con-

ference committees are hard at work developing the conference theme in conjunction with MSA students from across the country, building connections with MSAs, and more! The conference organizers are very enthusiastic about meeting the Zonal Challenge--to ensure representation at the West Zone Conference from every one of the 50 MSAs in the 11 states of the West Zone!

MSA National Zonal Conferences:

CZ USA
Dearborn, Michigan
March 30-April 1, 2007

EZ USA
Orlando, Florida
APRIL 6-8, 2007

WZUSA
Berkeley, California
APRIL 13th-15th

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honored to have Dr. Mattson chosen because she set an example for us on what we can attain as women, and having her as a role model provides empowerment for Muslim females worldwide.

Furthermore, there was a sense of solidarity and unity that encircled the room as we listened to the speeches given by the notable scholars. As a Muslim student, being given the chance to attend events like this

gives the spirit a sense of rejuvenation. In the world of professional pursuits in school it is easy to get caught up into our daily activities and not take the time out to educate ourselves more about our Religion. ISNA is a time when we can set aside all our worldly distress and take the opportunity to learn more. The reason for the uniqueness of ISNA is that it is one of the only conferences that tailor its programming to three different age groups. They target the speeches to the youth, college

students, and adults. As a college student I can speak on behalf of the MSA programming, which proved to be a success. The speeches were tailored to us, as Muslim students living in America, striving to better the cause of Islam within ourselves and within our communities. Imam Suhaib Webb was one of the many speakers that inspired us throughout the entire weekend. Imam Suhaib gave lectures till around Fajr prayer and did not stop once to get some rest. He exhausted himself in order

to provide the most knowledge he could to us. His tireless efforts makes one think, if he can go on without rest just to provide knowledge, we should be able to do the same in order to attain it. May Allah swt bless all those who worked effortlessly throughout the weekend and may he provide strength in this organization so we can continue gaining from it in years to come, Inshallah.

Lena Albibi is a first year Masters student at Georgetown University.



The Director's Report for Fall 2006

Asma Mirza
Director
The MSA Legacy Fund

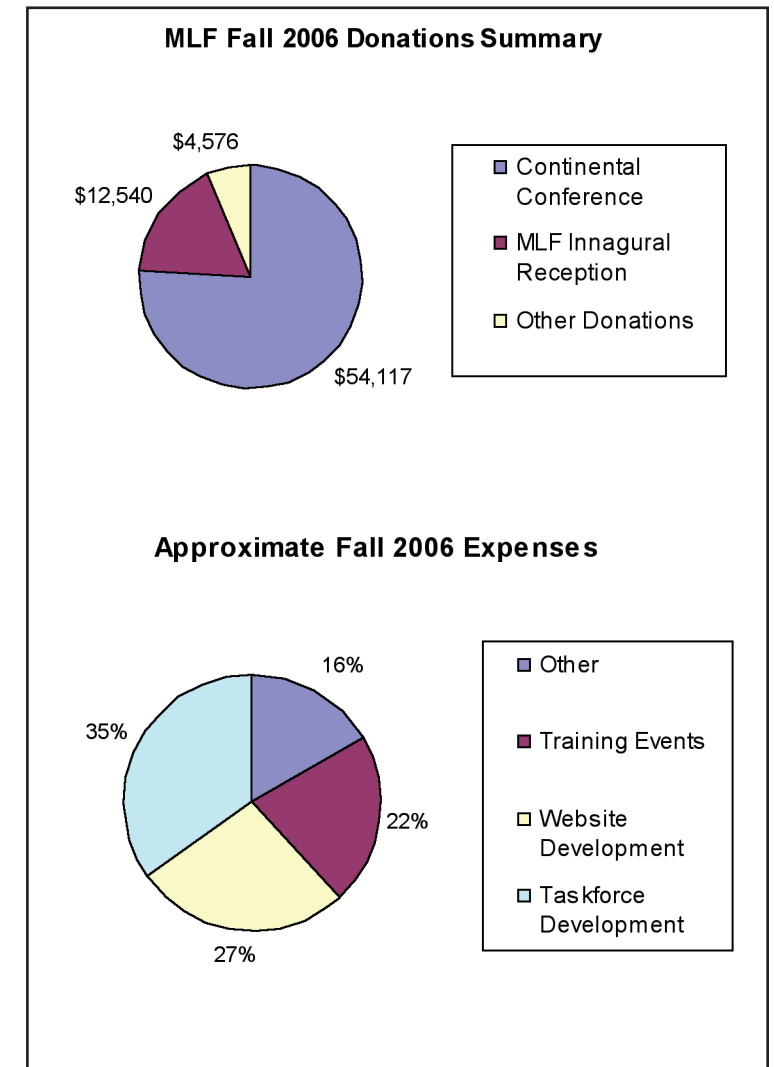
In the summer of 2006, the MSA National Executive Committee decided to make a long-time dream a reality. The goal: to create a donors club that would fund the programs and services of MSA National while building the endowment and the long-term stability of an organization that has affected so many students, both Muslim and of other faiths. I had no idea the results would be this incredible.

From the inception of The MSA Legacy Fund (MLF) on September 1, 2006 the Muslim community has shown its strong support for Muslim students across the US and Canada. My goal for 2006 was 100 MLF members. Today we have over 175 donors

giving at least \$120 a year. From September 1, 2006 to December 31, 2006 we raised over \$70,000.

Spending just under \$20,000 this fall, MSA National invested in an online student portal and conference management system as well as in taskforce development. MSA National launched two new taskforces, the Finance Taskforce (FTF) which manages The MSA Legacy Fund (MLF) and the Community Service Taskforce (CSTF) with its flagship program Project Downtown. In addition, the Programs Task Force held a 2-day training in Herndon, Virginia. With two new, full-time office staff members we estimate organizational expenses will increase by approximately 50% in Spring 2007.

I am very grateful to our donors; you made The MSA Legacy Fund a phenom-



enal success. I look forward to working with each of you as we build the financial stability of the longest, consistently serving Muslim organization in North America – MSA National!