



Islamic Society of Baltimore

Community Newsletter

January 2024 - Ramadan 2024



Islamic Society of Baltimore

isb.org

"The relationship of the believer with another believer is like (the bricks of) a building, each strengthens the other."

PROPHET MUHAMMAD ﷺ

SOURCE: AL-BUKHARI AND MUSLIM



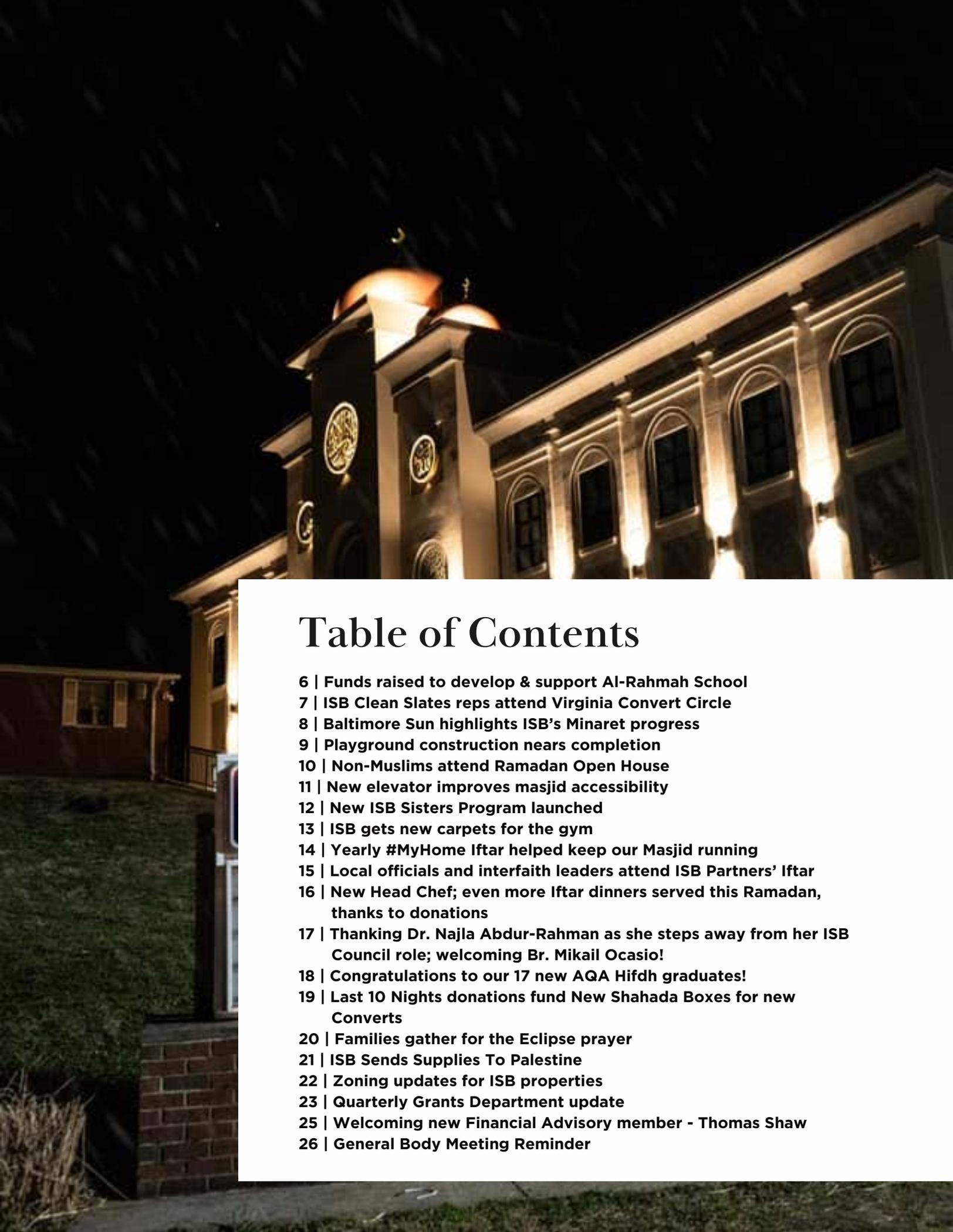


Table of Contents

- 6 | Funds raised to develop & support Al-Rahmah School**
- 7 | ISB Clean Slates reps attend Virginia Convert Circle**
- 8 | Baltimore Sun highlights ISB's Minaret progress**
- 9 | Playground construction nears completion**
- 10 | Non-Muslims attend Ramadan Open House**
- 11 | New elevator improves masjid accessibility**
- 12 | New ISB Sisters Program launched**
- 13 | ISB gets new carpets for the gym**
- 14 | Yearly #MyHome Iftar helped keep our Masjid running**
- 15 | Local officials and interfaith leaders attend ISB Partners' Iftar**
- 16 | New Head Chef; even more Iftar dinners served this Ramadan, thanks to donations**
- 17 | Thanking Dr. Najla Abdur-Rahman as she steps away from her ISB Council role; welcoming Br. Mikail Ocasio!**
- 18 | Congratulations to our 17 new AQA Hifdh graduates!**
- 19 | Last 10 Nights donations fund New Shahada Boxes for new Converts**
- 20 | Families gather for the Eclipse prayer**
- 21 | ISB Sends Supplies To Palestine**
- 22 | Zoning updates for ISB properties**
- 23 | Quarterly Grants Department update**
- 25 | Welcoming new Financial Advisory member - Thomas Shaw**
- 26 | General Body Meeting Reminder**



Funds raised to develop & support Al-Rahmah School

JANUARY 2024

Alhamdulillah, the Al-Rahmah School and Al-Rahmah Nursery Benefit dinner was a wonderful success, where the community came together to support our youngest community members- and absolutely pulled through.

JazakAllah Khairun to everyone who made this possible, by the will of Allah (SWT). With the funds raised extremely quickly, and the new format of dinner being served at each table to avoid the stress of having to wait in line, we could feel the barakah in the air, subhanAllah.

To our generous donors, may Allah (SWT) give you the reward of Sadaqa Jariya.

Your donations will allow Al-Rahmah School and Nursery to soar to new heights inshaAllah, and help facilitate the growth of our future resilient leaders.

Thank you for the hard-working volunteers, staff, and teachers who planned this entire event, set up all the beautiful decorations, and did everything to make this event happen.

Thank you to our amazing Barakah Bistro team who worked hard to cook the delicious and diverse dinner, dessert, and appetizers.

Thank you to our wonderful students who performed in front of everyone, showing their love of their school, of Allah (SWT), and even representing Palestine with a particularly memorable nasheed.

Alhamdulillah, the Benefit Dinner was not only a day to raise funds for our children and their future, but it was a day to remind us all how blessed we are to have such a wonderful community here.



ISB Clean Slates reps attend Virginia Convert Circle

FEBRUARY 2024

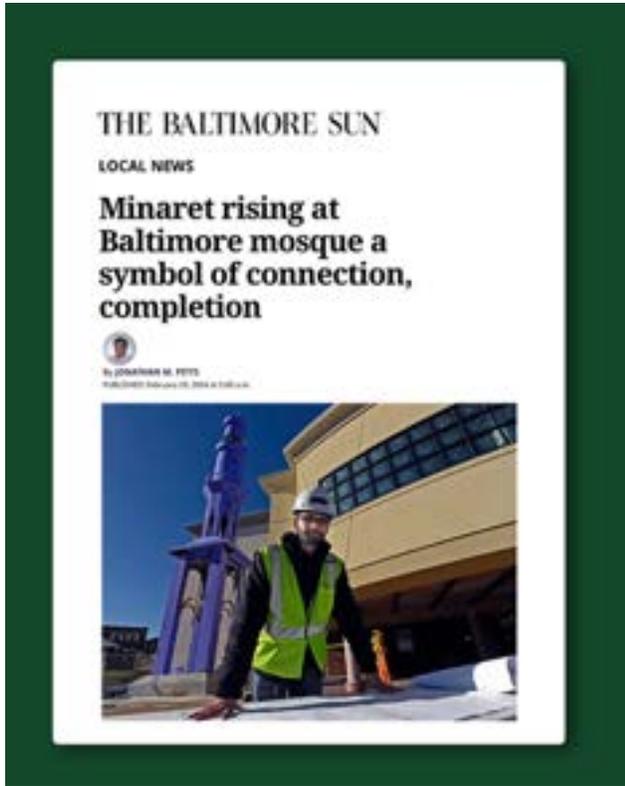
We must not forget about the converts to Islam in our communities. The Shahada is not the end of the journey, it is only the beginning. That’s why converts to Islam find solace in spaces where they can connect with other converts/reverts, learn, and build friendships.

ISB’s Clean Slates teamed up with ADAMS Center for Qahwa Cafe’s Monthly Convert Support Circle, in collaboration with Comfasion and Latina Muslimahs Circle, at their recent talk on overcoming common struggles on getting involved with and staying connected to the Muslim community.

There, Muslims from around the DMV - from new Muslims to longtime converts - gathered in a beautiful cafe setting and listened to a talk by ISB Clean Slates representatives, bonded over shared struggles, came up with solutions, and had fun together while enjoying delicious coffee and snacks.

ISB Clean Slates is a support group for new converts/reverts and offers online classes catered specifically towards new Muslims, Convert Iftar days during Ramadan and an Eid Brunch for Converts.

“Strengthening the Bond” is the name of Qahwa Cafe’s Monthly Convert Support Circle, where a different speaker gives a talk every month and converts come together at the ADAMS Center in Virginia to bond and build connections.



Baltimore Sun highlights ISB's Minaret progress

FEBRUARY 2024

The Baltimore Sun highlighted our beloved masjid when they came to take pictures and report on our minaret construction progress! MashaAllah, may this serve as a means of dawah and community education, just as we pray that the minaret itself is.

Thank you to all of our community members, whose generous donations and support have made this minaret's progress possible. We're so excited to see how it turns out, inshaAllah!

Full article is on the Baltimore Sun website.



Playground construction nears completion

FEBRUARY 2024

A masjid with a playground and park?! Alhamdulillah, we are so excited to see the progression on our newest addition to the masjid: A community playground for the children of ISB, a playground for Nursery kids, and a park space for adults to enjoy the weather on the masjid campus.

“I can’t wait to show this to the community. Wallahi, I can’t stop smiling,” said ISB President Hasan Hammad, “This is going to be a playground that can accommodate hundreds at once inshaAllah.”

With multiple slides, a 10-foot tall rock climbing wall, a zipline, a 3-story tower, a walking track sidewalk for adults to walk around the ISB campus on, a comfortable rubber ground for children’s safety, and much more, this project can be seen from the parking lot- much to the excitement of our community’s children and adults alike! In 55 years, there’s never been anything like this at our masjid before. Alhamdulillah.

“Every child that is going to come to ISB, whether they visit or they’re local who live here, are going to love this place,” said President Hasan, “I can’t wait to have you guys here inshaAllah.”

We pray that this playground will be a means of barakah for anyone who visits ISB, and a place for children and community members to build a lifelong tie to the masjid, inshaAllah.



Non-Muslims attend Ramadan Open House

MARCH 2024

We invited our non-Muslim neighbors for Ramadan at the masjid! At this exciting Ramadan Open House, dozens of visitors met the Muslim community when they took a tour of the masjid, joined a Q&A session with scholars and converts to Islam, observed Muslims praying, and learned about Islam and Muslims at a variety of informational booths.

Guests were able to come and see a beautiful, welcoming community due to your support over the years, by the will of Allah (SWT) - and several people even took their Shahada.

The Open House was hosted by ISB Outreach, which also through its Clean Slates program, takes care of those who convert to Islam as well.

"Over the past few years and especially the last year, we have had an unprecedented number of people taking their Shahada here at ISB," said Shaykh Yaseen Shaikh, head of Outreach. "We're offering them support, we want them to feel like ISB is their home."

ISB should be a welcoming presence for all, and we can keep it that way by maintaining our home-- truly treating it like a home.



New elevator improves masjid accessibility

MARCH 2024

The new accessibility lift outside of the ISB office is ADA accessible, and is now fully-functional and available for anyone in need of it.

We are grateful for the addition of this lift, as it is a much-needed addition to make the ISB office, the Nursery, and the second floor entrance to ISB accessible for all of our community members! It is also immediately next to the disability accessible parking spaces.

ISB has become more ADA accessible over the past year alhamdulillah- besides the addition of this lift, the doors to the first floor bathroom now have a push-to-open activation switch, the multipurpose building commonly used for Golden Age Village meetings has a wheelchair-friendly ramp, and the elevator inside of the masjid is regularly maintained for those who need it.

May Allah (SWT) reward you for making this possible with your generous support, by the will of Allah (SWT).



New ISB Sisters Program launched!

MARCH 2024

Unity in sisterhood: Our first official ISB Sisters event was a huge hit, alhamdulillah. So many sisters came together for an engaging event preparing for Ramadan and bonding in sisterhood at Graceful & Grateful: A Woman's Journey to a Fulfilling Ramadan.

With Qaffee House on site and a time for socialization after a beautiful discussion, as well as free childcare to make the event mom-friendly, our official launch event was a place for sisters of all ages to bond, learn, and grow closer to Allah and to the Muslim community.

Our last event, 'The Mother-Daughter Qiyam Night,' where mothers and daughters, as well as adults ages 30 and up, spent time at the masjid this Ramadan for a beautiful night of deen and sisterhood.

May Allah (SWT) put barakah into this initiative. Thank you to you, our beloved community, whose attendance and support made this event possible, mashaAllah.



ISB gets new carpets for the gym!

MARCH 2024

Exciting news: New carpets for the gym! We're unveiling the new carpets this Jumuah, in preparation for the arrival of Ramadan! The gym is an integral part of the community, but between being a spillover location for Jumuah, a place for Eid prayer, and of course, a Taraweeh space primarily for parents with children-

It's important that it's more than a gym: It needs to be a comfortable space for worship.

Alhamdulillah, with brand new blue carpets that match with the beautiful carpets in our musallah spaces, we're leveling up. We hope that the new carpets make this Ramadan comfortable for everyone in our community, and that the gym feels like just as much of a space for prayer as the musallahs do, inshaAllah.



We are giving away our previous red carpets to other masajid that may need them, and we have already given away most of them, alhamdulillah.

We could not have done this without you, our supportive community, by the will of Allah (SWT). Your generous donations make upgrades like this possible, so that inshaAllah, everyone who comes through the doors of our masjid can say, "ISB is [#MyHome](#)"



Yearly #MyHome Iftar helped keep our Masjid running

MARCH 2024

Thank you to everyone who came for the My Home Benefit Iftar here at ISB! It was so beautiful seeing you, our community, come together and connect in support of the masjid we all call our home.

MashaAllah, you donated generously in support of keeping ISB going. It's because of you that the mission of furthering a Prophetic Community is even possible, especially as our community continues to grow, every year.

“What makes our masjid community, is beautiful moments where you can come here to an Islamic event, and see people from all different backgrounds, all different experiences, and they welcome you. They say salaams to you. They sit next to you.



They tell you, ‘we’re going to have another event next week, come through!’” said Sr. Trish, who spoke about her experiences as a convert at ISB for the past 8 years.

“Our community is the place that you come and you join in Taraweeh prayer, and you cry to Allah about everything that is on your mind and that can only happen because this is our home, and we come together to support our community.

This masjid is funded by us. This masjid is funded by our community. And you never know when that one day at the masjid is only happening, because your five dollars that you donated, were the last 5 dollars [that allowed the activity to happen].

InshaAllah, Allah will reward you not just for the money that you gave, but for the good that it does for that person who you helped.”

From people who give every year to those who gave for the first time, we are so grateful for each one of you.

Jazakumullahu Khairan to everyone who keeps ISB running. By the will of Allah, you truly take care of your home.



Local officials and interfaith leaders attend ISB Partners' Iftar

MARCH 2024

Our yearly Partners' Iftar hosted local city and county officials including Governor Wes Moore and Lieutenant Governor Aruna Miller, County Executive Johnny "Johnny O" Olszewski, City Council Member Pat Young, Presidential Candidate Jill Stein, and many more.

We also hosted neighbors and interfaith leaders, who came forward to speak about the importance of standing up for Palestine due to the ongoing genocide.

The Partners' Iftar was also a time to share the Ramadan experience with our neighbors, and Imam Ismet Akcin beautifully recited Quran, ISB Scholars spoke about Ramadan and fasting, and two Shahadas took place that night, mashaAllah.





New Head Chef; even more Iftar dinners served this Ramadan, thanks to donations!

MARCH 2024

We welcomed Br. Mustapha Snoussi as the new executive chef at ISB's cafe prior to this Ramadan.

With a diverse culinary background and years of experience in the industry, Br. Mustapha led the charge when it came to distributing more iftar meals during Ramadan than ever before, averaging serving 500 people per day.



MashaAllah, your generous donations allowed the community to have access to iftar every night of Ramadan, now offered in convenient boxes to improve wait times for food, and reduce waste, as well as to enjoy nightly chai after Taraweeh. Iftar was also served at our twice a week Convert Iftar Dinners to help converts to Islam feel welcome at the masjid.



Thanking Dr. Najla Abdur-Rahman as she steps away from her ISB Council role; welcoming Br. Mikail Ocasio!

MARCH 2024

MashaAllah, we are grateful to Dr. Najla Abdur-Rahman for her time serving as Secretary of Education and Health Clinic since Summer 2022.

We thank Dr. Najla for her time serving on the ISB Council and her continued dedication to the Islamic Society of Baltimore and its various programs!

Now, she has stepped away from her former position, and has been succeeded by new council member Br. Mikail Ocasio!

Br. Mikail assumed the role of ISB Council member as of March 1st, 2024, covering the role of Secretary of Education, mashaAllah.

Sr. Shahista Mohamed, current council member, has shifted roles and is now covering the Secretary Health Clinic and Golden Age role.

An active ISB community member, Br. Mikail moved to Baltimore from Brooklyn, New York in 2004.

Ever since, he has been attending the masjid and he and his family have been involved in its various program and services.

Br. Mikail currently has one son attending Al-Rahmah School and he has two daughters who are attending the Tariqah program of the ISB After School Academy.

We're pleased to welcome Br. Mikail and are already impressed with his valuable perspectives being added to the ISB Council!

Keep him in your duas as he continues to bring his skills and insights to our beloved community, and may Sr. Najla be rewarded for her time serving the masjid.



Congratulations to our 17 new AQA Hifdh graduates!

APRIL 2024

MashAllah, the fact that Muslims have a tradition of memorizing the Quran will never stop being inspiring. Every year, we look forward to the Al-Rahmah Quran Academy Hifdh Graduation Ceremony. A long-running tradition, young people who achieve the blessed accomplishment of memorizing the entirety of the Quran come together with the community to be honored for this achievement.

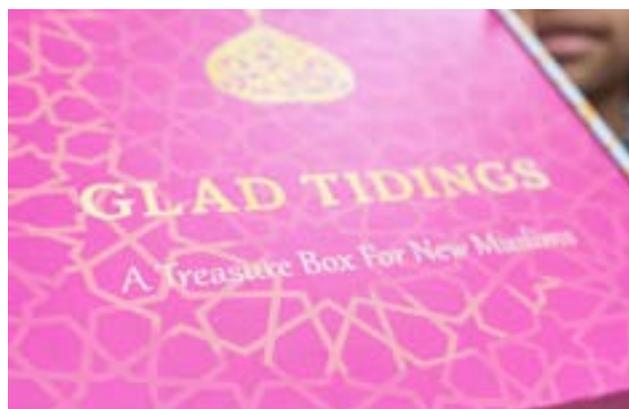
Friends, family, and general community members came together for an evening of beautiful Quran recitation by current students as well as graduates, inspiration, and spiritual upliftment.

This year, we celebrated the remarkable achievement of 14 boys and 3 girls who have successfully completed their Quran memorization journey, as well as recognizing those Hifdh graduations who completed their one-year review.



With beautiful speeches by our Quran teachers and ISB scholars, graduates were also reminded that one should not simply “end” their journey by memorizing the Quran, they should also attempt to live their lives by implementing Word of Allah found within its pages.

May Allah (SWT) reward our recent and longtime graduates as well as their teachers and supportive family members, and may Allah (SWT) keep them steadfast on His deen.



Last 10 Nights donations fund New Shahada Boxes for new Converts

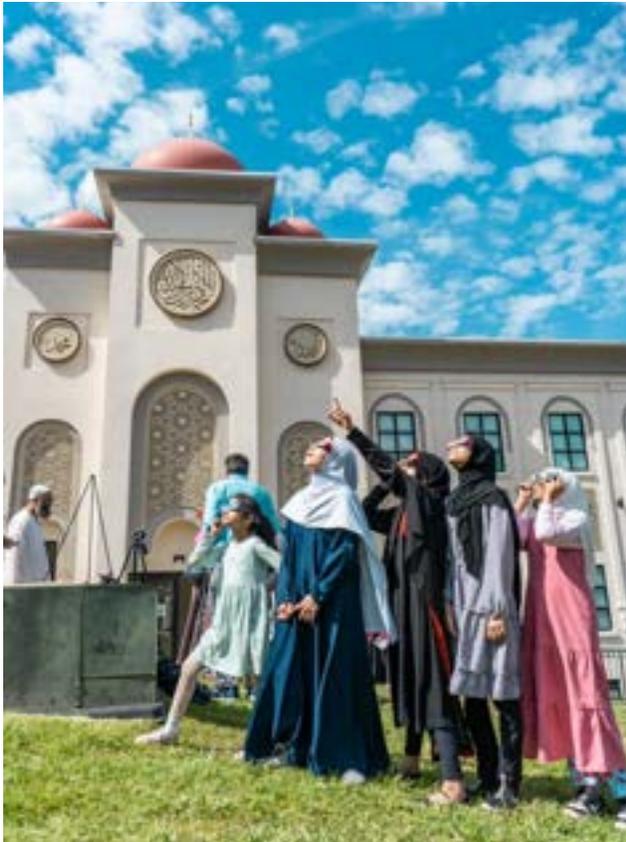
APRIL 2024

Alhamdulillah, with over 100 Shahadas during the month of Ramadan alone, we as a community can clearly see an influx of new Muslims coming to Islam.

When we revamped our New Shahada Boxes for new Muslims, you, our community, came together to fund the project so that we can launch our new boxes.

Called “Glad Tidings: A Treasure Box for New Muslims,” they include a copy of The Clear Quran with English translation, a pocket-sized prayer guide, a book on the Seerah, the book Being Muslim- which covers many frequently asked questions about Islam, the book Purification of the Heart, a prayer mat, and a hijab for women and a kufi for men, as well as a QR code that links to digital resources.

We are so excited to launch this project thanks to your donations!



Families gather for the Eclipse prayer

APRIL 2024

It's not often that Muslims get to sight the solar eclipse before they get to sight the Eid moon, mashaAllah! Our community gathered for Salat al-Kusoof, the prayer performed when an eclipse occurs, and also had the opportunity to view the eclipse through safety glasses and through a telescope, courtesy of the ISB Astronomy Club.

“They [the sun and the moon] are two signs amongst the Signs of Allah. So, if you see them, offer the Prayer (of eclipse).” (Bukhari)

What a beautiful way to come together as Ramadan comes to a conclusion, alhamdulillah.





ISB sends supplies to Palestine

APRIL 2024

We have been waiting for an opportunity to provide any help we can to Palestine, and alhamdulillah, this Ramadan we got that opportunity.

Dr. Farhan Abdul Azeez, a friend of ISB, Islamic speaker, and ER Physician, has been to Gaza multiple times when the Palestinian American Bridge coordinated with the World Health Organization.

ISB was able to send some much-needed, critical supplies for emergency care into Gaza with Dr. Farhan, including sutures, vital signs monitors, and ET tubes.

Dr. Yahya Shaikh who served on the ISB Health Clinic is temporarily living in Cairo, Egypt. Through our connection with him, ISB was able to have supplies purchased, boxed up, and loaded for Dr. Farhan to bring into Gaza when he landed in Egypt.

You, our community, donated and sent funds in order for these supplies to be purchased, through isb.org/palestine

InshaAllah, more donations will be given, as we continue to look for first-hand opportunities with physicians who we have relationships with, as they go for relief work to send additional supplies. May Allah (SWT) reward our donors, Dr. Farhan, and Dr. Yahya, and may Allah (SWT) protect the people of Palestine.





Zoning updates for ISB properties

APRIL 2024

In our effort to maximize development opportunities and plan for the future - the ISB Council has embarked on two rezoning initiatives:

They have submitted an application with the Baltimore County Planning dept for a Comprehensive Rezoning (CZMP) at the 6605 Johnnycake Road property purchased in 2021

The CZMP submission process occurs every four years with Baltimore County. Subsequently, after submitting the application to rezone 6605 Johnnycake from DR5.5 to DR16 (allowing for the opportunity for increased development and density options), the Council held a neighbor feedback session and defended the proposal at the CMZP planning board review session in January.

Next steps: Baltimore County planning board recommendations and County Council approval process - Summer 2024

The ISB Council also submitted a rezoning request with Baltimore county for the Windsor Mill parcels of land purchased in 2014.

The submission is for allowance of a prayer hall, a funeral washing facility with adjacent parking lot, and allocation of 14 acres for future cemetery space for the Maryland Muslim community.

As our existing King Memorial cemetery space is limited, it is prudent to secure plans for our future community burials.

We are looking forward to where these updates take us as a community, inshaAllah!

Quarterly Grants Department update!

MARCH 2024

The Grants Department works alongside ISB’s entities- including the Health Clinic, Golden Age Village, Al-Rahmah School, safety and security team- to seek and secure funding for programs and projects.

The Grants Department builds partnerships and relationships with various governmental agencies and organizations to sustain efforts that benefit our community.

The following projects have been made possible by grants:

- GAV Ramp (Activity Center)
- Examination Table (Health Clinic)
- Security Infrastructure (Main Campus)
- SMART Playground
- Media Center
- 40 Urban Trees
- HVAC upgrades in school

Thank you to our grants team and to our funders!

Grants Team:

Madiha Patel - Head of Grants
 Saadia Shabbir - Grants Assistant
 Haajra Ahmed - Grants Assistant

Questions? Concerns? Know of a Grant Opportunity? Contact us at Grants@isb.org



Pollinator Garden project

Pollinator Garden via CBT in partnership with Green Muslims and NWF

ISB has been awarded the 2023 Mini-Grant which funds the creation of a Native Pollinator Garden in the original playspace area. We are partnering with Green Muslims and New Wildlife Federation to design and construct the garden that will benefit the local wildlife.

This program is an initiative of Chesapeake Bay Trust .



New gym equipment

Gym Equipment for ARS via CWGC

Al-Rahmah School was awarded a grant by Catonsville Women’s Giving Circle to purchase new gym equipment for our students.



New patient examination table

ISB was awarded the 2023 Towson University Alumni Association Community Grant which funded a new patient examination table for our Health Clinic. It was awarded by TU Scholarships and Grants Committee at Towson University.

Broadband connection funded

ISB was awarded the Maryland Connected Communities Grant Program (MD-GAP) which funded the broadband connection to the Activity Center. This grant program is an initiative of the MD Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD).



Welcoming new Financial Advisory member - Thomas Shaw

Br. Thomas Shaw, STA for Microfinance at one of the largest global relief charities, leads an international microfinance team focused on developing and supporting market-based approaches to service provisions and high-quality performance standards. Br. Thomas, a long standing member of ISB, comes with 44 years of experience in the financial sector.

The mission of the Financial Advisory Board (FAB) is to advise the ISB Council on matters directly related to the financial affairs of the organization.

The FAB provides independent oversight for all relevant financial policies and procedures of ISB, and assists the ISB Council in fulfilling its responsibilities for the financial reporting, the system of internal control, budgeting and the audit process. The FAB also makes recommendations to the ISB Council to professionalize and improve ISB Finance processes, and improve its operational efficiencies.

FAB Members:

Rafia Siddiqui, Chair
 Zubair Ansari
 Aman Asif

Aijaz Hasan
 Rizwan Mahmoodi
 Thomas Shaw

Save the Date! General Body Meeting

Don't forget to mark your calendars for our semi-annual General Body Meeting, scheduled for **April 28th at 11:30am**. Learn updates, and give your feedback! Your participation and input are essential when it comes to building our community's future, inshaAllah.

Note: *GBM was moved from the usual scheduled time (March 24) due to Ramadan & for ease of community participation and availability.*



Testimonials

"I'm pretty sure all the Muslims in the world wish they went to this masjid. MashaAllah, MashaAllah!!!!!"

- Social media commenter (@mani.biriyani)

"Thank you for a wonderful time. Thanks to [the] whole Outreach team, I really appreciate the warm welcome and personal attention."

-Sister interested in taking her Shahada, who flew to ISB from out of state

"This confirmed my belief that Muslims are the most welcoming people to exist."

- Attendee of ISB's Open House, who went on to take her Shahada at the event

"I'm Catholic but I love this community event idea because it really shows the beauty and the dignity of Islam. God bless your entire congregation!"

- Commenter on ISB's Open House event

"Hope I can visit ISB in the future. You all have a very wonderful society there, a very good example for others to follow."

- Social media commenter (@alzenki)

Meet the ISB Council

2023-2025 Term



Hasan Hammad
President



Faizan Mahmoodi
Vice President



Rehan Alavi
General Secretary
HR/Communications



Abdullah Shafi
Qur'an Academy
& Youth



Shaista Mohammad
Health Clinic
& Golden Age



Mikail Ocasio
Secretary of Education



Aijaz Hasan
Treasurer



Sharif Silmi
Property Management
& Cafe



Umar Saleem
Secretary of
General Services

“We are always ready to serve you,
our community.”



Jazakumullahu Khairan for your continuous support. It's donors like you that help make this possible! May Allah reward you and continue to bless you and your family.