

VALLEY MUSLIM VOICES

Feb 2026 | Volume 4

RECONNECTING WITH OUR NEIGHBORS AS WE WELCOME RAMADAN 1447

Welcome readers and community members to the re-launch of VMV!

A BRIDGE OF COMMUNITY IN TIMES OF UNCERTAINTY AND DOUBT

Inside you will find:

Updates about a few of many local Masajid

Politics and Civic Participation

Interview with a local Professional Muslim Voice

Youth Activities that build our foundations

MEET THE TEAM

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VMV

Building a Mosque, Building a Community

Vol 4

Zana Kurdparwar, SCV Community Project Manager & Sunday School Principal

The Salahadeen Center of Virginia

(SCV) mosque project is more than the construction of a building, it is a shared act of faith, patience, and community. It reflects a collective commitment to creating a space grounded in learning, worship, and sincere intention.

Alhamdulillah, the project has reached an important milestone. All site plan and construction approvals have been completed, and work on the land is now underway. We are currently in the site stakeout phase, which establishes the precise layout for upcoming construction and sets the foundation for what follows.

The vision for this mosque is clear: to build a place rooted in faith, wisdom, love, and unity. A space where people can pray, learn, gather, and serve together. The design includes six classrooms to support and strengthen the SCV Sunday School program, which plays a vital role in nurturing our children's values, identity, and character.

Serving as both the volunteer project manager for the mosque and the volunteer principal of the Sunday School, I have seen firsthand how closely the physical space and our educational mission are connected. Every step of this process has been guided by intention (niyyah), trust, and reliance on Allah, with the goal of ensuring thoughtful and sustainable growth.

Like many community led efforts, this project has faced challenges, including lengthy approvals, technical requirements, and cost pressures. Through transparency, teamwork, and patience, the community has remained united and focused on the larger purpose.

Built by the community, for the community.

Whether through financial support, professional expertise, volunteer time, and duā, every contribution plays a role in bringing this vision to life. All support directly advances land development, construction, and the educational spaces that will serve our families for generations.

In the long term, we hope this mosque will be a lasting center for prayer, learning, and community life and an ongoing sadaqah jariyah for all who helped build it. We ask Allah to place barakah in this effort and allow it to be a source of guidance, unity, and benefit for generations to come. Amen.



Alhamdulillah! The Valley Muslim Community Foundation (VMCF) is almost done with the renovations needed to create three classrooms at the VMCF Center at Old Depot Lane. The new classrooms will be located on the lower level of the building. Since December 5th, when the construction began, VMCF has raised \$27,400 from generous donors in the community to renovate this new space, which is more than half of the required costs.

WHAT'S NEW AT VMCF?

by Sr. Hala Youssef

NEW CLASSROOMS



The two teams, North Mountain Contracting, owned by Hamza Higgie, and SAM Solutions, owned by Aissam Karimi and team of Jawan Ismail and Nasir Abdeh, have been working hard, knocking down walls, putting up new drywall, refinishing flooring, painting and preparing the space in general as a classroom environment. The work is expected to finish in the next few weeks and be available for Ramadan activities, Inshallah.

Over the last 25 years there have been many adults in our community that have devoted their time and compassion to teaching the language of the Quran and Islamic Tarbiyah studies to children in our community.

An Islamic school was established and initially supported financially by Hajj Awad Dames and his family. Dr. Abdul Rahman Rabie was the main administrator for many years with the help of many volunteers. As the community grew in size, it became necessary to establish another Islamic center to serve the community. In the last few years, the Islamic school has had many temporary homes such as at the old Al-Akram mosque and on the EMU campus. There will now be a permanent classroom space available for all the different classes that our community has to offer!

One of the characteristics of Harrisonburg is that it is home to Muslims of many ethnicities from all over the Ummah that value Islamic education and are deeply rooted in family principles and values. The VMCF classroom space is designed to create a school environment that kids associate with learning where Islamic values and study of the Quran will be taught. With Allah's guidance and help, Inshallah, establishing this classroom space will create a suitable and supportive environment for raising generations of children with strong, virtuous hands that spread goodness and exemplify the values of our Muslim communities



IASV'S NEXT CHAPTER

by Adnan Manzoor, edited by Israa Alhassani

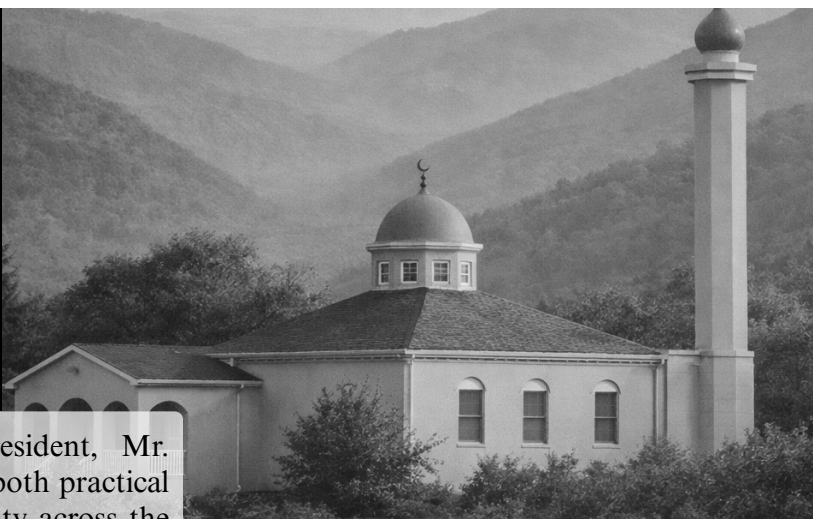
The Islamic Association of Shenandoah Valley (IASV) was established in 1989 by a small Muslim community in the Harrisonburg area, with a mission centered on strengthening the Muslim community, building interfaith relationships, encouraging civic engagement, and promoting a better understanding of Islam. Over the years, that early effort grew into what the community knows today as the Islamic Center of Shenandoah Valley, built through both community support and dedicated volunteer work.

Unity, Youth, and Showing Up

“The masjid belongs to the community, and it thrives when people step forward.”

“Beyond donations, our request is simple: be engaged.”

- President, IASV



In that same spirit, IASV's president, Mr. Azeem, says the focus this year is both practical and long term. One priority is unity across the community, including the goal of bringing everyone together for a single Eid prayer. Another is working toward stronger financial self-sufficiency for the masjid so IASV can plan ahead with stability. Looking further out, he also wants to begin planning for major future needs, including the important step of establishing a Muslim cemetery, while continuing to strengthen day-to-day operations and services at the masjid.

Mr. Azeem also wants people to see IASV for what it truly is: not only a place for salah, but a community center that belongs to everyone. He emphasized that IASV welcomes visitors, including people of other faiths, and values interfaith engagement. While IASV already has programs in place, including Saturday school and activities during the week, he believes the next step depends on greater participation from the community.

The needs he hears most often are youth engagement and education, along with more opportunities for people to connect in a relaxed, family-friendly way, such as monthly potlucks. He also noted that simple improvements like play equipment can make a real difference in helping children and youth feel welcome and excited to be at the masjid.

His vision is to make IASV a place people don't just visit on Fridays, but a place where they belong throughout the week. And his message to the community is straightforward: beyond donations, IASV needs people to show up, volunteer their time, and stay engaged, because that is how a masjid grows strong.

PERSONAL IS POLITICAL

The Case for Muslims' Participation in the U.S. Democratic System

Elections are a fundamental expression of citizenship in the United States.

For Muslim Americans, participating in the democratic process affirms their voice, strengthens representation, and reinforces their place in the national community. As the country grows more diverse, Muslim voters are becoming increasingly relevant to electoral outcomes, including in communities such as the Shenandoah Valley.

Muslim Americans are a young and ethnically diverse electorate whose political engagement has grown steadily. According to the American Muslim Poll (2025), 85 percent of eligible Muslim voters are registered, and roughly four in five registered Muslim voters cast ballots in the 2024 presidential election. While Muslims make up a relatively small share of the overall electorate, those who are eligible participate at rates comparable to other religious groups. Beyond voting, Muslim Americans engage in civic life by contacting elected officials, attending town halls, and volunteering in campaigns, demonstrating that their participation extends well beyond Election Day.

Muslim voter participation has had a measurable impact. In 2020, an estimated 800,000 Muslim Americans voted in the presidential election. Organized efforts to increase registration and turnout have translated community presence into political influence, particularly in competitive states such as Michigan, Pennsylvania, and Virginia.

Even when not decisive statewide, Muslim voters help shape policy conversations and candidate priorities through consistent engagement.

Most mosque leaders also emphasize civic engagement; in surveys, over 98% affirm that Muslims should be involved in American civic institutions and 95% support political participation (ISPU, 2021). These findings demonstrate that participatory citizenship is both a theological and social priority for many Muslim Americans, further connecting civic life to broader community identity.

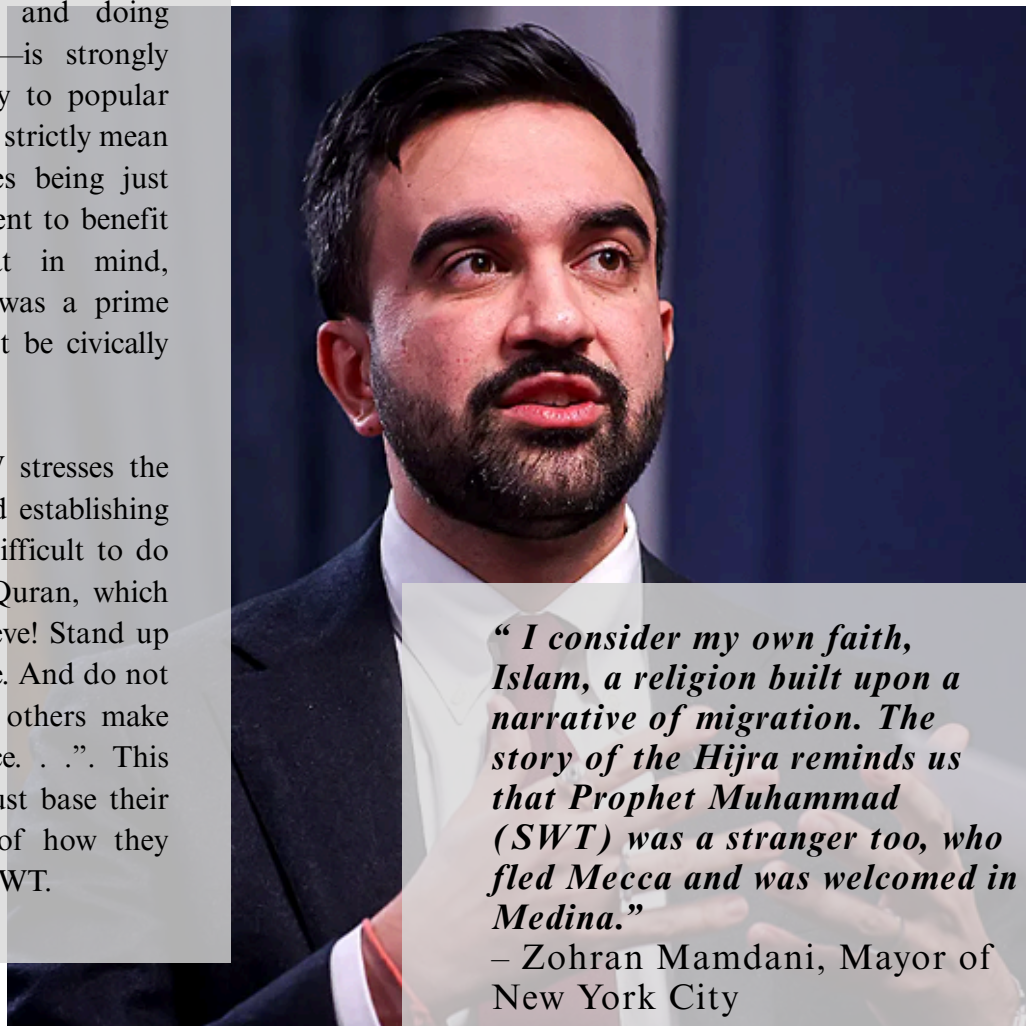
At the local level, civic participation can be especially meaningful. Offices such as school boards, city councils, and county supervisors make decisions that directly affect daily life, from education to housing and public safety. Because local elections often have lower turnout, organized participation from even a modest number of voters can shape outcomes and ensure that diverse perspectives are represented.

Ultimately, Muslim participation in U.S. elections is more than political activity; it is a lived expression of equal citizenship. Through voting, advocacy, and coalition-building, Muslim Americans strengthen representative democracy and help ensure that public institutions reflect the diversity and values of the communities they serve.

by Raad Amer, edited by Israa Alhassani

Civic engagement—the act of participating in one’s government affairs and doing service for the public good—is strongly encouraged in Islam. Contrary to popular belief, civic engagement doesn’t strictly mean voting. Rather, it encompasses being just and doing actions with the intent to benefit one’s community. With that in mind, Prophet Muhammad SAAW was a prime example of why Muslims must be civically engaged.

In several ahadiths, he SAAW stresses the importance of doing good and establishing justice, even when it may be difficult to do so. This is supported by the Quran, which states in 5:8, “O you who believe! Stand up for Allah as witnesses to Justice. And do not let the enmity and hatred of others make you swerve from doing Justice. . .”. This demonstrates that Muslims must base their actions on justice regardless of how they feel, for that is better to Allah SWT.



“ I consider my own faith, Islam, a religion built upon a narrative of migration. The story of the Hijra reminds us that Prophet Muhammad (SWT) was a stranger too, who fled Mecca and was welcomed in Medina.”

– Zohran Mamdani, Mayor of New York City

ISLAMIC CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

By Hind Mousa

Additionally, Prophet Muhammad SAAW shows us that we can work with non-Muslims on a common goal. His oath with the leaders of Quraish agreeing to establish justice and protect the oppressed (called Hilf al-Fudul), as well as the treaty of Hudaibiyyah establishing a ten-year peace between the Muslims and Quraish, are testimony to that. The Quran supports this further by stating in 5:2, “Cooperate with each other in (matters of) goodness and righteousness, and do not cooperate with one another in sin and hostility. . .”. Thus, societal progress can still be made among a patchwork of various faiths, just like we see in our Valley area.

Overall, civic engagement is a duty upon the Muslim in his/her community, and it may not always be easy, but the Quran and sunnah show us that basing our actions on justice and for the sake of Allah will always count.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION BEYOND THE BALLOT

"I participate in as many elections as I can, because we live in a democracy, and the voice of the people matters a lot, no matter where your background is. If you're eligible to vote, you need to do that. The decisions that come about are directly impacted by who votes, and you're able to make so much change based on your voting. And at the same time, no effort is too small, right? Allah takes account of everything. So I would say if the only options are two bad candidates, the best thing to do is to vote for, unfortunately, the lesser of two evils, because we have no choice. We're dealing with reality; not everything is always going to be perfect. So I say in those moments, still vote for the person who has the most positive policies."

Sabrina Abdullah, Community Voice

"I don't vote as a Muslim because I feel like there's so much evil everywhere in politics, and even if I'm voting for the lesser of two evils I feel like I'm still contributing to a killing of some sorts on either side. I feel like if I choose one or the other, they're both going to do harm to the country and none of them are better than the other."

ANON, Community Voice



By Khadija Alvi

Even if someone cannot vote in U.S. elections, there are meaningful ways to build a just and caring community here in Harrisonburg. Non-voters can volunteer at local organizations such as the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Free Clinic or local food pantries, assist with voter education efforts for those who are eligible, or organize civic events at the Valley Muslim centers. Attending city council meetings, sharing public comments, or joining local advisory boards allows residents to influence policy in areas like housing, access to education, transportation, and public safety.

Participatory budgeting initiatives in nearby neighborhoods offer another way to shape how public funds are spent. Writing op-eds, joining interfaith collaborations, and amplifying community concerns also strengthen collective influence. In Islam, civic engagement reflects the Quranic call to "stand out firmly for justice, as witnesses to Allah" (Qur'an 4:135).

Even without ballots, local action rooted in faith can shape a fair and compassionate Harrisonburg.

Professional Muslim Voices

SHOWING UP, ONE STEP AT A TIME: Why Dr. Fouzia Siddiqui Inspires So Many of Us

25 September, 2026

Interview by Israa Alhassani, Written by Khadija Alvi

Some people inspire you not because they show off their achievements, but because of how quietly and consistently they show up. Dr. Fouzia Siddiqui is one of those people. Her journey—from Karachi to Harrisonburg—is a reminder that perseverance, when paired with intention, can take you farther than you ever imagined.

Dr. Siddiqui completed medical school and internal medicine training in Karachi, Pakistan. From early on, she knew neurology was where her heart was. At the time, opportunities to specialize in that field were limited back home, so she did what many would hesitate to do—she looked beyond borders and started over. It was a long process of searching, recalibrating, and trusting that she would eventually find the right path.

The road was anything but easy. She traveled internationally just to take licensing exams, waited through long stretches of uncertainty, and rebuilt her career step by step in a new system. One piece of advice from a mentor stayed with her: “If you stop trying, you are definitely going to fail. But if you keep trying, there’s always a chance you’ll succeed.” That mindset carried her through the hardest years and became central to how she understands perseverance—not as a single moment, but as a daily choice.

Her persistence paid off. After training in sleep medicine in New Jersey and completing a neurology residency in Ohio, an unexpected interview brought her to Harrisonburg. She remembers being drawn to the mountains and the sense of calm the community offered. Fifteen years later, she’s still here—now serving as the Director of the Sleep Center and practicing neurology, sleep medicine, and headache medicine, with board certifications in all three.

What stands out most about Dr. Siddiqui isn’t just her professional success, but how she views it. For her, success comes with responsibility—to give back, to mentor, and to help build a stronger community. She speaks often about

Photo courtesy of Sentara Healthcare.



the importance of connection: having spaces where young people can gather, ask questions, find role models, and feel like they belong.

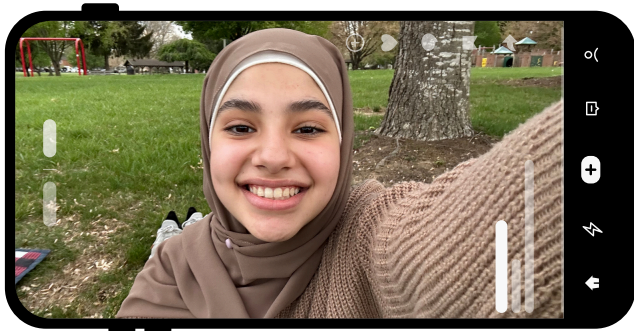
Outside of work, she believes in joy and rest. Traveling with her husband has become one of her favorite ways to recharge. Together, they’ve visited all 50 U.S. states—yes, all of them—with Alaska (in the summer) holding a special place in her heart. It’s her reminder that even after long, demanding days, life should still feel full. *Even during our interview—after seeing a full day of patients—her laughter and warm smile never faded, offering a glimpse into the grace and positivity she carries with her.*

Faith shows up in her story quietly—through gratitude, patience, and trust in the process. She often speaks with deep appreciation for her parents and

and mentors, acknowledging the role their support, sacrifices, and guidance played in helping her stay grounded through every transition. It’s not something she preaches, but something she lives. For young Muslims, especially women, her advice is refreshingly simple: stay focused, work hard, and don’t give up. Progress isn’t always fast, but it is always possible.

Dr. Fouzia Siddiqui’s story reminds us that inspiration doesn’t have to be loud. Sometimes, it looks like steady effort, kindness, and the courage to keep going—one step at a time.

Salaam Readers! Thank you for taking the time to engage with VMV!



Asalamu Alaikum! My name is Hind, and I’m one of the founders of the Valley Muslim Voices Newsletter. My experience starting this journey has been nothing short of wonderful! I’ve gotten to try new things (like journalism!), meet wonderful people, and improve my writing. All praise is due to Allah, and I can’t wait to share your stories with the broader community :)

Meet our growing team:

Hasan Hamdan
 Director &
 Senior Editor
Founding Member

Israa Alhassani
 Senior Editor
Founding Member

Hind Mousa
 Junior Writer
Founding Member

Adnan Manzoor
 Technology Specialist

Aqsa Zubair
 Graphic Design and
 Internal Support

Khadija Alevi
 Journalism and
 Outreach

Katie Robinson
 Editor

Lauren Amer
 Editor

****all members have dedicated time and effort far beyond their designated roles**

HARRISONBURG MUSLIM YOUTH:

Building Belonging, Leadership, and Service

By Delman Rasheed

Harrisonburg Muslim Youth was created to meet a simple but urgent need: young Muslims in the Shenandoah Valley deserve spaces that are safe, principled, and intellectually engaging. Our mission is to cultivate confident youth who are rooted in their faith, connected to their community, and prepared to lead with integrity in a complex world.

At its core, Harrisonburg Muslim Youth is about belonging. Many Muslim youth navigate multiple identities—religious, cultural, and civic—and our programming affirms those identities rather than forcing young people to choose between them. Through mentorship, discussion-based learning, and service-oriented activities, we help youth see their faith as a source of strength, responsibility, and ethical clarity.

Our weekly programming balances connection and substance. On Saturdays, we host activity-based gatherings that strengthen relationships and build community, including monthly bonfires that create informal spaces for friendship, trust-building, and connection across age groups. These gatherings are not simply social; they are foundational to long-term community cohesion. We also prioritize comfort, trust, and safety. Programming includes sisters-only events, boys-only events, and mixed gatherings with adult facilitators present, allowing participants to engage openly in environments that are appropriate and supportive.



On Sundays, we hold a weekly class at Eastern Mennonite University at 12:15 p.m. with a structured curriculum for teenagers and young adults. These sessions focus on faith, ethics, identity, and thoughtful engagement with the world young Muslims are inheriting. Leadership development is central to our work. We emphasize practical skills such as public speaking, collaboration, critical thinking, and community organizing.

Youth are active participants who help shape initiatives, lead projects, and support one another, building confidence alongside accountability and purpose. Harrisonburg Muslim Youth is intentionally independent of any single masjid, working instead in collaboration with all local masjid and community partners. We believe unity and shared responsibility best serve our youth and the broader community.

The organization is facilitated by a diverse group of educators, mentors, and community leaders, including Delman Rasheed, Dr. Ihab Alsadoon, Ahmed Salih, Shalaw Mohammed, Dr. Hasan Hamdan, Sabrina Abdulla, Sana Aga, Zaytoon Mirawdili, and Paywest Rasheed. Together, they are committed to creating thoughtful spaces where young people can grow intellectually, spiritually, and socially. As Harrisonburg continues to grow and diversify, Harrisonburg Muslim Youth plays an important role in fostering resilience, leadership, and connection among the next generation. Our vision is long-term: youth who are grounded, compassionate, and prepared to positively shape the future of their city.