

Muslim Education Trust
Islam
633 S.W. Montgomery St
Portland, OR 97201
Phone: 503-228-3754
Email: metpdx@metpdx.org
Website: www.metpdx.org

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 283
Portland, OR 97207

The profile was researched and written by student Anne Marie Armentrout of Reed College, under the direction of Dr. Kambiz GhaneaBassiri.

The Muslim Educational Trust (MET) is a community-based organization that functions to educate Muslims and non-Muslims about Islam. MET works to bring together and to serve the entire Portland Muslim community. They describe their mission as follows: "MET is dedicated to the betterment of our society, and strives to achieve its purpose through education in the broadest sense, through cooperation and networking, and through programs which benefit both Muslim and non-Muslim people of the greater Portland area."

History

In 1993 a diverse group of Muslims from different mosques and organizations in the greater Portland area, including the Muslim Community Center, Masjed as-Sabr and the Islamic Society of Greater Portland formed the Muslim Educational Trust in response to a growing awareness of the need to create an organization dedicated solely to education. The need, as they perceived it, was not only to educate their own community, but also to educate the non-Muslim community about Islam in order to build bridges of understanding and to counter negative images of Muslims that were generated in part by the Gulf War of 1991. MET rented a space in the Campus Ministries building at Portland State University, a geographically central location that was accessible to Portland Muslims and was good for engaging the non-Muslim community. The location also created a neutral ground for Muslims to engage one another in a space that was not owned and used by any one group in the community or aligned with a particular school of thought. MET began a weekend Islamic school, with classes for children and adults in the Islamic faith, Islamic history, the Qur'an and Arabic. These classes are still functional. The number of Muslims attending the weekend Islamic School grew to a reported one hundred and twenty children and adults at its peak. MET created a Muslims Speakers Bureau, which has sent speakers to numerous schools, colleges, churches and synagogues. MET has held dozens of conferences and seminars to provide opportunities for the non-Muslim community to engage with Muslims. One such conference held at Portland State University was attended by several hundred people. MET has established a resource center in their office at PSU, complete with pamphlets, books and videos about

Islam. It has also provided Islamic educational materials to public and private schools in the Portland area free of charge.

In 1997 MET started a full-time Islamic School – the Islamic School of the Muslim Educational Trust (ISMET) – at Portland State University. In its first year ISMET had four teachers and twelve students in kindergarten through third grade. The following school year ISMET moved several blocks away to a more spacious building, the number of students more than doubled and a fourth grade class was added. The third year they had over thirty students and added several more grades. In that same year, the year 2000, ISMET moved to a property they purchased in Tigard, a suburb of Portland. The fourth year they had forty-nine students, classes from kindergarten through sixth grade and increased the number of teachers. In the fifth year, ISMET added the seventh grade. In the sixth and seventh years ISMET added the eighth grade and the number of its students increased to over sixty, with nearly a hundred on the waiting list. The board of ISMET has plans to build a new school and expand to teach all twelve grades and to enroll three hundred students. Social studies, science, language arts, and math are all taught following the Oregon Public Schools Curriculum. Textbooks are purchased through McGraw-Hill. Computer classes, physical education, Islamic studies and Arabic are also taught. Girls and boys intermix freely, under supervision, during free time and in physical education, but sit on separate sides of the room from fifth grade on. Students wear a uniform consisting of white shirts and navy or black pants or jumpers. The day's schedule is designed to accommodate regular prayers and has a prayer room for staff and students. The goal is to provide a strong education within an Islamic environment.

MET runs a month-long summer camp for children three to twelve years of age. Activities include Arabic, Islamic studies, sports, crafts, science activities and field trips every Friday.

MET has monthly potlucks that bring together members of the various Muslim communities in Portland. Often ISMET students or guest scholars give a lecture or a presentation during these meetings.

In 2000 MET received the Ecumenical Service Award from the Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon for their efforts to help resettle refugees, particularly those from Kosovo. "MET has modeled an interfaith cooperation that has gone far in healing the wounds caused by religious struggles in Kosovo and elsewhere," said the award presenter.

Since their inception MET has worked to build good relationships with the media and serves as an advocate for unbiased news coverage of Muslims. Since the events on September 11, 2001, MET has been the primary organization within the Portland Muslim community with which the media has interacted. Beyond the local coverage the executive director has been interviewed and quoted in national news articles. MET is a member of the Coalition Against Hate Radio, an organization comprised of over thirty community, religious and human rights organizations, which has worked to get radio programs like Michael Savage's "Savage Nation" dropped by radio stations because of "his attacks on

other races, religions, women, the poor, gays and immigrants among others savage....He has at various times advocated the beating and killing of those he disapproves of."

Since September 11, 2001, MET has been involved in numerous interfaith events with various churches and synagogues that have taken the format of socials and picnics, dialogues and panel discussions. MET places a strong emphasis on Islam as a part the Abrahamic faiths, which also include Judaism and Christianity. MET has also had a representative on the Arab Muslim Police Advisory Council (AMPAC), which was formed by the Portland Police Department after 9/11.

In 2004 MET co-sponsored—along with Portland State University's Office of International Affairs, Middle East Studies Center, and Muslim Student Association—film presentations and lectures at Portland State University by renowned scholars and leaders in the American Muslim community. These lectures covered such topics as "U.S. and Islamic Constitutionalism: A Comparative Overview," "Gender Equity in Islam," and "Muslim Women Between Traditions and Modernization."

Management

Both the Board of Directors and the Board of Advisors at MET are comprised of leaders and prominent members from the various mosques and organizations in the Portland Muslim Community. An Executive Director, President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer oversee the day-to-day management of the organization. A team of two teachers and two members from the Board of Directors run ISMET. The Executive Director of MET also functions as the un-official principal of ISMET.

Description

MET consists of two offices, one in the Campus Ministries building of Portland State University and the other in ISMET. ISMET is located in a remodeled house on two and a half acres of land in Tigard, a Portland suburb about a twenty-minute drive from downtown. It is situated between a dense commercial area and a residential neighborhood. The property is right off of a busy four-lane street. There are no signs for the organization or school at the driveway or mailbox. There is a tall white fence surrounding the property. Surrounding the building is a parking lot, which in turn is surrounded by a large grassy field and several large trees. Amongst the trees is a playground. Security cameras monitor the parking lot, playground and entrance of the property and building. The building is a one-story gray house. Inside is a long hall off of which are classrooms, school offices (which double as MET offices), and a large kitchen and eating area, as well as a prayer room.

Prepared by Student Researcher
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Hidden Data:

Researcher Notes

ISMET is located at 10330 SW Scholls Ferry Road Tigard, Oregon 97223 Their phone number is 503-579-6621