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Religion notebook: Oregon Islamic Academy helps out in Japan, Catholic Human Development funds local grants and Jewish Federation looks for next big idea

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By



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Muslim Educational Trust

Basil Abu-Hamdeh, a junior at Oregon Islamic Academy, helps clean up debris from a house damaged by the March 11 tsunami in Japan.

Seven students from the **Oregon Islamic Academy** in Tigard recently returned to Portland after a week touring Japan and helping in the tsunami recovery effort.

The five juniors and two seniors were part of the **Flight of Friendship** organized by Sho and Loen Dozono of **Azumano Travel** with the help of **Mercy Corps** and **Peace Winds**. The Dozonos helped pay the students' expenses.

It was the first time a group of Oregon Islamic Academy students had traveled internationally for humanitarian service, said Rania Ayoub of the **Muslim Educational Trust**. They visited **Sendai**,

a coastal city severely damaged in the **March 11 earthquake and tsunami**, and Tokyo. The students helped distribute relief items, prepare temporary shelters and clean up wreckage. They visited mosques and a Buddhist temple.

Amirah Fattom, 16, of Beaverton said seeing the damage firsthand was profound. She and her team helped furnish temporary shelters with necessities, including plates, futons and sheets.

"Through all the suffering people went through, when we talked to them they had smiles and a sense of hope that they could rebuild their lives from a base," she said. "We helped give them that base."

"In Islam, compassion is one of the main goals we strive for," she added. "There is a saying that before you feed yourself, feed the people around you. ... So many people want just a piece of bread."

The other students making the trip were juniors Basil Abu-Hamdeh, Farhio Kheir, Mariam Said and Mohamed Tarhuni; and seniors Fatima Tarhuni and Nima Mohamed.

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The **Archdiocese of Portland's Catholic Campaign for Human Development** has announced seven grants to local programs that fight poverty's root causes.

Two grants of \$4,500 were given, one to **Madonna's Center**, a Clackamas County group that serves disadvantaged teenage parents of young children, for a resource fair, and another to the **Community Alliance of Tenants'** Housing Justice Program, which helps low-income renters challenge unsafe housing conditions and advocate housing policy changes.

Grants of \$4,000 were given to the **Oregon New Sanctuary Movement's** work on behalf of low-income immigrants, **VOZ Workers' Rights Education Project** for training and leadership materials, **OPAL Environmental Justice Oregon's Bus Riders Unite!** effort in East Portland, **Salem-Keizer Coalition for Equality's** work with Latino migrant parents, and Dayton's **San Martin de Porres'** social justice ministry. (The Dayton mission, which was associated with St. James Parish in McMinnville, was scheduled to close last fall but now is part of St. John Parish in Yamhill.)

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A new demographic study commissioned by the **Jewish Federation of Greater Portland** estimates more than 27,700 Jewish households, compared to about 11,000 households identified from synagogue and agency rosters. The challenges, according to federation leaders, are to create new programming and expand their outreach during a time of economic uncertainty.

At their annual meeting Monday, the federation will announce \$300,000 in grants and provide \$1,800 to "the next great Jewish idea" in an effort to serve the broader Jewish community. The meeting begins at 4:30 p.m. in Zidell Hall at **Rose Schnitzer Manor**, 6140 S.W. Boundary St., Portland.

-- **Nancy Haught**

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