

Utah educator who worked in World Trade One brings students to mosque for remembrance



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WEST VALLEY CITY, Utah — A group of students met at Khadeeja Islamic Center Friday to learn more about the Islamic community in the Beehive State on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the September 11th attacks.

Friday is a day of congregational prayer for the Islamic community. Muslims read words from the Quran in Arabic -- it sounds like a song.

It's not Grant Beckwith's first time in a mosque, but it was a first for the group of 15 or so students he brought.

“We wanted our students to come and connect here and feel a part of this Muslim community because we’re all connected,” said Beckwith.

Beckwith is the head of the American Heritage School, a private, non-profit school for K-12.

Before his time in Utah though, Beckwith worked for Deloitte at the World Trade Center, in World Trade One.

Home videos and pictures show Beckwith and his wife with the Two Towers in the background.

In the summer of 2001, Beckwith moved to Washington D.C. for work.

“It was a very poignant and personal experience to watch those buildings coming down and thinking of my friends and colleagues who were there,” said Beckwith.

Memories of mourning with loved ones resurface on the anniversary of the attacks. Beckwith specifically remembers mourning with his Muslim friends and family.

“20 years later, it’s still a difficult time to be a Muslim in America,” said Beckwith.

Though the students studying at American Heritage School were all born after the attacks, Beckwith wanted to help them come together with their Muslim brothers and sisters for remembrance.

“We need to take some of these tragedies in our history and turn them into beauty,” said Beckwith.

One of the first things Isabelle Fee, the student body president at American Heritage School, noticed was how they needed to take off their shoes before walking into the mosque.

“As they came in you could hear the call to prayer and that’s one of my favorite parts,” said Fee.

Ninth-grader Nathan Hendrickson said he loved getting to know more about Islam from the people themselves.

“Whether you’re sitting in pews or kneeling on the ground, we’re all worshipping the same God and we should respect the ways others worship,” said Hendrickson.

[READ: Utah Islamic community plans to honor 9/11 victims](#)

Avais Ahmed, the chairman of the Utah Muslim Civic League, said he enjoyed watching the eyes and body language of students as they learned.

“They get very surprised that Islam is an Abrahamic religion,” said Ahmed. “They hear names of familiar prophets and they hear familiar messages, so I can see them get at ease.”

Ahmed has lived in Kaysville since the age of five and has spent the last 20 years trying to help people understand that they condone the terrorists from 9/11.

"That's not even what we believe in Islam," he said. "It's something we don't even accept those folks as our religion or even portraying any of the values of our religion."

Helping others learn the rich history and tradition within his religion has been a mission for Ahmed.

“Instead of saying hey, we’re not about this, let’s actually go ahead and show people what we’re about,” said Ahmed.

There are more than 60,000 Muslims in the Beehive State.

Five of Utah’s 13 mosques will join the 9/11 National Day of Service project held on the twentieth anniversary.