



MAC

MUSLIM AMERICANS FOR COMPASSION

MAC Interviews: Amir Malik Davis

Director of Amir Public School and Naya Ujalla, Inc.

"I grew up in a very remote village in Pakistan. There, education is a kind of luxury," said Amir Malik Davis, Director of Amir Public School and its Foundation, Naya Ujalla, Inc.

Located in the remote village of Gujranwala, Amir Public School (APS) has provided an oasis of knowledge for children in the area ever since it was first established in 1980. Amir Davis' aunt Laviza-K-Lal founded the school, naming it after him.

"She was an educated lady, and I was lucky growing up to have parents and guardians who were well aware of the importance of education," said Davis, who studied hard and completed a master's degree in computer science in the Indian city of Lahore. He moved to Ireland, then to the United States, but his bond to the school that bears his name remained strong.

APS began as a small facility with just a couple of rooms, but dozens of students each year received a primary education. Pakistan has plenty of private schools for wealthier families, but opportunities and resources are extremely limited for most families unable to pay the fees to attend.

"I saw my childhood mates, who were very smart, work in labor because they had few education opportunities. Instead, they work in farming or making bricks," Davis explained. "I wanted to do something to help the next generation explore their potential and not remain underprivileged."



In 2008, Davis formed the Naya Ujalla (New Light) organization as a foundation/fundraising arm of APS. The fruits of his labor began to show in 2010 as building enhancements were made to accommodate more students. "We worked on infrastructure, upgrading from just four classrooms to 12, and we brought more staff on board," he said. "Low-income families were also provided uniforms, books and stationary items free of charge." With the help of Naya Ujalla, APS blossomed. More than 300 students now study at the school each year.

Education expanded to include middle school and then high school studies. Eleven students from the school have now gone on to college. A few have become nurses, some accountants, one went into software engineering, and another is on the way to becoming a doctor. "Many fruits have come from this seed which grew into a great tree," said Davis. "It's amazing how a small amount of money in America can have a huge impact in Pakistan. If you save the money from one meal a month, that might help educate 10 children."

"Any finances, any funds we raise, we spend 100% supporting the students and the school. There's no administration or any charge. I'm working voluntarily. Other directors are working voluntarily. Everything goes towards the cause. If you give \$100, all \$100 is being spent on the cause."

Today, Amir Davis lives in Arizona, where he works as an automation engineer with Intel. Through a friend, he connected with Muslim Americans for Compassion (MAC) President Dr. Muhammad Babar. As they discussed building a library for students, the idea developed that it should have computers and feature multimedia opportunities.

"We have a 3,600 square foot facility for the library. Construction is in progress now and then we'll begin furnishing. How can APS grow in scope to make this most effective? We're thinking about implementing evening classes for adults once the library is in place, and English language courses because it's very important for careers in Pakistan to be able to speak English," Davis said.

APS has made a significant impact in Gujranwala, but there's more work to do. Through their teaching's, APS teachers are fighting gender inequality (as girls rarely can attend school) and child labor (which is much too common in the country).

"The common man in Pakistan is really struggling with economical situations. Because money is tight, children are considered a resource too often used to child labor," said Davis. "Education is the only tool that will bring them out of this crisis. We're not giving them fish. We're teaching them to fish. I'm proud of the work we're doing, but more people



need to find out how vital this mission is.

MAC has already contributed to APS through Naya Ujalla, and we'll continue to update our members as the library takes shape. You can learn more about the great work being done at Amir Public School through <http://apspakistan.org>.

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