

**NEWS**

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## **Young Muslim Students Spearhead School Wide Fundraising Initiative in South River, Raise Thousands of Dollars for Ugandan Charity**

**SOUTH RIVER, N. J.** – Three students from the Islamic faith-based high school, Darul Arqam, located in South River, banded together on a school wide fundraising initiative, helping to raise \$5,000 for Holmdel-based nonprofit Sylvia’s Children, in just three months.

The students, Aamina Ali, Sarah Soliman (president of the group), and Hira Ismail, led the group and they raised the substantial funds by holding bake sales, championing high school sports tournaments, donation pleas, and various classroom presentations with fundraising goals for each class. Overseeing all of this was the school’s principal, Iman ElDessouky.

The money the students raised is now enough to launch a Women’s Cooperative at the Mbirizi Advanced Primary and Day Care School, located in Southwestern Uganda in Africa. In addition, the brand new 6,000-square-foot medical clinic in Uganda will now have its laboratory room named after Darul Arqam.

Sylvia Allen, founder of Sylvia’s Children, first spoke at Darul Arqam in mid-March, and by mid-June, all of the funds had already been raised by the determined students. A deal was made that if any of the students raised enough to meet their goals, they didn’t have to pay for dress-down day, and if they exceeded their goal they would have a party to celebrate.

One of the pillar beliefs of the Islamic faith surrounds support of acts of a charitable nature. In fact, every year during the month of Ramadan, Muslims fast without food and water every day from sunrise to sunset so that they can truly understand what those who are impoverished go through.

“These students were wonderful ... so kind, so thoughtful, so capable,” stated Allen. “Truly children helping children..”

Funded by Allen, Sylvia’s Children has been working tirelessly for over a decade to help improve the living conditions of the children at the school in Mbirizi, Uganda, by helping to create a self-sustainable model for the school, which can then be shared with schools in surrounding

villages. The non-profit currently supports 1,015 children at the school, one fourth of whom are orphans, at the school as well as 93 orphans in high school, three orphans in college and one who has graduated and is now a teacher.

Since launching the organization in 2003, Allen has succeeded in gaining annual sponsorship for 150 of the 331 orphans, and she has raised nearly a million dollars, all of which has gone directly to the school since she covers all administrative expenses herself. In addition to the medical clinic, the charity has constructed a fresh well, a chicken coop with 400 chickens, a kitchen, a sewing facility, new classrooms, housing for teachers and orphans, a fully-stocked library, a playground and most recently, a 6,000-square-foot medical clinic.

Those interested in more information can visit [www.sylviaschildren.org](http://www.sylviaschildren.org), or can email Allen directly at [sylvia@sylviaschildren.org](mailto:sylvia@sylviaschildren.org) or call 732-946-2711.

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