

By Arif Kabir | Published by [The Muslim Link](#) on February 27, 2009

A few days before the Presidential Inauguration, ISNA (Islamic Society of North America) announced a collaborative effort with the Presidential Inauguration Committee for the National Day of Service on January 19, 2009. They were encouraging Muslims to hold their own local service events and were told to inform ISNA about them so that their event could be put on the official inauguration website.

Seeing this, the Islamic Information Center of Dar-us-Salaam (IIC) posted their upcoming monthly trip to volunteer at the Dinner Program of Homeless Women in Washington DC. In just a few hours, the event started to rapidly fill up as people signed up for the soup kitchen event. They were all part of a Jewish community called Shirat HaNefesh (Song of the Soul) and wanted to participate in the event alongside with the Islamic Information Center. The IIC agreed and they soon made plans to meet at Dar-us-Salaam and to go to the soup kitchen from there.

The National Day of Service came, and bystanders looked on as they watched a large group of approximately twenty Muslims and Jews walking on their way from Dar-us-Salaam to the nearby Metro. When the group arrived at the Metro, they were amazed to see endless lines of people waiting to buy their tickets for the Presidential Inauguration that was to be held the next day.

Here the group split; some went back to Dar-us-Salaam and then carpooled, while others that had Metro passes from before went on the Metro to Washington DC. On the trip there, lively conversation ensued as everybody started to talk about their religion and beliefs. Jenny Adams, organizer of the event, commented, "Some of the Jewish volunteers thanked us for explaining many things to them. We had a long conversation on many topics in the car ride. They asked many questions about Islam and Muslims, and it was a very positive exchange of knowledge".

After both groups arrived in Washington DC, they made their way to the soup kitchen. Just as Barack Obama helped out at a homeless shelter earlier that day, the group also quickly became involved in the different tasks at the soup kitchen by preparing the food, washing the dishes, and cleaning up the trash. As they started on their duties, they were surprised to see a barrage of journalists and photographers sweep into the kitchen. They identified themselves as part of MediaSoup, which is a group of independent journalists that are dissatisfied with the reporting of the mainstream media. They had found out about the program through the online posting of the event and after given permission, they started to snap pictures of Muslims and Jews working side by side for a worthy cause.

After all the food was prepared, the dishes were washed, the trash was cleaned, and the food was served to the homeless women, everybody felt satisfied and content. Nathan Mishler, the director of the homeless shelter, remarked, "It was really great to have such a large group. There was good energy and mix of people, and it was fun."

This service project is a monthly outreach effort by the Islamic Information Center of Dar-us-Salaam.