

Muslim learning centre eyes

ARVIND HICKMAN

IT'S a place where young Muslim men and women can gather, learn about their religion and socialise.

But despite an open-door policy, Liverpool's Global Youth Centre in George St was not always welcoming of the media.

Early in the new year, the *Liverpool Leader* paid the George St youth centre a rare visit to find out what went on inside the hall.

We were greeted at the front entrance by the centre's administrator Zunaid Moosa.

The father of three is one of 17 volunteers who manage the centre and its activities.

A son of South African migrants, Mr Moosa has devoted his life to the way of Islam.

He grew up in Raby in Campbelltown, has a degree in aviation studies and works as a recruitment consultant.

Mr Moosa told the *Leader* the centre was established in 2000.

"A few men wanted something for the Liverpool region and found a prominent speaker, Sheikh Feiz of Lakemba, who agreed to start the centre," the 28-year-old said.

"It was for the purpose of propagating Islam and helping the kids out in this area."

The centre's premises, once an old rundown gym and adjacent offices, has been completely refurbished by members.

It now comprises a large prayer hall, library, gymnasium, separated women's room, offices, canteen, bathrooms and storage facilities,



Centre administrator Zunaid Moosa.

Pictures: MAT SULLIVAN



Gezim Recaj and Mathew Jenkins in the bookshop.

religious classes) the centre runs daily prayers and recreational activities, including soccer and basketball competitions, camps, festivals and social events.

"It started with 20 to 30 people in the first year and now we would get about 1000 people who attend throughout the week," Mr Moosa said.

"What brings them together is the educational lessons we provide and the brotherness, the togetherness and homely feeling."

The centre attracts a multinational crowd.

There are Bangladeshis, Indonesians, South Africans, Arabs, Pakistanis, Bosnians, Italians and Somalians. Followers of all ages attend - but it is targeted towards youth aged from six to 21.

Mr Moosa said an open-door policy meant youth from troubled backgrounds often found sanctuary at the centre.

He said the centre also raised funds for charities such as Human Appeal and Muslim Aid.

Surprisingly, GIYC has its own multi-media production company, One Islam Productions, and clothing label, ISRA Night Journey.

Mr Moosa said the youth centre was becoming so popular that organisers were planning to build a larger centre, estimated to cost about \$1.4 million.

The Global Islamic Youth Centre is open Monday to Saturday for lunch time prayer, Wednesday night and Friday afternoon for main prayers and Saturday morning for children's classes.

ties, all paid for through donations.

Blackboards and whiteboards adorn the walls, reminding visitors of the heavy focus on education.

The library is home to hundreds of books, "inspirational" videos and resources on Islam and history. There are personal computers with Internet access, TVs and a bookshop.

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