

NEWSLETTER

Mid-Year Highlights: January – June 2025

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PEARL OF THE ISLANDS
FOUNDATION INCORPORATED

A MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

"Welcome to the Mid-Year Newsletter of Pearl of the Islands Foundation (PIF).

It is a pleasure to reflect on the journey we've shared over the first half of 2025, a time filled with meaningful connections, impactful programs, and strong community spirit. This edition celebrates the collective efforts of our dedicated staff, volunteers, Advisory Board, Board of Directors, and the unwavering support from friends and partners like you.

Inside, you'll find highlights from our key initiatives, including our Ramadan activities in March, interfaith collaborations, cultural programs, and community outreach projects. These stories are a testament to our ongoing commitment to fostering dialogue, education, and service across Aotearoa's rich multicultural landscape.

We hope this newsletter not only informs but also inspires you to stay connected and engaged with our mission. Your support continues to play a vital role in helping us build an inclusive, compassionate, and united society.

Thank you for being an essential part of the PIF family. Together, we're building bridges that bring people closer, across cultures, faiths, and generations."

- Yalcin Solak -



WELCOMING NEW TEAM MEMBERS

We are excited to announce the expansion of our team with the appointment of two new staff members:



Adem Soylemez, joining us as **Community Engagement Coordinator**, brings a passion for connecting communities and fostering meaningful relationships across cultures.

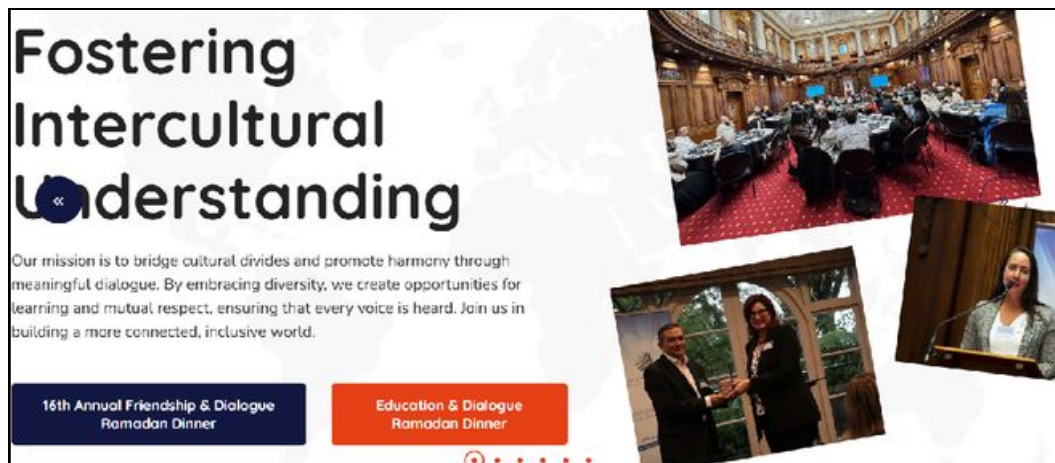
Mehmet Ciftci steps into the role of **Youth & Community Programs Coordinator**, where he will lead initiatives designed to empower and support young people in their personal and educational journeys.



DISCOVER THE NEW LOOK OF PIF ONLINE!

We're thrilled to unveil our brand-new website, designed with our community in mind! The refreshed site offers a smoother and more user-friendly experience, making it easier than ever to learn about our work, connect with us, and get involved. From updated information on our services and events to interactive forms for volunteering, service requests, and donations; everything you need is just a few clicks away.

Visit www.pif.org.nz to explore the new features, stay up to date with our latest activities, and access useful resources.



Our Mission to Empower and Uplift Communities

We believe in the power of unity to uplift communities. Through collaborative projects and outreach programs, we strive to create inclusive spaces where individuals from diverse backgrounds can come together, share experiences, and grow.

Community Building

We aim to support and engage people within our community through a variety of inclusive activities and services.

Dedicated Support

Our dedicated support network includes a passionate team of volunteers, guided by our experienced Advisory Board. We also collaborate with local and global partners to bring impactful projects to

Helping people

Each year, we allocate funds to support those in need, both locally and globally, through development, relief, and advocacy initiatives aimed at creating a better world.

LAUNCHING A NEW YOUTH CENTRE

PIF will soon be opening a dedicated Youth Centre at 2163 Great North Road, Avondale. The centre will serve as a safe, inclusive space for young people, offering academic support and homework help, youth leadership and personal development programs, intercultural and interfaith dialogue activities, skills workshops, mentoring, and social events, volunteer and community engagement opportunities

We look forward to welcoming young people from across Auckland into our new Youth Centre in the months ahead.

PIF RAMADAN CALENDAR

During Ramadan 2025, PIF hosted around 20 Ramadan dinner programs across New Zealand, bringing together over 2,700 participants from a wide range of backgrounds. Highlights included major events in Auckland and at Parliament, youth-focused gathering, interfaith Iftars with churches and a synagogue, and a variety of community, mosque, and home-hosted Iftars.

These events took place across Auckland, Wellington, Dunedin, and Motueka, fostering connection, understanding, and the true spirit of Ramadan throughout the country.

16TH ANNUAL FRIENDSHIP & DIALOGUE RAMADAN DINNER AT THE PARLIAMENT

PIF held its 16th Annual Friendship and Dialogue Ramadan Dinner at the New Zealand Parliament on the 26th of March under the theme "Respectful Coexistence Combats Extremism." The event was held in collaboration with MP Dr. Parmjeet Parmar, whose support made this meaningful gathering possible. We welcomed 90 guests, including Ministers, MPs, faith leaders, and community representatives for an evening of meaningful exchange and reflection.

Keynote speaker Prof. Douglas Pratt emphasized the importance of embracing diversity to counter extremism, while guest speaker Dr. Melissa Derby, Race Relations Commissioner, shared powerful insights on unity and social cohesion.

The evening also featured the presentation of the Community Leadership Award to Jocelyn Armstrong for her outstanding work in interfaith relations and the Ethical Leadership Award to Brian Henry for his dedication to justice and ethical advocacy. The event celebrated dialogue, diversity, and the shared values that unite communities.



EDUCATION & DIALOGUE RAMADAN DINNER 2025



PIF hosted its Annual Education and Dialogue Ramadan Dinner on the 19th of March at Sorrento in the Park, under the theme "Building Cultures through Education & Dialogue." The evening brought together 130 guests including MPs, councillors, police representatives, faith leaders, and community members for a night of meaningful exchange and celebration.

Keynote speaker Maretha Smit delivered powerful reflections on the role of education and dialogue in fostering inclusive communities. The evening featured interfaith reflections, a tribute to Mr. Fethullah Gülen, a video on the values of Ramadan, and cultural performances.

PIF also presented its annual awards, honouring Maretha Smit with the Community Leadership Award for her impactful work in diversity and inclusion, and Helene Crown with the Public Leadership Award for her lifelong commitment to education and community empowerment.



FIRST ANNUAL YOUTH RAMADAN DINNER



On the 22nd of March 2025, PIF held its Annual Youth Ramadan Dinner at the Maclaurin Hall, University of Auckland. Organized in collaboration with Beth Shalom Progressive Synagogue and Holy Trinity Cathedral, the evening brought together youth from diverse faith and cultural backgrounds under the theme “Empathy in Every Bite”.

The event fostered meaningful interfaith dialogue and cultural exchange, with participants engaging in thought-provoking conversations about the role of fasting, personal spiritual journeys, and the shared values across Christian, Jewish, and Muslim traditions.

Interactive discussions encouraged open reflection on questions such as: “What does fasting mean in your tradition?”, “What have you learned from the experience of fasting?”, and “Can fasting serve as a bridge between faiths?”

The fast was shared and broken, marking a moment of unity and mutual respect. The evening not only captured the spirit of Ramadan but also highlighted the power of empathy, learning, and connection in building a more inclusive future.



COMMUNITY RAMADAN DINNERS AT MOSQUES

PIF partnered with Avondale, Pakuranga, and Ranui mosques to host Ramadan dinners, welcoming over 1,150 participants. The events fostered community spirit and supported the Ramadan Food Parcel Campaign, promoting generosity and care.



RAMADAN DINNERS AT CHURCHES & SYNAGOGUE

PIF collaborated with churches in Dunedin, Motueka, Johnsonville, and Wellington to host Iftar dinners, bringing together over 450 people. Also an Iftar at first time at Temple Sinai, Wellington. The events fostered friendship, interfaith dialogue, and shared traditions.



A RAMADAN DINNER FOR INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



In recognition of International Women's Day, PIF had the privilege of honouring the remarkable women in our community through a special Ramadan dinner. The evening brought together women of all ages and backgrounds in a warm and welcoming space, where stories were shared, challenges reflected upon, and strength celebrated.



The event was more than just a meal, it was a tribute to the resilience, courage, and unwavering spirit of women who continue to uplift and empower those around them. From personal journeys to collective achievements, the conversations reminded us of the vital role women play in shaping a more compassionate and inclusive society.

MUSLIM BOARD MEMBERS RAMADAN DINNER



As part of our Ramadan Dinner Series, we hosted a special Iftar evening for mosque leaders and community brothers at the Pearl Centre.

The gathering was a memorable one, filled with warmth, meaningful reflection, and a strong sense of community spirit. It offered a valuable opportunity to come together, deepen relationships, and honour the values of compassion, unity, and faith during this sacred month.

HOME IFTARS

PIF community members warmly opened their homes throughout Ramadan, hosting daily dinners for friends, family, and guests from diverse faiths and backgrounds. These home Iftars fostered connection, hospitality, and deeper interfaith friendships in an intimate, welcoming setting.



EID CELEBRATIONS IN AUCKLAND & WELLINGTON

Eid is a time of reflection, generosity, and unity, marking the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting, prayer, and self-discipline. PIF joyfully celebrated Eid with families and friends, embracing the spirit of gratitude, togetherness, and joy. The celebration was filled with laughter, delicious food, and shared moments, strengthening our bonds as a community.



EID AL- ADHA CELEBRATIONS

Eid al-Adha celebration brings joy, unity, and support to our communities.

We at PIF celebrated Eid al-Adha with family and friends from our wonderfully diverse communities! It was a beautiful day of joy, connection, and shared celebration, filled with delicious food, heartfelt conversations, and plenty of laughter.

The highlight for the little ones was a colourful bouncy castle play area, set up especially for them. Their energy and excitement brought smiles to everyone's faces and added an extra layer of joy to the day.



CELEBRATING CULTURE AND COMMUNITY AT THE WHAU EID FESTIVAL



As part of the festivities, PIF contributed through a delicious Turkish food stall and a stunning Turkish lamp-making workshop of Art Masterclass New Zealand. All proceeds from the day were donated to charity, reflecting our ongoing commitment to service and social good.

PIF was proud to be part of a vibrant celebration of cultural diversity hosted by the Whau Ethnic Collective at the New Lynn Community Centre.



PEACENIC 2025: A CELEBRATION OF UNITY AND FRIENDSHIP

Muslim, Christian, and Jewish communities came together for a beautiful networking session centered around connection and shared hospitality at the Peacenic 2025 event held at Arthur Faulkner Reserve, Auckland. PIF was honoured to collaborate with the Council of Christians & Muslims (CCM), serving delicious Turkish Baklava and Apple Tea to participants from diverse faiths and backgrounds. Events like these powerfully highlight the strength found in unity, mutual respect, and celebrating our shared traditions.



PIF AT PUKETAPAPA DAY 2025

PIF joined the Council of Christians & Muslims (CCM) at Puketāpapa Day 2025! The day was filled with great food, insightful conversations, fun activities, and meaningful local connections. It was a wonderful opportunity to refresh friendships, build new community and interfaith bonds, and celebrate cultural diversity through shared experiences.



CREEK CLEAN UP IN WHENUAPAI, AUCKLAND

All our faiths share a deep commitment to caring for the environment, especially protecting our waters. PIF was proud to join the Creek Clean-Up in Whenuapai, organized by the Auckland Inter-Faith Council.

It was inspiring to see people of all ages and faiths come together, rolling up their sleeves to clean the creek and surrounding bush.

Every small effort makes a difference!



SHARING EID BLESSINGS WITH REFUGEE FAMILIES



In the true spirit of Eid, PIF partnered with the Asylum Seekers Support Trust (ASST) to deliver a meaningful act of service; distributing meat parcels to 100 refugee families. This initiative aligns with the tradition of sharing and caring that defines Eid al-Adha, and we are honoured to have supported our wider community in this way.



RAMADAN GIVING: SUPPORTING COMMUNITIES IN NEED

A small act of giving,
a big impact of HOPE.



Make a difference with your Donation

Bank: BNZ

Acc No. : 02-0184-0128059-001

Acc Name: Pearl of the Islands Foundation



Scan the QR code to make your
donation online

Your donations will be distributed to locals in Türkiye, Syria, Yemen,
Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Asia Pacific & African Countries in
collaboration with the Australian Relief Organization (ARO)



www.pif.org.nz



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In line with this year's Ramadan, the season of giving, PIF partnered with the Australian Relief Organization (ARO) to deliver vital aid to vulnerable communities across Türkiye, Yemen, Lebanon, Pakistan, Afghanistan, the Asia-Pacific region, and Africa.

As part of this campaign, we reached out through emails, shared messages at Ramadan dinners, and visited mosques to encourage generous giving. With heartfelt support from our community, we were able to collect donations that directly supported families in need, including those in the Philippines.

Thank you to everyone who contributed. Your generosity brought hope and essential food supplies to many during this blessed month.

PARTNERING TO TREASURE OUR SENIORS



For the first time ever, nearly 40 ethnic communities came together to celebrate and honour our seniors at the Treasuring Our Seniors event, held at Spark Arena in recognition of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day.

The day was filled with meaning and connection, from inspiring speakers and vibrant cultural performances to delicious food stalls and informative community. PIF was proud to contribute through our food stall, with all proceeds generously donated to support those in need.

STRENGTHENING COMMUNITY BONDS



During the recent family, youth, and girls camps held in Q1, PIF community members deepened their connections through shared experiences, reflection, and learning. In Rotorua, participants enjoyed a two-night stay filled with sightseeing, adventure activities, and meaningful group discussions. The boys engaged in daily prayers, Qur'an lessons, self-reading, and team-building sessions, alongside fun activities like touring Turangi, playing football, and relaxing in the region's iconic hot pools. Similarly, the Coromandel trip offered a warm atmosphere for girls to connect over delicious meals, shared readings, and knowledge exchange, creating a balanced and enriching experience for all.

PIF JOINS COMMUNITY OF ST LUKE FOR A SPECIAL MATARIKI GATHERING

As part of this year's Matariki celebrations, PIF was honoured to take part in a meaningful evening of reflection and connection, hosted by the Community of St Luke.

The evening featured an interfaith walk, bringing together individuals from diverse faiths and cultural backgrounds to mark Matariki; a time of remembrance, gratitude, and renewal in Aotearoa. Walking side by side, participants shared stories, traditions, and hopes for the year ahead, embodying the spirit of unity and collective wellbeing that lies at the heart of Matariki.

The gathering concluded with a warm and inclusive shared dinner at Everybody Eats; a community-driven restaurant that reflects our shared values of service, hospitality, and care for others.

