

South Brunswick High School freshman to receive community service award for interfaith group Eleven Points

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Trenton, NJ-5/30/13--Bob Biel/ Asbury Park Press Staff
Photographer: I-r Amani Ahmed, 16, Princeton, Dean Alamleh, 15, Robbinsville, and Zain Bhayat, 15, South Brunswick volunteer at the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen. They are receiving the NJ Governor's Youth Community Service Award on June 8.

Zoom

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VIDEO

Visit website link to see a video from this story. Eleven Points co-founder reflects on volunteer work. **Page A2**

After organizing service projects to help the homeless and hungry, a South Brunswick High School freshman was recognized by the state for his volunteer work as an interfaith group leader.

Zain Bhayat of South Brunswick will receive the New Jersey State Governor's Jefferson Youth Community Service Award June 8 for cofounding Eleven Points, an interfaith community service group of Muslim and Jewish youth. Its name represents the sum of the five points on stars in Islamic calligraphy and the six points on the Star of David.

"It's really nice to know that all of our hard work is being noticed," Bhayat said. "It's great to see that people are recognizing us and what we're doing."

Bhayat was chosen for the award alongside cofounders Amani Noor Ahmed, a sophomore at Stuart Country Day School in Princeton, and Dean Alamleh, a sophomore at Robbinsville High School. Ahmed approached Alamleh and Bhayat with her idea to organize the group after being inspired by her upbringing, which emphasizes service and faith.

"I was interested in combining my faith with community service," she said. "And I wanted to build a new community with Jewish and Muslim students in particular."

Amani's mother, Faria Abedin, said that helping the poor is seen in Islam as the greatest form of charity.

"Even as something as simple as smiling is considered a form of charity," Abedin said. "I think it's great that Eleven Points is coming together with Muslim and Jewish kids to alleviate poverty."

Bhayat said he was excited when Ahmed, a family friend and peer at the Islamic Society of Central Jersey weekend school, asked him to be involved with Eleven Points.

“I have attended many service projects with [Ahmed] in the past,” he said. “I also helped her with the first Eleven Points service project before she asked me to join her as one of the group’s leaders.”

The Eleven Points cofounders invited Jewish students from Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple in New Brunswick to help assemble hygiene kits and bagged lunches for the Trenton Area Soup Kitchen and Homefront, an organization that assists the Mercer County homeless.