Service Opportunities

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Organization: Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture

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Brief organizational background: Al-Bustan Seeds of Culture is dedicated to presenting and teaching Arab culture through the arts and language. “Al-Bustan,” Arabic for “The Garden,” offers structured exposure to the language, art, architecture, music, dance, literature, and natural environment of the Arab world. Al-Bustan promotes cross-cultural understanding among youth and adults of all ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds through artistic and educational programs. Al-Bustan supports the pursuit and affirmation of Arab American cultural identity, while playing a constructive civic role within broader American society.

Range of services: Broadly speaking, Al-Bustan presents and educates. Regarding teaching, we have multiple public school programs in which we teach, among other subjects, Arab percussion, singing, instrumentalism, art, and language. The most prominent of these is the Arab arts after-school program at Moffet Elementary School at 2nd and Oxford. In terms of presenting, we have a concert series, and commission renowned artists and musicians to produce, perform, and teach in Philadelphia throughout the year. We have also have a permanent Arab musical ensemble that we recently commissioned to create new musical compositions for traditional Andalusian poetry.

Population served: Although Al-Bustan is primarily focused on Arab culture, its programs and initiatives do not serve one particular group. Our educational programs target younger children--the Moffet Arab arts after-school program, for instance--as well as college students and Philadelphia-area music and Arabic teachers. Our music concerts are open to the general public and well attended by a diverse range of people.

Brief description of proposed activity: Al-Bustan will run an Arab arts after-school program for the duration of this upcoming year at John Moffet Elementary School, located near 2nd and Oxford. Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday from 3-6pm we will have an art class and a music class. From 3-5pm the art class will be led by Tremain Smith, an experienced artist and teacher, followed by homework help from 5-6pm. Concurrently, there will be a music class with choir from 3:30-4:20pm, which will then split into a percussion class and music skills class from 4:20 to 6pm.

Main expectations of student interns: Our program is looking for volunteers to help run the art class from 3-5pm, and to then tutor students from 5-6pm.
Regarding music class, we are seeking interns to help run choir, music skills, and percussion from 3:30-6pm. Interns will be expected to commit to volunteer at least once a week for the duration of the semester. There is no experience requirement, though an interest in art, music, Arabic, or Spanish will be advantageous.

**Benefit to students:** Students who work with our program will receive valuable experience teaching children grades 3-5 by assisting experienced teachers in a classroom setting. Additionally, they will learn how to work in a very culturally diverse setting—Moffet School in majority Hispanic, with Arabic the third most spoken language. Also, those interested in Arabic art and music will be exposed to Arab music theory, language, culture, and art-making techniques.

**Benefit to organization:** Volunteer help is essential to the Moffet children's educational experience in Al-Bustan's after-school program. The children's access to individualized help, which should supplement the lead-teacher's work, will improve their experience dramatically. This is especially important for the students having more trouble learning the concepts in music and art. Really, you can make a big difference in these children's lives by helping with this program.

**Service location:** John Moffet School, 127 West Oxford Street, Philadelphia, PA 19122.

**Materials/resources to student interns:** Our best resource is our experienced artists/teachers, who can act as models and mentors to aspiring educators. In addition to them, Al-Bustan maintains an extensive library of pedagogical resources such as books about Arab culture and language, as well as teaching guides.