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AUC STUDENT CLUBS GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY IN RAMADAN

April 11, 2022, Cairo – From creating packs full of essential food staples to hosting charity iftars and buying new clothes to celebrate Eid, student clubs and organizations at the American University in Cairo (AUC) are showing their dedication to creating a positive impact in the local community during the holy month.

Volunteers in Action (VIA), led by President Dareen Hussein, have compiled around 3,000 handmade and ready-made packs this year. Around half of the packs will go to families in the urban area of *Kafr Hakeem*, while the second half is split between orphanages and other organizations as well as people in Giza's *Mit Okba*. "VIA also oversees the handout of 30 fresh meals to different orphanages around Cairo each day during the holy month," says Hussein.

Student club Mashroo3 Kheir (The Goodness Project) is also continuing an almost decade-long initiative modeled after the tradition of buying new clothes to celebrate Eid. The club organizes a shopping day for children from orphanages and other institutions, during which they get to pick out brand-new outfits for themselves. Club President Amina Khedr notes the importance of this program. "Usually, these children do not get to choose what is given to them," she explains. "We want to give them the experience of choice." Mashroo3 Kheir also integrates the orphaned children they work with into everything they do. "Right now, we are empowering them to give back to their communities through teaching them to pack meals," adds Khedr.

The University's Hand in Hand Club, which is dedicated to helping orphaned children, the elderly, and women in prison due to debt, is planning a major improvement project in Giza's *Zawiyat Abu Musallam* for the month of Ramadan. According to President Ahmed Seif, the club is giving the gift of water to the community—that is, adding a water system to the small community.

“This year, we wanted to give something to the community that would live on for a long time,” says Seif. Additionally, the club is making and distributing Ramadan packs, but with the help of local high school students. “When I was a child, I did not enjoy charity work when it was forced,” he admits. “That’s what gave me the idea to teach high school students the value of service while stressing that it is not an obligation. This in turn changes students’ perceptions around the work.”

On top of giving Ramadan food packs to 2,500 families in *Masr El-Adima* (Old Cairo) and Upper Egypt, AUC’s Help Club is also focusing on spreading “Ramadan vibes” throughout the AUC campus.

Another major goal for AUC’s Student Union (SU) this Ramadan is spreading happiness through a program called *Re7let el Sa3ada* (Trips of Happiness). Under this, the SU is organizing a number of trips for AUC students throughout the month to disadvantaged communities in Egypt, where they will engage with locals through activities such as house painting, lantern-making workshops and other activities for children.

People donate money, time and other resources to charitable causes for a number of reasons—feelings of social responsibility, religious obligation, or because they see others doing the same—but the most common reason among AUC’s club presidents was simply, “It feels good.”

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The University offers 40 undergraduate, 52 master’s and two PhD programs rooted in a liberal arts education that encourages students to think critically and find creative solutions to conflicts and challenges facing both the region and the world.

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