

## Religion in the Twin Tiers

The Muslim faith

# 'We are no different'



JEFF RICHARDS/Star-Gazette

Elizabeth Walton, left, of Pine City, and Keesha Trudeau, right, of Waverly, meet with Shahida Zainul in the St. Joseph's Hospital lobby before heading to a lab class Wednesday evening.

■ Families find mostly acceptance, some racism as they blend into community.

By JEFF MURRAY

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[jmurray@stargazette.com](mailto:jmurray@stargazette.com)

Shahida Zainul of Horseheads doesn't try to conceal her Muslim heritage when she attends nursing classes at Corning Community College.

Her traditional attire makes her stand out, but Zainul said that's a good thing.

Some Muslims shun attention at a time when relations with some of their fellow Americans are strained; the Council of American-Islamic Relations says it has handled many more harassment complaints against Muslims since Sept. 11, 2001.

But Zainul believes it's her responsibility to let her fellow Americans know that that most visible faces of Islam - Osama bin Laden, convicted Sept. 11 conspirator Zacarias Moussawi, Iraq al-Qaida leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and other extrem-

### Online

■ Council on American-Islamic Relations: [www.cair-net.org](http://www.cair-net.org).

■ Web sites on Islam:  
[www.islam-guide.com](http://www.islam-guide.com);  
[www.discoverislam.com](http://www.discoverislam.com);  
[www.introducingislam.com](http://www.introducingislam.com);  
[www.understandingislam.us](http://www.understandingislam.us).

ists who are frequently in the news - do not represent her or millions of others of her faith.

"I'm the only one in my school who is a Muslim, so I am a minority. I get questions all the time," said Zainul, who is in her early 90s.

"In all religions, you have extremists, then you have regular people. I'm working for a purpose. If I'm at home, I can't spread

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### How many Muslims?

■ There is no consensus about how many Muslims live in the United States. The U.S. Census Bureau does not collect data about religious affiliation.

■ Other studies have produced conflicting results, ranging from 1.8 million to more than 8 million Muslims.

■ Six or 7 million is probably the most widely accepted estimate, and the one often cited by the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

■ South Asians, at 25 percent, make up the largest number of American Muslims, followed by Arabs at 23 percent and African Americans at 14 percent.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Council on American-Islamic Relations, "The North American Muslim Resource Guide" by Mohamed Nime.