

Suburban Life

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RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Saqib Razvi and his father, Dr. Syed Razvi, kneel on the prayer rug that is mathematically aligned to face Mecca from their Farmington Hills home. Saqib's head covering, a topi, was made for him by his grandmother.

Ramadan

Islam's Holy Month of fasting

By Lorraine McCleish
staff writer

ABOUT ONE BILLION Muslims throughout the world are observing Islam's Ramadan, the Holy Month of fasting, which began this year April 17.

Among that number is the Farmington Hills family of Dr. Syed Shameem Razvi who think of the period as a blessed month, which has its beginning with mercy, its middle in forgiveness and concludes with freedom from the place of eternal fire.

"Its real significance is in practicing self-restraint while obeying the Creator. It involves the consciousness of total submission and prepares one to observe the way prescribed by God, or in Arabic, Allah," Razvi said.

The fast is broken on Eid, a celebration Zia Razvi likens to Christmas.

"There is a lot of specially prepared foods, sweets, a lot of embracing, gift Zia Razvi," said Zia Razvi, who teaches Islamic history to youngsters in what could be likened to a Sunday School, except that it takes place on Friday evenings.

"It took 10 years for the prophet to reveal the Quran (or Koran). The revelation was completed during Ramadan, so it is a special time for rejoicing," she said.

"Eid is a rewarding experience for those who have kept fast for the sake of Allah's commands," Dr. Razvi said. "We wear new clothes, give alms and patronize relatives, friends, poor people. Zakath (alms giving) is an integral part of Eid. Islam requires that a Muslim contribute 2.5 percent of his or her idle assets to the deserving," he said. "Muslims offer thanks five times a day in prayers, yet the Eid is a special occasion for thanks."

FASTING IS one of the five pillars of the religion. "After 30 days of fasting one's body is cleansed of fats, cholesterol and lipids. The cardiovascular, digestive, nervous and other bodily systems have been rejuvenated to the condition similar to that of a newly born baby," Razvi said.

Ayesha Razvi, a student at Farmington High School, and Saqib Razvi, a student at Dunkel Middle School,

said they have had no trouble keeping the fast, nor do they find it difficult practicing the Eastern religion in a Western society.

"When we go through a cafeteria line we have to ask if there is pork in a dish, or if it was cooked in lard. We read all the labels on everything we buy in the grocery stores. Sometimes it is hard to find quiet for prayer during a busy day. But they are minor things," Razvi said.

The family belongs to the Moslem Community of Western Suburbs, which meets Friday nights in an elementary school in Livonia. On occasion they visit a mosque in Troy. Many of the get-togethers with other Muslim families take place in one another's homes. The Razvi family expects to host about 60 people in their home for Eid, and when they do they will welcome those of all faiths.

Razvi initiated and is president of Monotheistic Congregations of Metro-West, which has a mailing list of 40 families, and says he can expect up to 150 for any event that is planned.

"Islam preaches monotheism — one God," Razvi said. "The religion recognizes Judaism and Christianity as predecessors of Islam. We are all cousins."

RAZVI SAID he formed the coalition of congregations to help those of different religions to understand one another.

"When I came here in the '60s there was a lot of talk about Black Muslims. No one hardly knew where Egypt was, much less Iran or Pakistan, and whatever talk I heard about Islam was either misrepresented, misunderstood or misquoted," he said.

Razvi was born in Saudi Arabia and lived in Iran, India and Pakistan before coming to the U.S. He married his wife in India.

When he came to Detroit in the '60s he worked at Harper Hospital as a hematology researcher. He is now doing immunology research in the stepped up programs having to do with AIDS at Wayne State University.

When Ayesha Razvi graduates from high school in 1990 the family plans to make their pilgrimage to Mecca, a pilgrimage every Muslim is expected to make at least once in their lifetime.

Refresher course Self-defense for women only

JAYE SPIRO returns to Orchard Ridge Campus to conduct a one-day intensive self-defense workshop for women that will concentrate on awareness, prevention, strategy and effective fighting back.

The second-degree black belt in Aikido Shotokan Karate is founder and director of Mejlshi Karate Do-Jo, Lloess School of Self Defense in Detroit, and a once-a-year visitor to the campus to head up the session for women of all ages.

"She's taught the blind, the elderly, the disabled to effectively defend themselves," said Mary White, director of Womencenter on campus. "So when we invite women of all ages we also mean women of all capabilities, women of all experiences or no experience."

"We think of these sessions as an introduction to some, and a refresher course for those who have taken the training before. And with what is happening in our suburbs right now this is a particularly good time for a refresher."

"Being aware is very much a part of the training and it is important not to numb ourselves out," she said.

The session runs from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday, May 14, in Room 409, J Building, on the campus at 1495 and Orchard Lake Road. Participants are asked to bring their own brown bag lunch.

Fee is \$20. Reservations are taken by calling Womencenter, 471-7602.

SPIRO BELIEVES women have a lot more going for them in the event of an attack than what they might believe.

"Studies show that women get out of attacks more often than they become victims just by yelling, using a book, keys, umbrella, whatever they have in their hands. My workshop helps raise awareness of what you can do. It causes you to think about it ahead of time. Makes you prepared," she said.

Spiro believes that the success of any self-defense program is not measured by the number of assailants defeated by hand-to-hand combat. Rather, it is gauged by the numbers who avoid victimization by prevention.

"I teach home security, car security, street prevention and always emphasize teaching assertive, non-victim behavior," Spiro said.

"A powerful posture, a calm tone of voice, direct eye contact, and assertive speech decrease vulnerability and at the same time increases your own confidence," she said. Spiro is a pioneer in the development of courses for women, the blind, children, senior adults, the physically and mentally disabled.

And while her book is called "Women's Self-Defense: 22 Commonly Asked Questions," she is emphatic

that the techniques she teaches in her workshops are uncommonly simple.

"The fighting theory is clear, easy to learn and easy to remember," she said. "It is used by women of widely varying ages, backgrounds and levels of fitness."

AS FOR STRATEGY, she says, "To create sensible plans of action for different kinds of encounters is the main goal of self-defense training."

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Black belt Jaye Spiro emphasizes teaching assertive, non-victim behavior in her self-defense classes for women.

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