

BELIEFS Values

Muslims prepare for the inauguration of Ramadan

BY RENA FULKA
SPECIAL WRITER

Booths offering everything from Islamic videos to fine foods of the Middle and Far East drew over 1,000 visitors on Jan. 5, to the first pre-Ramadan Ethnic Bazaar at the Unity Center in Bloomfield Township.

Ramadan, the ninth month of the Muslim calendar, commences with the sighting of the new moon and is culminated by the sighting of the next moon.

This year, the observance begins Jan. 10 and ends Feb. 9.

Most individuals attending the bazaar were affiliated with either the Unity Center or mosques in Rochester Hills and Canton. Others came from the greater community.

"It's not just a Muslim affair, it's an ethnic affair," said Shaheena Beg of Bloomfield Hills, who organized the Oakland County event. "It's for Muslims and non-Muslims alike."

While some visitors snacked on popular palate-pleasers like shish kabab and biryani, a meat and rice dish, others took the opportunity to shop for clothes, jewelry and gifts for the post-Ramadan celebration of Eid.

"People like to do their shopping now, before the fast begins," said Begg.

Ramadan is characterized by

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a month-long, dawn-to-dusk abstinence from food, drink, smoking and sexual relations that is meant to increase "God-consciousness."

The fast is the fourth of the Five Pillars of Islam, which provide the framework of Muslim spiritual life. The others are the declaration of faith, praying five times a day, almsgiving and making Hajj, or pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca.

"The total experience is self-restraint from worldly things, material things and the carnal desires that human beings have," said Iqbal Baig of Troy. "It teaches you how to control yourself and do more charity, serve humanity and feel for the less fortunate."

Baig and his wife, Shaheen, manned adjoining booths at the Ethnic Bazaar, peddling oriental rugs and jewelry.

An engineer at General Motors, who operates his own business on the side, Baig



PHOTOS BY BILL HANSEN

American fare: Children affiliated with the Unity Center played a role in raising funds for the general maintenance of the mosque by peddling candy.

serves the Unity Center at 1830 W. Square Lake as a back-up "hafiz" — one who has memorized the entire Qu'ran, the last revealed word of God and the source of Islamic teachings and laws. During Ramadan, the entire Qu'ran unfolds chapter by chapter as the hafiz recites it in Arabic from memory each night at the mosque.

"It's a tradition of the prophet Mohammed," explained Baig, who studied the Qu'ran for three years in his native India before attending school.

Ramadan commemorates the revealing of the Qu'ran to the prophet Mohammed in the year 610 in the Common Era. "Qu'ran literally means recitation, reading the revelations from God," said Victor Begg, president of the Muslim-American Alliance. "It's the Newest Testament... the continuation of God's message."

A Bloomfield Hills businesswoman, Begg and his wife, Shaheena, are founding members of the Unity Center, along with

their children, Sami, Yusuf and Sofia.

The Ethnic Bazaar, held to raise funds for the general maintenance of the mosque and for Family Services, was purposely scheduled to precede Ramadan as an annual event.

"Our first day of operation was on the first day of Ramadan," said Begg, when discussing the founding of Unity Center. "This is our fourth Ramadan. In a way, it's historic for us."

A good cross-section of the Muslim community is represented at the Unity Center, where 100 affiliated families claim ancestry from Africa, Bosnia, India, Lebanon and Russia.

"We're a billion strong in the world," said Begg, a member of the National American Muslim Council Board of Advisors.

"Muslims, wherever they went, created a distinct Muslim culture. The Muslim community in America is still Americanizing."

The diverse group is united by the same precept that

unites Muslims worldwide — a sense of community called, "Ummah."

"The community concept of Islam is very important," said Begg, a native of India who came to the United States in 1969 as a student. "It binds us as one community, irrespective of race or ethnic background."

Muslims throughout the world break the Ramadan fast precisely at sunset in a daily ritual that is shared with family and friends. "When Ramadan comes, people are looking forward to it," said Begg. "It's not just a renewal spiritually. It's a whole social atmosphere."

The observance culminates with Eid, a special feast centered around prayer, socializing and gift-giving.

The Arabic word, Islam, means peace, purity, acceptance and commitment. "Islam is not a new religion. It's a continuation of the message of God," added Begg.

"We believe in Jesus and Moses, and our common ancestor is Abraham."



Ethnic gifts: Bloomfield Hills engineer Iqbal Baig, a back-up "hafiz" at the Unity Center, sold jewelry and oriental rugs at the pre-Ramadan Ethnic Bazaar.



Holiday attire: Dr. Kishwar Tahir of Bloomfield Hills shops for new clothing for Eid, the post-Ramadan celebration marked by prayer, feasting, socializing and gift-giving.

Joan Rivers to speak at Adat Shalom

Emmy-winning comedian, talk show host, actress and writer Joan Rivers will entertain at CHOICES 11 a.m., March 5, at Adat Shalom Synagogue, 29901 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills.

CHOICES is the annual Allied Jewish Campaign community outreach event and fund-raising luncheon sponsored by the Bloomfield Hills-based Jewish Federation Women's Campaign and Education Department.

Since her career beginnings as a stand-up comedian, Rivers has become an author, actress, playwright, screenwriter, movie director and talk show hostess.

She has written four books and a newspaper column. On television, she wrote for "Candid Camera," "That Show" and ABC-TV movie "The Girl Most Likely To..." She has appeared on "The Tonight Show" as both a guest and guest host, and on critically acclaimed talk shows in England.

Her one-hour comedy special, "Joan Ms. Rivers and Friends Salute Heidi Abramowitz," aired in 1985; one year later, she had her own talk show on the Fox network.

She also hosted shows on the USA network and appeared in a made-for-TV movie "How to Marry a Millionaire." With daughter Melissa, a "CBS This Morning" feature reporter, she

starred in the TV film "Tears and Laughter... The Joan and Melissa Rivers Story."

On the QVC television shopping network, Rivers introduced her own fashion jewelry line and currently hosts "Can We Shop?"

Rivers has appeared in and written for movies, and made her directorial debut in 1978 with the film, "Rabbit Test."

On Broadway, Ms. Rivers was in "Fun City," a play she wrote with her late husband, "Edgar Rosen-berg," "Broadway Bound" and "Sally Marr... and Her Escorts." She has won many honors for her charitable work and in the entertainment field.

There is a \$20 charge which includes lunch, plus a minimum \$150 pledge to the Allied Jewish Campaign is required for admission. Complimentary baby-sitting will be available for children age 2 1/2 and older by reservation before Feb. 15.

Co-sponsors are Jacobson's, which has stores in Birmingham and Rochester, and Polo Ralph Lauren, which has a store in Troy. Reservation deadline is Feb. 21, unless the program sells out earlier. For information, call the Federation Women's Campaign and Education Department, (810) 642-4260.

COMMUNITY MESSENGER

Community Messenger features spiritual announcements from Oakland County religious institutions. Write: Community Messenger, c/o Beliefs & Values Editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, MI 48009. Our fax number is (810) 644-1314.

FRIENDS ARE TALKING
The American Arabic and Jewish Friends, whose membership includes many Oakland County residents, will hold a "Friends Are Talking" luncheon at noon

Thursday, Jan. 16, The Peking House, 215 S. Washington, Royal Oak. Cost is \$10. To for reservations, call Barbara Gray of the Roundtable of the National Conference, (810) 669-6306.

"Friends Are Talking" gatherings have given Jewish and Arabic people an opportunity to come together in a very comfortable and informal social setting, while developing friendships and better understanding of the two communities. It has also provided opportunities for individuals to network, socially and professionally," said Michael Donenfeld, American Arabic and Jewish Friends co-chairman.

The American Arabic and Jewish Friends, a program of the Greater Detroit Interfaith Roundtable of the National Conference, is an organization founded with the mission to improve understanding and friendship between the Arab and Jewish communities.

BIBLE STUDY
First United Methodist Church, 805 E. Maple, Birmingham, invites women to include Bible study in their new year by joining WOW! or WOW! P.M. for an in-depth study of the book of Genesis through group discussion and a lecture led by Leigh Hook. The group meets at 9:30 a.m. on Tuesdays, and at 7:30 p.m. on Thurs-

days. Child care is offered on Tuesday mornings. For information, call Betty Breedlove at (810) 646-9682.

KOSHER COOKING
Cong. B'nai Moshe, 6800 Drake, West Bloomfield, invites aspiring chefs, men as well as women, to participate in a Kosher Cooking Class with Mimi Markofsky, of Spencers Catering. The class meets from 7 to 9 p.m. on Wednesdays, Jan. 22 and Feb. 5, and features a variety of kosher meatless recipes. Everyone is invited. The cost is \$20 per session. There is a discount for members of Sisterhood B'nai Moshe, which is sponsoring the event. Pre-paid registration is strongly encouraged. For information, leave a message for the Sisterhood at (810) 788-0600.

NOMINATIONS NEEDED
The Michigan Regional Advisory Board of the Southfield-based Anti-Defamation League invites nominations for the 1997 Greater Detroit Women of Achievement Award. Presented on May 1, the award honors women of inspiration who are making a difference in our community.

Nominations are requested to identify women who demonstrate excellence in leadership, through their professional and personal lives, and who exemplify the philosophy of the ADL by promoting greater understanding among the diverse racial, religious and ethnic communities of Greater Detroit. The ADL is dedicated to safeguarding civil rights and combating all forms of prejudice, discrimination, bigotry and antisemitism.

Nominations should include the name, address and phone number of the nominee, company or organization (if applicable), a brief summary of why the nominee qualifies for the award and a contact number for the person or organization submitting the nom-

ination. Mail nominations by Jan. 10 to: ADL, 4000 Town Center, Suite 420, Southfield, MI 48076, or fax to: (810) 355-9534. For further information, call (810) 355-3730.

HOLIDAY RECORDING
First United Methodist Church, 1589 W. Maple, Birmingham, is offering CD's and cassette tapes of its choirs for purchase during the holiday season. The anniversary recording contains thrilling anthems, inspiring hymns, pealing bells and exciting youth choirs. Proceeds go to the youth choir's tour to England. For information, call (810) 646-1200.

JEWISH ISSUES
Cong. B'nai Moshe, a West Bloomfield synagogue with a metro-wide membership base, has launched a monthly, home-based "Contemporary Jewish Issues" discussion group facilitated by Rabbi Elliot Pachter. The next meeting will take place at 8 p.m. Sunday, Jan. 12, at a private home in West Bloomfield. The group draws its topics from "Sh'ma," a biweekly journal of Jewish opinion published by CLAL-The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. CLAL is a leader in the effort to promote pluralism and mutual respect among the movements in contemporary Judaism. Recent issues of "Sh'ma" have focused on ethics and Jewish communal leadership, physician-assisted suicide, synagogue music, Jewish spirituality, new directions in Jewish philanthropy, Jews and liberalism, and the angst of Jewish baby-boomers. There is a charge, which includes year's subscription to "Sh'ma." For more information and to receive a complimentary issue of "Sh'ma" to read in advance of the Jan. 12 session, call (810) 788-0600.

HEBREW CLASSES
Kolel Moshe, Cong. B'nai Moshe's adult Jewish learning center,

offers daytime, evening and Sunday morning Hebrew reading classes for the winter session. Classes meet for eight sessions and are open to the public.

Total Beginner Hebrew Reading, taught by Ahuva Newman, meets from 12:30 to 1:30 p.m. on Thursdays beginning Jan. 16. The class focuses on letter recognition and phonetic reading ability, especially for the siddur (the Jewish prayer book for Shabbat, the festivals and daily worship services). The cost is \$28 for B'nai Moshe members, \$45 for non-members. Newman is also teaching a Total Beginner Hebrew Reading class from 7:30 to 9 p.m. on Thursdays beginning Jan. 16. This class began in October and has met eight times. New students are welcome. The fee is \$40 for members, \$56 for non-members. Two adult Hebrew classes on a Beginner Plus level are being offered for students with three semesters experience in Hebrew study. Dr. Ed Goldberg's series runs from 9:30 to 11 a.m. on Sundays beginning Jan. 12. The fee is \$18 for members, \$36 for non-members. Education director Rita Abramson's class meets from 8 to 9 p.m. on Mondays beginning Jan. 13. Tuition is \$28 for members, \$45 for non-members.

The Intermediate-Advanced Hebrew Reading class meets from 9:30 to 11 a.m. on Sundays beginning Jan. 12. This group has been studying with instructor Nathan Roth for five years. The fee is \$18 for members, \$36 for non-members. New students are cordially invited to join the continuing adult Hebrew classes at B'nai Moshe, 6800 Drake, West Bloomfield. Prospective students may audit the first class at no charge before deciding to enroll. For information or to arrange a personal consultation with an instructor, call Rita Abramson at (810) 788-0600.