

Ramadan: a function of fast, feast and reflection



Students gathered in the Heritage room at sundown to end their fasting with a Ramadan feast. Fasting began at seven in the morning and lasted until seven at night. SARAH CARTWRIGHT

Tom Lany
Staff Writer

This year, The Pan-Afrikan Student Organization and The Crossroads Program wanted to give the Gustavus campus community an opportunity to see what it is like to experience an element of the religion of Islam by fasting, something Muslims do

throughout the month of Ramadan. So, On Sept. 24, the groups held the 1st annual Gustavus Day of Fasting.

In addition to providing information about Ramadan, the two groups worked together to provide information about the fasting traditions of other religions. "I think just tabling has done a lot," said Junior Accounting Major

Abdul Suleyman.

Suleyman said students decided it would be best to hold one big event this year, instead of holding smaller events each week throughout the month of Ramadan, as they have done in past years.

More than 160 students signed up for the Gustavus Day of Fasting in the first three days of

promotion. "It has been a success. Hopefully we can make it [even] bigger next year," said Suleyman.

In addition to the Gustavus Day of Fasting, Professor of Physics Steve Mellema gave a reflection on Ramadan during Chapel on Sept. 18 as a part of the Interfaith Observance Program. "This just shows how open our campus is about religion," said Suleyman.

In his reflection, Mellema described the month of Ramadan as a period of self-restraint, in which Muslims strive to live up to the teachings of the Qur'an. Mellema mentioned that the month is also a time when Muslims think about people who

are less fortunate.

"It was very well put together," said Sophomore English Major Susan Kranz.

For many Muslims, the benefits of fasting outweigh the challenges. "I become aware of God's presence every year," said Mellema.

For Suleyman, the challenge of fasting is not what some make it out to be. "I don't think about it too much," said Suleyman.

Although the season of Ramadan will conclude on Sept. 30, an on-campus lecture featuring Imam Faheem Shuaibe and addressing the question "Does Islam Oppress Women?" is scheduled for Oct. 9, 2008, at 6:30 p.m.

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