

A Time For Celebration

The Muslim Student Association Plans for the End of Ramadan

“I’m so sad it’s almost over,” said Ayah Sasi as she began a planning meeting Monday for the final activities of Ramadan, a month long Muslim holiday.

Not the type of comment you would expect from someone who has been fasting for three weeks, but for members of the Muslim Student Association on Auraria campus Ramadan is a time of celebration.

During Monday’s weekly planning meeting, MSA members discussed the preparations for their Eid-al-Fitr dinner to be held at 5 p.m. Wednesday in the Club Hub of the Tivoli student union. The dinner will celebrate the sighting of the new moon and signify the end of Ramadan and all fasting, said Marziya Kaka, president of the Metro State chapter of the MSA.

During the month of Ramadan, the ninth month of the year according to the lunar calendar, Muslims refrain from eating, drinking or smoking during daylight hours, reports Kaka. She goes on to explain that Muslims break their fast each evening after the sun goes down with a small meal known as an iftar, but it is the last meal of Ramadan that is the most significant.

Ali Baba, a Middle Eastern restaurant based in Boulder, will cater the dinner with Kaka in charge of the food once it arrives at the Club Hub. Other MSA members sorted out details of what beverages they would provide and who would bring them, and also decided on small bags of candy to be given as party favors.

MSA members discussed how the few tables available to them will be arranged to serve food to the 150 guests they anticipate Wednesday night. The dinner will be set up

buffet style, said Kaka, but due to seating space most of their guests will end up standing.

Of particular concern to MSA members is the location of the dinner at the Tivoli Club Hub. A relatively small space with no dividing walls, the MSA office shares the Club Hub with other Auraria clubs whose members came and went as the MSA conducted their meeting.

Other more fitting space in the Tivoli had already been reserved according to Kaka, so a last minute decision was made to hold the dinner, unofficially, in the Club Hub.

But this isn't the first time the MSA has had to worry about space, said Kaka. The founding members of the Auraria chapter had no designated place to pray when they arrived on campus and used the hallways in the Tivoli to conduct their daily prayers. When the Tivoli administration became aware of this, they offered them a room in the Club Hub.

Sasi, president of the Community College of Denver Chapter of the MSA, is not concerned with the issue of space for the Eid-al-Fitr dinner.

"We'll all take our dishes and go downstairs if we have to," she said. "It's not a problem."

Because of funding concerns as a campus organization, MSA members also want to ensure a strong turnout of non-Muslims at their dinner.

"We've been accused of catering more to the Muslim community than to the campus," said Kaka.

For this reason members were instructed by Sasi and Kaka not to invite Muslim friends and family, but instead to advertise the dinner to those around campus of non-

Muslim faith.

Also covered in Monday's meeting was a request from a sixth grade class in Idaho Springs to have a speaker from the MSA address their class as part of their section on Islamic studies.

The MSA encourages its members to be active in this type of community service, said Kaka. The week before MSA members helped out in a local nursing home. During the holidays they will volunteer in downtown Denver soup kitchens and in January participate in the annual Martin Luther King walk.

Before the meeting started many of the female members gathered around their small central table in the Club Hub and exchanged a few words and phrases in Arabic. Most wore the traditional Muslim head coverings, but despite the interpretation by the western world that this is a sign of submission, these women were clearly in charge of their domain with only one male member in attendance for the meeting.

Other male members not participating in the planning meeting sat on a nearby couch engrossed in video games. Meanwhile, temptation lurked only a few feet away from all: a water cooler and two vending machines, one containing soda, the other chips and candy bars. For the fasting members of the MSA, this did not seem the slightest distraction.