

## Ramadan Tent

September 26, 2008

Texas A&M University invited students, faculty and staff an opportunity to experience the celebration of Ramadan with an Iftar (meal) in Rudder Plaza and the Rudder Exhibit Hall Thursday, Sept. 25, 2008.

The event called "Ramadan Tent" lasted from 6-9 p.m. Iftar, the dinner which breaks the day's fast; began at sunset, which was approximately 7:30 p.m., to celebrate the start of Ramadan.

The Muslim Student Association, in conjunction with the Freshman Leadership International, Arabic and Asian Language Office, International Programs Office, Qatar Support Office, and the Turkish Raindrop Foundation hosted the event and wanted everyone to experience the celebration of Iftar.

The supporting organizations committed to this event in order to dispel stereotypes and promote understanding of a holiday central to the Islamic faith and to celebrate breaking the fast with Muslim students, staff, and faculty colleagues.

The event featured live traditional music by local artists, henna painting, Arabic calligraphy, culture displays, customary Islam prayers, and the Iftar dinner, a buffet of traditional Arab foods, placed under a large tent.

Dr. Mike Pilant, professor of Mathematics, sparked the crowd by playing the traditional Arabic instrument called an "oud." He learned to play the guitar-like instrument while he was overseas.

Several students who are studying abroad in AggieLand from their homes of Doha, Qatar, wore their traditional Muslim garb at Ramadan Tent, in order to celebrate the event as they would in their home country.

Patti Urbina, director of Qatar Support Services, said it was the power of just a few people who thought that this event needed to take place. She wanted A&M students to be able to take notice and learn something, and she said it is all about understanding one another's culture.

Nancy Allaham, administrative coordinator of the Qatar Support Office, spent many hours in the past two weeks working to collaborate with others to make this event happen. When asked about how she thought the event had gone, she only had one word to describe it, "Wonderful!"

Allaham explained the order of the evening's events including eating of dates and drinking water to begin the breaking of the fast. Those who wished to participate could also take part in the prayer room, which was located inside the Rudder Exhibit Hall.

Allaham said many of the students would probably leave after Iftar to go to their mosques to continue in the celebration. She said she was glad that the university could share this occasion with everyone and that it was a learning experience.

Sponsors for the event included: the Charles Bowman and Lynn Holleran International Endowment, Office of the Vice President and Associate Provost for Diversity, and the Office of the Dean of Faculties.