

Eid Mubarak! Halton Muslims celebrate the end of Ramadan

Eid al-Fitr marks the end of the holy month of fasting, and centres around family visits and celebration

SAIRA PEESKER

sairapeesker@metroland.com

With the end of Ramadan, Muslims across Halton and beyond finished their month of fasting with a day of celebration featuring food, family and prayer.

This year, Ramadan began in mid-May and ended at dark Thursday when the crescent moon that signals the end of the lunar month was visible in the sky. The ensuing day, Eid al-Fitr, is marked by widespread celebration. Some religious organizations, such as Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Canada and the Fiqh Council of North America, announced June 14 that the following day would be Eid for their communities.

During the holy month, Muslims typically abstain from food and drink during daylight hours, give more to charity, refrain from bad behaviour and offer additional prayers. With Ramadan this year falling on the season with the most daylight, adherents were subject to extra-long fasts and very little sleep, as most wake up before sunrise for a meal.

"It's not really the food you miss, it's the habits," said Milton Ward 8 Coun. Zeeshan Hamid, who hosted a community Iftar dinner on June 7.

More than 100 people from diverse backgrounds attended the event at Paramount Fine Foods, which was co-hosted by the Muslim Association of Milton and the Islamic Community Centre of Milton. That day, Hamid was joined in fasting by several non-Muslim colleagues from Milton town council. "Missing coffee is

really difficult, and was hard for (Ward 6 councillor) Mike Cluett ... We don't realize how much of our time we fill with food."

Ward 3 Coun. Cindy Lunau went well past sunset before having a meal because she was attending her granddaughter's dance performance at the time of breaking the fast. She says it was all worth it, both to know she could do it and to get a better understanding of Muslim practices.

"There's a way of truly appreciating cultures by immersing yourself into that culture, and as much as I can, I want to do that," she said, noting she has been reading parts of the Qur'an with students in the United Church Sunday school class she teaches.

"Fear is a terrible, terrible weapon and if you can dispel some of that fear, I think it helps." Burlington resident Kayleigh Lowe also tried fasting to get a better understanding of the area's Muslim community. She participated in the Fast with a Muslim Friend campaign organized by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at in Milton, which saw her get up early on May 30 to eat breakfast with a host family, experience prayers at their mosque, then rejoin the community in the evening to break fast and eat dinner.

She said it left her with new friends and a sense of the challenges posed by the Ramadan schedule. "Going into it, I thought it was just food. I didn't know I'd be abstaining from water and drink," said Lowe, a 22-year-old social services student at Sheridan College. "I was a little bit freaked out, but ... I got a little



Graham Paine/Metroland

Men of Milton's Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at take part in a prayer at sunset prior to enjoying dinner on June 4, 2018.

thirsty but it wasn't crazy. I am also not a napper and I found myself needing a nap. A solid two-hour nap."

Lowe ended up fasting for a second day as well, saying that time, she "chugged water" before beginning. Her main challenge that day was her job at M&M Food Market, where they were offering samples to customers.

"I gained a little bit of empathy," she said. "It was a great experience."

Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Milton held a community Iftar on June 4.

It will now take most Muslims a while to readjust to their normal schedules, said Abdul-Ahad

Ruhomaun, secretary general of Oakville's Masjid Noor-Ul-Haram, part of World Islamic Mission Canada. The point is to remember what they learned while they fasted, he said, a sentiment echoed by Noor-Ul-Haram president Noorhassen Kausim.

"On behalf of the entire team of Masjid Noor-Ul-Haram, I would like to wish all brothers and sisters Eid Mubarak (Happy Eid)," he said in a statement. "On this day, let us reflect to what we have experienced and learned through the month of Ramadan and inculcate those good lessons in our daily lives.

"Despite its challenges, Ramadan is a period of blessings and

community togetherness, said Ruhomaun, describing a bitter-sweet feeling as it drew to a close.

"The joy when you see the moon is exciting," Ruhomaun explained June 12. "It's a mixed sentiment because for 30 days you've been together, done a routine, and been blessed so much. You feel a pinch in your heart because the month of blessings is going away. On the other hand, you feel happy because Eid is a gift from God."

Masjid Noor-Ul-Haram will host five sittings of morning prayers on Eid, and will also rent out Mississauga's Living Arts Centre, which seats 1,500. People often dress up and spend the day visiting family, said Ruhomaun, adding children are given gifts of money called "eidi."

Oakville Mayor Rob Burton and Oakville MP John Oliver joined about 200 people at a community Iftar at Noor-Ul-Haram on June 10. Both issued statements wishing area Muslims a joyous Eid.

"I was touched to hear from members of this mosque that undertook a time of special seclusion to reflect on and pray for the betterment of our community and our country," wrote Oliver.

"Breaking the fast with some of our Muslim community in Oakville to celebrate the end of Ramadan was a wonderful experience."

Milton councillor Hamid says the challenge now, with Ramadan behind us, is to maintain that discipline for the rest of the year — but it's not easy.

"The main goal is learning to give up all the things we shouldn't be involved in," he said June 12. "When you deprive yourself of food and water you are acutely aware (of how little you actually need). It works for the month, but unfortunately, it's easy to go back to your old habits."

2018 Cadillac Escalade

now available at

0% for 72 months

+ \$5,000 off MSRP*

Wallace

EXPECT THE BEST

905-878-2355 | WALLACECHEV.COM | 801 MAIN ST. E. MILTON

VISIT US TODAY!



The vehicle you always wanted is closer than ever

*MSRP of 2018 Escalade or any other GM model from 1999-2018