

Worshiping while away from home

Non-Christian students work to observe their religion while at school

BY SCOTT HENSON
Staff Reporter

While practicing Christianity in Kirksville is made easier with the presence of more than 20 Christian churches and 14 Christian religious organizations at Truman, adhering to religions other than Christianity in the city can be challenging.

For many Truman students who belong to a religious minority, adapting to a small-town Christian culture can mean developing personal religious rituals and the occasional trip home during school days for religious holidays.

For sophomore Sandi Sunnati, attending Masjids, places of Muslim worship, in her hometown of St. Louis was never difficult as she said there are roughly 10 there. Although she said Muslim prayer can occur "anywhere on Earth that's clean," Muslims at Truman who wish to pray in organized fellowship often rely on the Muslim Student Association's weekly Jum'ah, or congregation prayers, at 1:30 p.m. every Friday in the Student Union Building, she said.

"Most of the people who come are international students who are from Saudi Arabia where they're used to hearing the adhaan [call to prayer] broadcasted across the country, whereas here it's just in a small room," she said. "For them, it's just a little taste of home."

A lack of fellowship options is not the only religious limitation Sunnati faces in Kirksville. Halaal meat, which comes from animals slain in the name of Allah, can only be found in Columbia, Mo., she said. Because she strictly eats only this type of meat, Sunnati sticks with vegetable options on Sodexo's menu and often must return to Truman with a cooler full of Halaal after her trips home if she wants a break from her vegetarian diet.

Sunnati said returning home for Muslim holidays, which often fall on school days, also provides its share of complications. When she recently traveled home for Eid al-Adha, an Islamic holiday from Nov. 6-9, trying to complete homework for all her classes before and after the weekday festivities made her feel crunched for time, she said.

"It's harder for us to celebrate because when we observe our holidays, we're missing out on school hours," Sunnati said. "When people go home for Christmas break, they don't do anything for school. We have to set aside our time, and it's harder because we want to finish all our work before we go home, which is virtually impossible."

During Jewish holidays like Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah, sophomore Josh Dayan said he travels to a Jewish temple in Columbia or in St. Louis, his hometown.

With the nearest of these two sites approximately 100 miles away, Dayan said he relies on weekly meetings in Violette Hall with Hillel, Truman's Jewish or-

ganization, for fellowship with others in Kirksville who share his faith.

Dayan said that while he accepted Kirksville's lack of Jewish spiritual options when he applied to Truman, he wouldn't mind seeing a synagogue within city limits where he could more frequently worship among fellow Jews without traveling so far.

"For a lot of religious people, college is that time where you get to explore how you define your religion personally," he said. "Because you're on your own, it's up to you to practice. Sometimes I feel like I'm missing out on that experience [more than] other Jews who go to more Jewish schools."

Despite the absence of a worship center, Dayan has maintained several private expressions of his faith, which include reciting blessings before each meal and saying the Shema, "the holiest of Jewish prayers," when he wakes up, during worship services and before he goes to bed, he said.

However, observing Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest on Friday evenings, was something Dayan said he's had to sacrifice since coming to Truman.

"Being Jewish in Kirksville, I don't really get to celebrate [Shabbat] at all because a lot of our events and things that happen around here happen on Friday nights ... so I have to choose between my religion and my social life," he said.

Before coming to Truman, senior Ankeeta Koirala often would attend Hindu festivals and could find temples "everywhere" in Nepal, the country she's from. Since she's been in Kirksville, she said, without a Hindu temple, her observance of her faith has declined.

While she knows Hindu students who set aside food on their plate to offer their gods or mark a space in their rooms with holy statues for morning prayer, she said she hasn't observed many of the rituals common to her faith while at Truman.

"If you have temples and places to go to, you would be more religious," she said. "Because I don't have anywhere to go to and pray, I don't really practice it that often."

Koirala, like most Hindus, refrains from eating beef products. Having to explain this to non-Hindus can be a hassle, she said, especially in the Midwest where beef products are a staple of daily life.

"Everyone is like, 'Why do you not eat meat?' and it's a religious thing," she said. "[We] consider cow to be a form of God. ... When we say that, I don't think [non-Hindus] completely understand it."

For Dayan, being a non-Christian in Kirksville hasn't made him feel misunderstood or marginalized, though. He said the Truman and Kirksville communities embraced his religious differences, and he doesn't feel held back from having a religious identity.

"I came to Truman because I love the school," he said. "I don't wake up every morning wishing I was somewhere else with a higher Jewish population. ... I can be Jewish in a non-Jewish community."



Jessie Poole/Index

Savanna Buford, left, and Alyssa Buckallew, right, seniors from Schuyler County High, practice their steps during the salsa lesson Nov. 15. The lesson was given by Spanish professor Sergio Escobar.

Festival presents new experiences

BY JOHN O'BRIEN
Assistant Features Editor
index.featureseditor@gmail.com

Learning Arabic, salsa dancing and playing the outdoor French game Pétanque were just a few of the events on the agenda for Missouri high school students attending the Classical and Modern Language Festival at Truman State.

The festival, which was from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tuesday in the Student Union Building, has been hosted at Truman since it was created during the mid 1990s. The festival brings high school students from throughout Missouri together to experience Truman, new cultures and, most of all, new languages.

Nearly 200 high schoolers from six Missouri schools participated in 25 25-minute sessions, classics professor Bridget Thomas said. Each of the 25 sessions featured one of 11 foreign languages, including more common languages, such as Spanish and French, and less frequently taught languages, such as Arabic and Greek, Thomas said.

Sessions ranged from a more traditional lecture-style to a more hands-on sessions such as Lecciones de Salsa, in which Spanish professor Sergio Escobar taught students the fundamentals of salsa dancing.

"Sometimes we have people who do a PowerPoint presentation and make it more like a lecture," Thomas said. "Then there are others, like Salsa dancing ...It's very

hands on, well very hips on. So some of them are very formal and some of them are very creative."

One of the primary changes made to the festival this year was the introduction of the Arabic language to the sessions offered.

Because of the introduction of Arabic courses at Truman, it was not until this year with the help of Thomas and French professor Ronald Manning, who supervises the Arabic classes at Truman, that the language was brought into the festival in the course, A First Lesson in Arabic.

"I was just kind of determined to get Arabic in, so I pursued it more than usual," Thomas said. "I felt like it's a unique offering Truman has and I know a lot of our students are interested in it. I thought high school students may have no opportunity to practice it otherwise and it may spark an interest. It's a critically important language so we need to have people learning Arabic."

With the help of senior Sarrah El Moumouhi, who presented the session on Arabic, the introduction of the new language was well received by the high school students, Thomas said.

French professor Timothy Farley said he thinks teaching Arabic and all other foreign languages are essential and this festival helps students experience new languages in new and exciting ways.

"I always say that growing up in the Midwest is like living on an island because you don't know how big the world is and

you have to fly or drive for hours and hours just to get out of the Midwest," Farley said. "So these kids don't really know how big the world is, so they come here and sit in on the Greek session or on the Italian or Russian sessions and they do fun activities and it really inspires them."

Sophomore Alejandro Dominguez-Delgado said he thought the festival was a great learning experience.

Dominguez-Delgado, currently is pursuing a degree in Spanish in hopes of obtaining a career in Spanish education, led a session about his home country, Michoacán, an intimidating task, he said.

"A lot of people said [presenting] will help to get a feel of high school students," Dominguez-Delgado said. "I was freaking out before [the presentation], but the kids were great and I got to experience dealing with students and answering questions."

He said his session went well and helped him prepare for a future in education.

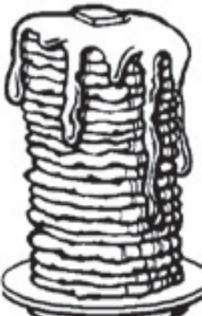
While it aided him, Dominguez-Delgado said the festival's main purpose is to expose the students to new languages and help stress the importance of foreign languages in America.

"A lot of students take for granted foreign languages," he said. "They get to learn about other foreign languages they hadn't known before. It opens people's eyes to what there is and why it is important to know a foreign language."

Pancake City

We're breakfast and a whole lot more!

OPEN
Sunday: 12:00am - 9:00pm
Monday: 6:00am - 10:00pm
Tuesday - Saturday: 24 Hours



**Monday Nights 5pm-9pm:
All U Can Eat Spaghetti
\$7.09**

**Tuesday Nights 5pm-9pm:
All U Can Eat Shrimp \$7.89**

pancakecitykirksville.com

The Epsilon Omega Chapter of alpha gamma delta

would like to congratulate their newly initiated sisters.

Emily Hagen	Sarah Meyer
Jessica Koch	Olivia Nalley
Ellen Jackson	Sam Ruhlman
Briana Sharkey Gonzalez	Arlene Seper
Janise Gildehaus	Bianca Kliethermes
Katie Hussey	Staci Sanders
Molly Diecker	Sarah Engelkamp
Alyssa Perley	Emily Smith
Lucy Ferguson	Jordan Bossard
Kayla Oliver	Jessica Williams
Emily Eck	Tara Lovekamp
Hillary Corwin	Jessica Chiodini
Keri Shine	Cora Claypool
Casey Philipp	Ally Flick
Taylor Winger	Natalie Reinhold
Sarah Branch	Paige Bergan
Haleigh Steins	Valerie Dobson
Taylor Barker	

Welcome to AGDI!