



Community Focus

Days of Religious Observances

LaDeanne Jha
Extension Educator

The following are some religious and cultural groups' holidays and observances.

African American

Kwanza is celebrated from Dec. 26 to Jan. 1. This holiday focuses on seven principles: unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity and faith.

Bahat

Baha'i's observe the birthday of Bab on Oct. 20 by suspending work and coming together for prayer and festivities. The Bab is considered a spiritual messenger and forerunner of Baha'u'llah, the prophet and founder of the faith. Baha'u'llah's birthday occurs on Nov. 12 and is another significant day of observance for Baha'i's.

Buddhist

Bodhi Day is Dec. 8 and celebrates Buddha's Enlightenment — a time when he gained understanding of the truth of existence, was freed from human suffering and found perfect happiness. This date is based on the Japanese Buddhist calendar and observed by Mahayana Buddhists.

Islam

Ramadan, The Month of Fasting, is the holiest month of the Muslim year (see related article below). Eid al-Fitr, The Feast of the Breaking the Fast, marks the end of this period of fasting with festivals, buying and wearing new clothes and celebrations over three days. Eid al-Fitr arrives in early winter. These religious festivals and holidays may significantly affect business openings and work schedules. This is especially true of Eid al-Fitr and Eid al Adha,

See **OBSERVANCES** on next page

Ramadan, the Month of Fasting



Sief Mahagoub
Extension Community Coordinator

Ramadan is a special month of the year for over one billion Muslims throughout the world. Muslims think of it as a kind of tune-up for their spiritual lives. There are as many meanings of Ramadan as there are Muslims.

Among these, the most important it is a means of learning self-control. Due to the lack of preoccupation with the satisfaction of bodily appetites during the daylight hours of fasting, a measure of ascendancy is given to one's spiritual nature, which becomes a means of coming closer to God.

Ramadan is also an opportu-

nity to gain by giving up, to prosper by going without and to grow stronger by enduring weakness.

As a secondary goal, fasting is a way of experiencing hunger and developing sympathy for the less fortunate, and learning thankfulness and appreciation for all of God's bounties.

Fasting is also beneficial to the health and provides a break in the cycle of rigid habits or overindulgence.

Fasting in Ramadan is obligatory on those who can do it. Sick people and some travelers in certain conditions are exempted from the fast but must make it up as they are able.

The daily period of fasting

See **RAMADAN** on next page

Watching the Corn Grow

Internet Course Offers Real-Time Farming Experience

Charles Flowerday
Conservation and Survey

A new University of Nebraska internet course that lets students look in on a working farm now offers real-time video of farming operations and natural resources data gathering via a Web-based camera, a much-anticipated feature of the farm.

Using the newest technology to connect them to humanity's oldest industry, "America's Farm" focuses on operations at

where the Center for Advanced Land Management Information Technologies (CALMIT) already conducts much of its research on remote sensing, geographic information systems and agriculture. Funded by a \$700,000, three-year grant from NASA, the course also offers views of the

are not exposed to farming and need to be aware of its influence and different topics that affect farmers," one student said in the course evaluation.

The course has included about 15 students but should eventually accommodate 20-25. Unlike some Internet classes, it

is not self-paced, running roughly concurrent with each semester. This was done to facilitate interaction and a sense of community among the students taking it, sometimes lacking in Internet instruction, Clark said.

The class will also be cross-listed through UNL in the future. It is part of a new problem-solving teaching format designed to use open-ended questions as a way to tackle a number of related subjects, Perk said.

These "inquiry-based" scenarios require that students research a problem emerging from farm life or operations, develop questions leading to solutions, acquire and analyze suitable data and generate a set of conclusions. Examples include setting up an airborne imaging project or geographic information system for the farm; using remote sensing to assess crop residue from conservation, or reduced, tillage; soil compaction; irrigation efficiency or pasture quality; using remote sensing and GIS to analyze the spread of weeds; or linking yield results with soils quality. The Web camera also should tie into local climate data and help students see what field looks like under various climatic and cropping conditions, Perk said.

America's Farm also has resulted in a plan to incorporate the nation's first technology track into the curriculum at Mead High School, one of a select group of magnet schools for agriculture in the country. The track would allow students to specialize in high technology such as remote sensing and GIS, Perk added.

"There are about a half dozen agriculture magnet

See **CORN GROW** on next page



At the remote sensing research facilities used by CALMIT (pictured at top), researchers collect close range remote sensing data (pictured below) to be incorporated into America's Farm education products.

NU's research farm at Mead and is offered to teachers of science, social studies and vocational agriculture as curriculum development. The course finished its second full semester last spring after a fall semester with a 100-percent completion rate, much greater than most Internet courses, said Paul Clark, grant coordinator for the College of Education at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. He is collaborating on the project with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Center for Advanced Land Management Information Technologies.

The class has been used by educators teaching every age from kindergarten to high school, Clark said.

America's Farm is on the 9,500 acre NU Agricultural Research and Development Center (ARDC) near Mead,

farm from aircraft and satellites. Remote sensing involves airborne or satellite imagery, and geographic information systems are computerized means of displaying and analyzing spatial data.

"The idea is to give teachers and their students access to a real, working Midwestern farm and to deliver various kinds of data in a package that teachers can use, all over the Web," said Don Rudquist, director of CALMIT, which helped secure the grant and provides technical assistance. A program of the Conservation and Survey Division and the UNL School of Natural Resource Sciences, CALMIT is UNL's center for remote sensing and GIS.

"It was good for my students to see how the farming community affects the economy of Nebraska. With the decline in the number of farmers, students

This Nebraska math graduate is a proven problem solver.

Lt. Shane Osborn faced a lot of challenging problems as a mathematics student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, but his ultimate test came last April when he successfully

landed a badly damaged EP-3E surveillance plane on China's Hainan Island after colliding with a Chinese F-8 fighter. For saving his 24 Navy crewmembers under extreme circumstances, this Norfolk native has been hailed as a hero across the country. Commissioned in the U.S. Navy after completing the NROTC program and receiving a degree in math at Nebraska, Shane will continue to serve the Armed Forces as an EP-3E instructor pilot.

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