

Students Prepare to Observe Hanukkah, Kwanzaa

BSU Stresses Unity, Values at Kwanzaa Teach-In

By NATIA DAVITI
Staff Writer

When the Christmas trees and menorahs go up in homes and storefronts every December, few people need to ask what they stand for – such symbols are almost inescapable during the holiday season.

When decorations go up for Kwanzaa, however, many people are left to ask what exactly this third December holiday is all about.

Saturday night in the Student Union, over 100 UB students, staff and alumni gathered to shed some light on the lesser-known holiday and celebrating Kwanzaa at an annual dinner sponsored by the Black Student Union.

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Danick Baron / The Spectrum

Students light candles Saturday night in a ceremony part of the annual Kwanzaa dinner, sponsored by the Black Student Union.

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Students End Semester With Eight Days of Hanukkah

By ERICA HOOD
Staff Writer

With Hanukkah set to start Tuesday night, hundreds of Jewish students at UB will celebrate the Festival of Lights for the next eight days by either going home to family, or lighting candles and swapping presents with friends on campus.

"I am so excited to go home for Hanukkah," said Jon Goldberg, a junior communications major. "I usually go home every year, and this year is no different. Celebrating with your family is extremely important during this festival. There's nothing else out there quite like it."

A celebration of the Jewish victory over Greek conquerors over 2,000 years

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BSU: Seven Candles

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"For people who don't really understand what Kwanzaa is about, this dinner is a great experience for them," said Christopher Brown, a first year graduate student and BSU member. "It's important to celebrate African American culture within such a large university."

An African American and pan-African cultural holiday, Kwanzaa was first celebrated in 1966 in the aftermath of brutal race riots and the Black Freedom Movement. Ron Everett, a professor at the University of California at Long Beach, created the holiday to celebrate family, community, and the seven principles called "Nguzo Saba."

Unity, self-determination, collective work and responsibility, cooperative economics, purpose, creativity, and faith are all fundamentals highlighted during the days of Kwanzaa and applied to life throughout the year.

"I take whatever I learn about Kwanzaa here and bring it back home with me," said Deidra McBean, a second year graduate student in economics. "It's important to practice the foundations of Kwanzaa. It's a good way to live."

Organizers said Saturday's unseasonably nice weather made it easier for more people to attend the cultural event.

"Snowstorms have plagued us the past couple of years and haven't allowed many who were interested in attending to be able to, so we really lucked out this time," said Terrell Monroe, a UB alumnus who was a speaker at the dinner.

The holiday itself, which is not religious, runs for a week from

Dec. 26 to Jan. 1.

Black Student Union organizers said the celebration was meant to give a background on the holiday and answer questions for those who are interested in learning more about it.

The dinner featured all of the seven symbols of Kwanzaa.

The Kinara, or candleholder, represents continental Africans and ancestors. The Mkeka, or mat, represents the tradition and history that today's Africans build their lives around. The Mazao, or crops, are symbolic of the African harvest celebrations and the rewards of productive and collective labor.

The last key symbol is Mishumaa Saba, the seven candles, which symbolize the Seven Principles, and provide a set of values, which people are encouraged to live their lives by.

The night also showcased the Daemen College step troupe and gospel choir. The neighboring college was invited to join in on the festivities to stress the importance of a cohesive community.

"The whole idea is to make the annual Kwanzaa dinner a family and community event, and Daemen's presence really helps us to that," Monroe said.

Although the dinner featured a traditional and hearty menu, for those who attended, the event was about far more than good food.

"Coming together at the end of the semester to have a good time and eat food is fun," said Robyn Liverpool, a senior business major and BSU member. "But learning good ways to live and the strength of community is invaluable."