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VOLUME

CELEBRATING HANUKKAH AND CHRISTMAS



PHOTO BY MARK FISETTE

David and Christine Shapiro light the menorah last night with their children, Remy, Kemal, and Justin.

A blended family

Natick residents
celebrate three
different religions

By Kathy Uek
DAILY NEWS STAFF

NATICK — When the Shapiro family gathered Friday night to light the menorah to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah, Jews, Roman Catholics and a Muslim took part.

They include parents David and Christine Shapiro, a Jew and a Catholic, respectively, and their children, 11-year-old Justin, a Catholic, 4-year-old Remy, who is learning about both Judaism and Catholicism, and 18-month-old Kemal, adopted last year from Ethiopia.

Based on the region of Ethiopia where Kemal was born, the Shapiro family assumes his moth-

er is Muslim.

What makes this family unique is they plan to celebrate Hanukkah and other holidays of the season in an ecumenical fashion.

Hanukkah celebrates the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem in the second century B.C. when the Maccabees defeated a much stronger Greek army. When the Maccabees went to light the Temple's menorah, they found only one container of pure oil fit for lighting the candelabrum. It lasted eight days.

In addition to Hanukkah, the Shapiro family will celebrate Christmas, learn about Muslim traditions and the holiday of Kwanzaa.

"Because Kemal is so young, this 3 RELIGIONS, Page A3

FROM THE FRONT PAGE

Celebrating 3 religions under 1 roof

3 RELIGIONS, From A1

is a time for us to learn so we can understand and inform him of his heritage and ethnicity," David Shapiro said. "It's nice to be a newly blended family where difference doesn't matter and we can learn about the different religions and cultures.

"Kemal is like any little boy in the entire world," he said. "It's nice to have three children, which is what we wanted."

Dale Eldridge, the coordinator at Adoption Choices of Jewish Family Service of MetroWest in Framingham, helped the family through the adoption process. For about 25 years, Adoption Choices, a non-sectarian organization, has helped families, regardless of their religious or cultural background, with domestic and international adoptions.

"Most people like us know little about the process," said David Shapiro, who was adopted at birth and grew up in Newton.

Adoption Choices helped the couple decide between a domestic and international adoption and choose among the different countries. Ultimately, the couple decided on Ethiopia.

Their Hanukkah celebrations included a family dinner last night with David's father. Tonight, the fourth night of the holiday, the family plans to host a dinner and light the

menorah again.

"Justin really gets into it and Kemal will probably be fascinated by the lights," said Christine Shapiro.

"For the kids, their favorite part is Hanukkah," said David Shapiro. "My favorite is the family being together and that's the core."

Yesterday, Remy and her grandmother, Abby Shapiro, went to Wayland Community Nursery School to read and discuss books on the history of Hanukkah and play with dreidles.

When Dec. 25 arrives, Kemal will learn about opening more presents and the story of Christmas.

"My children completely adore Kemal," said Christine Shapiro, as Kemal tackled his brother, Justin. "The fact that Kemal has a different color skin, none of that matters to my children or others in the neighborhood. From the day we brought him home, he was meant to be with us. He fit right in."

Since Kemal's arrival, the family has enjoyed a few dishes from his homeland, including a mild chicken stew called *doro alich'a*. Justin worked on a school project on Ethiopia and Remy told her teachers at nursery school she was thankful for water because of its scarcity in Ethiopia.

"It will be busy, but it's giving everyone a different view on all the different religions," said Christine Shapiro.



Adoption Choices



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Thank you for your interest in Adoption Choices of Jewish Family Service of Metrowest. As you consider building your family by adoption, you may have many questions about the process and what our agency offers. We hope you will find this booklet helpful. Please feel free to contact us with your questions or to request a personal consultation.

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