



2026

CULTURAL HOLIDAYS
AND OBSERVANCES

CALENDAR

*Allyship and Advocacy:
Unity Through Understanding*



A Message from the Office of Access & Belonging

Dear Colleagues,

We are proud to share the 2026 Calendar, guided by this year's theme: **Allyship and Advocacy: Unity Through Understanding**. This theme serves as a powerful reminder of our collective responsibility to foster supportive communities across our healthcare system.

This year's theme encourages us to stand together, listen with empathy, and take meaningful steps to uplift every voice. Through shared stories, learning opportunities, and celebrating different perspectives, the calendar is designed to inspire connection and promote lasting change rooted in mutual respect.

What is Allyship, and how can we practice it?

Allyship is about actively supporting and advocating for the rights, dignity, and well-being of individuals and communities whose voices, experiences or access to opportunity have historically been excluded or overlooked. It's more than a gesture, it's an ongoing journey of learning, listening, and intentional engagement. Being an ally means using our voices and actions to challenge unfairness, amplify others' experiences, and help create spaces where everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

Whether it's through self-education, speaking up when it matters, or offering a compassionate presence, allyship is about showing up with humility, consistency, and care.

To support this journey, the calendar highlights key concepts along with monthly themes, reflection prompts, and suggested actions. These tools are meant to help us grow as supportive colleagues and advocate for fairness in both our workplace and the communities we serve.

We hope this calendar will serve as a resource you can return to throughout the year to deepen your understanding and strengthen your commitment to belonging. Each step we take brings us closer to fulfilling WMCHealth's mission of advancing a welcoming environment for all.

With appreciation,

Matilde L. Román, Esq.
Chief Inclusion & Impact Officer

JANUARY

BEGIN WITH INTENTION

Set the Foundation of Allyship



Start the year by exploring what it means to be an ally and how intentional actions can foster inclusion and belonging.

An **ally** is someone who chooses to stand in solidarity with individuals or communities whose voices, experiences, or access to opportunity have not always been equitably recognized. Allies use their awareness, influence, and actions to support equity, challenge injustice, and help create environments where everyone feels respected and valued.

Allyship is the ongoing practice of learning, listening, and taking intentional action to support and advocate for others. It involves recognizing systemic barriers, amplifying underrepresented perspectives, and committing to behaviors that promote inclusion and belonging. Allyship is not a title, but a continuous journey rooted in humility, empathy, and accountability.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- What does allyship look like in your daily work?
- How can you be more intentional in supporting others whose experiences differ from your own?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF ALLYSHIP.

- **Read:** [How to Practice Allyship in the Workplace | AMA](#).
- **Watch:** [3 ways to be a better ally in the workplace](#) TED Talk by Melinda Epler
- **Listen:** [Code Switch Podcast](#) (NPR) stories on race, identity, and culture.

2. CONNECT: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS ACROSS DIFFERENCES.

- **Schedule a Coffee Chat or Virtual Meeting.** Take time to connect with a colleague to learn about their background, lived experience, or perspective.
- **Host a Story Circle.** Invite a small group to share personal stories around a theme such as resilience, belonging, identity. Use a rotating format to ensure each person has equal time to speak and listen.

3. ACT: PRACTICE INCLUSIVE BEHAVIORS.

- **Use Inclusive Language.** Be intentional with words in emails, meetings, and communications to foster belonging and respect.
→ **Resource:** [A Progressive's Style Guide](#).
- **Advocate for Diverse Voices.** Champion the inclusion of underrepresented perspectives in decision-making spaces to ensure more equitable outcomes.

KEY OBSERVANCES



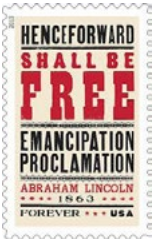
January – National Mentoring Month
Celebrate the power of mentorship in advancing equity, opportunity, and leadership development across generations.

January 1 – New Year's Day A time for renewal, reflection, and setting intentions for inclusive action in the year ahead.



January 1 – Haiti's Independence Day Commemorates Haiti's declaration of independence from France in 1804.

January 1 – Emancipation Proclamation Anniversary
Marks the 1863 executive order that changed the legal status of over 3.5 million enslaved African Americans in the secessionist Confederate states to free.



January 3 – Mahayana New Year (Buddhism) Celebrated on the first full moon of January, this observance invites reflection and renewal in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition.



January 4 – World Braille Day Honors Louis Braille, the inventor of braille. It is observed to raise awareness of the importance of braille as a means of communication and inclusion for people with low vision.

January 6 – Epiphany (Three Kings Day)
Observed by many Christian communities, this day celebrates the visit of the three wise men to the baby Jesus twelve days after his birth.



January 19 – Martin Luther King Jr. Day (Observed) A federal holiday honoring Dr. King's legacy of civil rights, nonviolent advocacy, and the ongoing pursuit of equity and justice.



January 27 – International Holocaust Remembrance Day (Judaism)
Remembers the six million Jewish victims and millions of other victims of the Holocaust. January 27 marks the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, honoring the resilience of survivors and reaffirming a global commitment to combat antisemitism, hatred, and genocide.



JANUARY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

“Allyship is not about being in the spotlight, it’s about holding the light so others can be seen.” — Author Unknown



FEBRUARY

HONOR THE LEGACY, DEEPEN THE PRACTICE

Allyship in Action – Advancing Justice Through Awareness

Building on January’s call to “[Set the Foundation of Allyship](#),” February invites us to move from intention to action. As we honor the legacy of Black leaders and communities during Black History Month, we are reminded that allyship is not only about standing in solidarity, but also about actively working to dismantle injustice and uplift historically marginalized voices. This month challenges us to deepen our awareness of systemic inequalities, reflect on our roles within these systems, and take meaningful steps to advocate for equity in our daily work and relationships. [Allyship in action](#) means listening with humility, speaking up with courage, and showing up with consistency.



REFLECTION PROMPT

- Reflect on the systems you are part of, whether at work, in your community, or in daily life. What actions can you take to help make them more inclusive?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: DEEPEN YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF RACIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE

- [Read: *The 1619 Project*](#) by Nikole Hannah-Jones, a reframing of U.S. history through the lens of slavery and its legacy.
- [Watch: *13th*](#) by Ava DuVernay. A documentary exploring the intersection of race, justice, and mass incarceration.
- [Listen: *The Invention of Race. NPR’s Throughline podcast episode.*](#)

2. CONNECT: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND FOSTER DIALOGUE

- [Host or Join a Discussion Group.](#) Create space for meaningful dialogue centered on equity, inclusion and cultural awareness.

Use heritage month themes, equity-focused reading, or current events as conversation starters.

- [Attend a Virtual or Local Event.](#) Engage in cultural celebrations, speaker series, educational workshops, or community forums that promote understanding and connect across differences.

3. ACT: PRACTICE VISIBLE ALLYSHIP

- [Speak Up Against Bias and Microaggressions.](#) Use bystander intervention strategies like the 5 D’s: Distract, Delegate, Document, Delay, Direct.
→ [Resource: Free Trainings - Right To Be \(Hollaback!\)](#)
- [Celebrate and Share Black Voices.](#) Feature Black authors, artists, and innovators in newsletters, meetings, or social media.
→ [Resources: The Brown Bookshelf](#), celebrating Black children’s book creators; Authors to explore: [James Baldwin](#), [Toni Morrison](#), [Ta-Nehisi Coates](#), [Jesmyn Ward](#), [Ibram X. Kendi](#), [Brit Bennett](#), and [Colson Whitehead](#).

KEY OBSERVANCES



Black History Month

Since 1976, this month has been designated to honor the contributions, history, and culture of people of the African diaspora. It is a time

to reflect on the ongoing struggle for racial justice and to celebrate Black excellence, resilience, and leadership.



February 1 – National Freedom Day (U.S.)

Commemorates the signing of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States. A day to reflect on freedom, justice, and continuing work toward equity.

February 1 – World Hijab Day (Islam)

Created in 2013, this day celebrates people who wear hijabs worldwide.



February 1-7 – World Interfaith Harmony Week The first week of February was designated by the UN General Assembly to promote harmony between all people regardless of their faith.

February 14 – Valentine’s Day

Beyond romantic love, this day can also be a celebration of compassion, kindness, and inclusive love in all its forms.



February 15 – Nirvana Day (Buddhism)

Observed by some Mahayana Buddhists to commemorate the death of the Buddha and his attainment of final Nirvana. A time for meditation and reflection on impermanence.

February 16 – Presidents’ Day

Recognizes the leaders of the United States and reflect on the nation’s history.



February 17 – Ramadan Begins (Islam)

A sacred month of fasting, prayer, and reflection observed by Muslims around the world. It is a time of spiritual renewal, community, and compassion.

February 17 – Lunar New Year (Year of the Horse)

Celebrated in many East and Southeast Asian cultures, this marks the beginning of the lunar calendar. It is a time for family reunions, honoring ancestors, and welcoming new beginnings.



February 20 – World Day of Social Justice

Recognizes the need to promote efforts to tackle issues such as poverty, exclusion, gender inequality, unemployment, and human rights.



February 26 – Intercalary Days Begin (Bahá’í)

A period of hospitality, charity, and preparation for the Bahá’í month of fasting. These days are devoted to spiritual renewal and acts of kindness.

February 27 – Dominican Republic Independence Day

Commemorates the country’s declaration of independence from Haiti in 1844.



FEBRUARY 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

“Do not be silent; there is no limit to the power that may be released through you.” — Howard Thurman, Theologian, Educator, and Civil Rights Leader



WMC Health

Westchester Medical Center Health Network



Centering Inclusion Through Listening and Representation

In March, we focus on the power of [inclusive leadership](#) and [intentional listening](#), recognizing that allyship also means creating space for others to lead, speak, and be heard. As we celebrate [Women’s History Month](#) and other cultural observances, we are reminded that representation matters. Representation not just in who is present, but in whose voices are valued and whose stories are told.



This month encourages us to reflect on how we can elevate underrepresented voices in our teams, decisions, and systems. Practicing allyship means stepping back when needed, amplifying others’ contributions, and ensuring that inclusion is not performative, but deeply embedded in how we lead and collaborate.

REFLECTION PROMPT

- Whose voices might be missing or overlooked in the spaces where I lead, work, or collaborate, and what intentional steps can I take to ensure they are heard, valued, and included?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: UNDERSTAND THE IMPACT OF REPRESENTATION

- [Read: *Lean In*](#) (Sheryl Sandberg), a practical and powerful call for women to pursue their ambitions, with strategies for navigating gender bias.
- [Watch: *How to break through fear and become a leader*](#) TED Talk by Valerie Montgomery.

- [Listen: *Intersectionality Matters!*](#) podcast by Kimberlé Crenshaw that offers conversations on race, gender, and power.

2. CREATE SPACE FOR DIALOGUE AND VISIBILITY

- [Host a Storytelling Session](#). Invite colleagues to share personal or professional experiences related to identity and inclusion.
- [Celebrate Women’s History Month](#). Highlight women leaders and innovators across the organization and community.

3. ACT: CHAMPION INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- [Conduct a Representation Audit](#). Take a closer look at who is speaking, leading, and being recognized in your meetings, panels, and projects. Identify gaps and opportunities to ensure diverse voices are present and empowered.
- [Amplify Others](#). Use your platform to elevate the ideas, contributions, and leadership of individuals whose voices are often overlooked. Intentional amplification can foster inclusion and shift narratives.

KEY OBSERVANCES

March – Women’s History Month

Celebrates the achievements, leadership, and contributions of women throughout history and today. It is a time to reflect on gender equity, uplift women’s voices, and advocate for inclusive representation across all sectors.



March – Irish American Heritage Month

Honors the history, culture, and contributions of Irish Americans and their impact on U.S. society.

March – National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Established to increase awareness of the barriers that people with disabilities still face in education, employment and community living.



March 2-3 – Purim

Holiday to commemorate Jewish people being rescued from death at the hands of the Persian Empire. Purim is celebrated among Jews by exchanging gifts of food and drink, known as misloach manot.

March 4 – Holi (Hinduism, Sikhism, Jainism, Buddhism)

Also known as the festival of colors, it is a multi-day festival that celebrates the beginning of spring. Holi is celebrated by people performing rituals in front of a bonfire, visiting family and friends, eating delicacies and playing with colors.



March 8 – International Women’s Day A global day recognizing the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It also calls for continued action to accelerate gender equity and challenge bias.



March 17 – St. Patrick’s Day

Originally a religious feast day honoring the patron saint of Ireland, it has evolved into a broader celebration of Irish culture and heritage.

March 20 – Spring Equinox

(Ostara – Pagan/Wiccan) Marks the beginning of spring and symbolizes renewal, balance, and growth in many spiritual traditions.



March 21 – International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Established by the United Nations to commemorate the 1960 Sharpeville Massacre in South Africa. This day calls for global action to eliminate racial discrimination and promote justice and equality.

March 25 – International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade

Honors the memory of the millions of people who suffered and died as a result of the transatlantic slave trade. It is a day to reflect on the legacy of slavery and reaffirm commitments to human rights and dignity.

March 29 – Eid al-Fitr

(Festival of Breaking the Fast)

Is the festival that marks the end of Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting.



March 31 – International Transgender Day of Visibility

Celebrated to bring awareness to transgender people and their identities as well as recognize those who have helped fight for rights for transgender people.

MARCH 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

“There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”

— Maya Angelou, Poet and Civil Rights Advocate



WMC Health

Westchester Medical Center Health Network

APRIL

CULTIVATE COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Fostering Trust Through Dialogue and Accountability

In April, we focus on the role of **open, respectful dialogue** in advancing equity and inclusion. Courageous conversations, those that address difficult truths, challenge assumptions, and invite vulnerability, are essential to building trust and driving meaningful change.

This month encourages us to lean into discomfort, listen with empathy, and speak with honesty. Whether addressing bias,



navigating conflict, or exploring identity, courageous conversations help us grow as allies and advocates. They require humility, curiosity, and a commitment to learning, not just from experts, but from one another.

REFLECTION PROMPT

- What conversations have I avoided that could lead to greater understanding, healing, or change?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: BUILD SKILLS FOR BRAVE DIALOGUE

- Read:** *Crucial Conversations: Tools for Talking When Stakes are High* by Patterson, Grenny, McMillan & Switzler.
- Watch:** *The Power of Vulnerability* TED Talk by Brené Brown.
- Explore:** *The Dialogue Project*, tools for bridging divides through conversation.

2. CONNECT: CREATE SPACE FOR HONEST EXCHANGE

- Host a Brave Space Dialogue.** Create intentional space within your team or community for open, respectful conversations that invite vulnerability, diverse perspectives, and deeper understanding.
- Practice Active Listening.** In meetings and collaborative settings, listen with intention. Pause to reflect, paraphrase to confirm understanding, and ask open-ended questions to encourage meaningful dialogue.

3. ACT: MODEL AND SUPPORT COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

- Address Microaggressions or Exclusionary Behavior** with curiosity and care.
- Encourage Feedback and Reflection** in your leadership or peer interactions.

KEY OBSERVANCES

April – Diversity Month Started in 2004 to recognize and celebrate our differences and honor our common humanity.



April – National Arab American Heritage Month Celebrates Arab American culture and honors the contributions of Arab Americans to American history and life.

April – (Tartan) Scottish American Heritage Month Many members of the Scottish diaspora come together on Tartan Day (April 6) to celebrate their Scottish heritage. Tartan Day often features pipe bands, highland dancing, and other Scottish-themed events.



April 1-9 – Passover (Judaism) An eight-day festival commemorating the liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt.



April 2 – World Autism Awareness Day An internationally recognized day that encourages Member States and the United Nations to take measures to raise awareness about autistic individuals throughout the world.



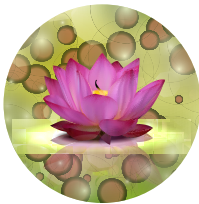
April 3 – Good Friday Commemorates the crucifixion of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for humanity.



April 5 – Easter Sunday Celebrates the resurrection of Jesus Christ, symbolizing hope and renewal.



April 8 – Buddha’s Birthday (Buddhism) Observed in many Asian countries, this day celebrates the birth of Siddhartha Gautama, the founder of Buddhism.



April 13 – Vaisakhi (Sikhism) A major Sikh festival marking the founding of the Khalsa in 1699 and celebrating harvest season.



April 20 – First Day of Ridván (Bahá’í) Commemorates the beginning of the 12-day Ridván Festival, celebrating Bahá’u’lláh’s declaration of his mission.



April 22 – Earth Day A global observance dedicated to environmental protection and sustainability.



APRIL 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

“We don’t have to agree on everything to be kind to one another and to listen.” — Brené Brown, American Researcher and Author



MAY

BRIDGE ACROSS DIFFERENCE

Advancing Belonging Through Cultural Awareness and Empathy

In May, we reflect on the importance of cultural awareness and empathy in building inclusive environments where everyone feels a sense of belonging. As we recognize [Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander \(AANHPI\) Heritage Month](#) and [Jewish American Heritage Month](#), we are reminded that allyship begins with curiosity, respect, and a commitment to learning from the lived experiences of others.

This month invites us to explore how culture shapes perspective, how empathy deepens connection, and how bridging across difference



strengthens both our organization and the communities we serve. Practicing allyship means actively seeking to understand, honor and uplift those whose stories differ from our own.

REFLECTION PROMPT

- How can I better understand and honor the cultural identities of those I work with and serve?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: EXPAND CULTURAL AWARENESS

- Read:** [Minor Feelings: An Asian American Reckoning](#) by Cathy Park Hong. A powerful exploration of Asian American identity and experience.
- Watch:** [Asian Americans](#), a PBS documentary series on the history and impact of AANHPI communities.
- Explore:** [The Jewish Women's Archive](#). Discover stories and historical insights that highlight the contributions of Jewish American women.

2. CONNECT: CELEBRATE AND SHARE CULTURAL NARRATIVES

- Attend or Host Cultural Events.** Participate or organize gatherings to recognize AANHPI and Jewish American Heritage Month, highlighting heritage, history and contributions.
- Invite Storytelling and Sharing.** Encourage colleagues or community members to share cultural traditions, stories, or recipes to foster connection and understanding.
- Spotlight Diverse Voices.** Use internal communications to elevate stories, achievements, and histories from underrepresented communities.

3. ACT: PRACTICE EVERYDAY INCLUSION

- Review Materials for Representation.** Assess visuals, messaging, and content for cultural accuracy, inclusive language and diverse representation.
- **Resource:** [Inclusive Language Guide](#), American Psychological Association (APA).

KEY OBSERVANCES



May – Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month Observed throughout May to recognize the contributions and influences of Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Pacific Islanders

to the history, culture, and achievements of the United States.

May – Jewish American Heritage Month Celebrates the history, culture, and contributions of Jewish Americans to U.S. society.



May – Mental Health Awareness Month Observed since 1949, the month-long observance aims to raise awareness and educate the public about mental health issues to reduce the stigma associated with mental illness.



May 1 – May Day/ International Workers' Day Honors labor movements and workers' rights worldwide.

May 5 – Cinco de Mayo Commemorates the Mexican army's victory at the Battle of Puebla in 1862 and is widely celebrated as a day honoring Mexican culture and heritage.

May 8 – World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day Recognizes humanitarian efforts and the principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.



May 10 – Mother's Day (U.S.) Celebrated on the second Sunday in May, this day honors mothers and maternal figures for their love, care, and contributions to families and society.

May 12 – International Nurses Day Celebrates the contributions of nurses to healthcare and patient well-being globally.



May 15 – International Day for Families Created by the United Nations to highlight the social and demographic issues affecting families around the globe.

May 17 – International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia Raises awareness of LGBTQ+ rights and calls for action to eliminate discrimination.



May 21 – World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development Promotes understanding and respect for cultural diversity as a foundation for peace and development.

May 21-23 Shavuot (Judaism) A holiday marking both the wheat harvest in Israel and the anniversary of the day when the Jews received the Torah at Mount Sinai.



May 25 – Memorial Day (U.S.) A federal holiday honoring those who lost their lives in military service.

May 26-30 – Eid al-Adha (Islam) One of the most significant Islamic holidays, commemorating the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son in obedience to God.

MAY 2026

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

“When you learn something from people, or from a culture, you accept it as a gift, and it is your lifelong commitment to preserve it and build on it.” — Yo-Yo Ma, Renowned Cellist and Cultural Bridge Builder



WMC Health
Westchester Medical Center Health Network

JUNE

CELEBRATE IDENTITY, CHAMPION EQUITY

Affirming Pride, Intersectionality, and Inclusive Belonging

In June, we celebrate the richness of identity and the power of visibility. As we honor **LGBTQ+ Pride Month**, we are reminded that allyship includes affirming people’s full selves, across gender, sexuality, race, ability, and more. This month invites us to recognize the intersections of identity and the unique challenges faced by those living at the margins of multiple systems of oppression.



Practicing allyship in June means advocating for equity, challenging exclusion, and creating spaces where everyone can thrive authentically. It’s about celebrating progress while acknowledging the work that remains to ensure dignity, safety, and belonging for all.

REFLECTION PROMPT

- How can I create spaces where people feel safe to express their full identities?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

- 1. LEARN: DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING OF LGBTQ+ AND INTERSECTIONALITY**
- Read:** *The Savvy Ally* by Jeannie Gainsburg, a practical guide to LGBTQ+ allyship.
 - Watch:** *Stonewall Uprising, American Experience*, PBS.
 - Explore:** [GLAAD](#), resources for LGBTQ+ inclusion.

2. CONNECT: BUILD INCLUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS

- Attend a Pride Month Event.** Participate in virtual or in-person celebrations to show support and deepen understanding of LGBTQ+ communities.
- Host a Listening Session.** Create space to hear directly from LGBTQ+ colleagues and allies, fostering empathy, learning, and stronger connections.

3. ACT: PRACTICE VISIBLE ALLYSHIP

- Use Inclusive Language and Pronouns.** Ensure communications reflect gender-neutral terms and respect individuals’ pronouns preferences to foster belonging.
 - Promote Equitable Workplace Policies.** Advocate for inclusive benefits, healthcare access, and anti-discrimination protections that support LGBTQ+ employees.
- **Resource:** [Allies Resource Page, Human Rights Campaign](#).

KEY OBSERVANCES



June – LGBTQ+ Pride Month
Celebrates the history, achievements, and resilience of LGBTQ+ communities. Pride Month honors the ongoing fight for equality and inclusion, while promoting visibility and advocacy.

June – Caribbean American Heritage Month Recognizes the contributions and cultural heritage of Caribbean Americans and their impact on U.S. history and society.



June 5 – World Environment Day A global observance dedicated to environmental protection and sustainability.

June 12 – Loving Day (U.S.) Commemorates the 1967 Supreme Court decision *Loving v. Virginia*, which struck down laws banning interracial marriage.



June 14 – Flag Day (U.S.)
Celebrates the adoption of the U.S. flag in 1777.

June 19 – Juneteenth (U.S.)
Marks the day in 1865 when enslaved African Americans in Texas learned of their freedom, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. It is a celebration of liberation and resilience.



June 20 – World Refugee Day Raises awareness of the plight and resilience of refugees worldwide and calls for global solidarity.

June 21 – Father’s Day (U.S.)
A day to honor and celebrate fathers and father figures for their role in families and communities.



June 21 – Summer Solstice
The longest day of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, celebrated in many cultures as a time of renewal and light.



June 24 – Feast of St. John the Baptist (Christian) Observed in various Christian traditions to honor the birth of St. John the Baptist.

JUNE 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
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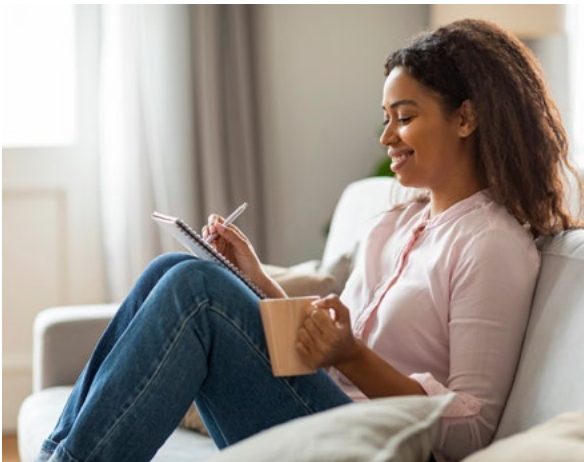
“Equality means more than passing laws. The struggle is really won in the hearts and minds of the community, where it really counts.”
— Barbara Gittings, LGBTQ+ Rights Activist

JULY

REFLECT, RECOMMIT, REIMAGINE

Sustaining Allyship Through Reflection and Renewal

As we enter the second half of the year, July offers a moment to pause, reflect, and commit to the work of equity and inclusion. It's a time to assess our personal and collective growth, acknowledge challenges, and reimagine what is possible when we stay grounded in purpose and aligned in action.



This month encourages us to revisit our intentions, celebrate progress, and identify areas for deeper engagement. Sustaining allyship requires rest, reflection, and resilience. It's not just about doing more, it's about doing better, together.

REFLECTION PROMPT

- What progress have I made in practicing allyship this year, and what commitments will I renew to strengthen equity and inclusion moving forward?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

- EXPLORE THE POWER OF REFLECTION**
 - Read:** [Leadership and Self-Deception](#) by The Arbinger Institute, to understand blind spots and accountability.
 - Watch:** [Everyday Leadership](#) by Drew Dudley.
- CONNECT: SHARE INSIGHTS AND INTENTIONS**
 - Host a Mid-Year Inclusion Check-In.** Create space for your team to reflect on progress, challenges, and opportunities related to inclusion goals.

- Create Space for Honest Feedback.** Invite open dialogue around equity and belonging initiatives to strengthen trust and inform future actions.
- Facilitate Peer Learning Circles.** Encourage teams to share lessons learned, exchange strategies, and recommit to inclusive practices.

3. ACT: RECOMMIT TO INCLUSIVE PRACTICES

- Review Equity and Inclusion Goals.** Revisit your personal and organizational commitments to equity and inclusion. Identify progress, gaps, and opportunities for renewed action.
- Examine Your Sphere of Influence.** Reflect on who is included in your meetings, projects, and leadership pipelines, and who might be missing. Take steps to expand access and representation.
→ **Resource:** [How to Be an Inclusive Leader, Harvard Business Review](#).

KEY OBSERVANCES



July – Disability Pride Month
Celebrates the diversity, history, and achievements of people with disabilities, promoting inclusion and accessibility.

July – French American Heritage Month
Celebrates the influence and contributions of French Americans to the history and culture of the United States.



July 4 – Independence Day (U.S.) Commemorates the adoption of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, marking the birth of the United States.

July 14 – Bastille Day (France) Marks the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille in 1789, a key event in the French Revolution.



July 14 – International Non-Binary People's Day
Started in 2012, this day promotes awareness about the issues people who have non-binary gender face around the world.

July 18 – Nelson Mandela International Day Honors the legacy of Nelson Mandela and encourages acts of service and social justice.



July 21 – Guru Purnima (Jainism, Hinduism & Buddhism) Also known as Vyasa Purnima; marks the birthday of the Vyasa (one of the authors of Hindu scripture) and a day to pay respect to spiritual and academic teachers.



July 21 – Asalha Puja (Buddhism) Also known as Dharma Day, this day celebrates Buddha's first teachings.



July 22-23 – Tish'a B'Av
A day of fasting and mourning commemorating multiple historic tragedies in Jewish history.

July 24 – Pioneer Day (Utah, U.S.) Celebrates the arrival of Mormon pioneers in the Salt Lake Valley in 1847.



July 26 – Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Anniversary Commemorates the signing of the ADA in 1990, a landmark civil rights law ensuring accessibility and equality for people with disabilities.



JULY 2026						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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“Part of the problem is that we tend to think that equality is about treating everyone the same, when it's not. It's about fairness. It's about equity of access.” — Judith Heumann, Mother of the Disability Rights Movement



Embedding Inclusion into Everyday Leadership

In August, we turn our attention to [inclusive leadership](#), the everyday choices, behaviors, and mindsets that shape equitable environments. Whether you lead a team, a project, or by example, allyship means using your influence to create space, share power, and remove barriers for others.

This month encourages us to examine how leadership shows up in our daily actions. It is how we listen, how we make decisions, and how we hold ourselves accountable. Leading with equity means moving beyond intention to embed inclusion into systems, culture, and outcomes.



REFLECTION PROMPTS

- How do my everyday decisions reflect inclusive leadership?
- In what ways do I share power, listen actively, and remove barriers for others?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: EXPAND INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICES

- [Read: *Daily Practices of Inclusive Leaders: A Guide to Building a Culture of Belonging*](#) by Eddie Pate, Jonathan Stutz.
- [Watch: *Tips for inclusive leadership.*](#)
- [Explore: *Best Inclusive Leadership Examples in 2026.*](#)

2. CONNECT: BUILD RELATIONSHIPS THAT FOSTER INCLUSION

- [Host a Team Conversation.](#) Facilitate a dialogue on what inclusive leadership looks like in your department. Encourage shared understanding and commitment.

- [Invite Lived Experience Sharing.](#) Bring in guest speakers or panels to share personal stories of leadership, allyship, and navigating inclusion, helping to build empathy and insight.

3. ACT: EMBED INCLUSION INTO DAILY LEADERSHIP

- [Identify and Address Systemic Barriers.](#) Reflect on who is included in your meetings, projects, and pipelines, and who might be missing. Take action to remove barriers within your sphere of influence.
- [Share Power Intentionally.](#) Rotate leadership roles in meetings and projects to elevate diverse voices and foster shared ownership.
- [Interrupt Bias.](#) Speak up when exclusionary behavior occurs, and model inclusive responses that promote respect and accountability.

KEY OBSERVANCES



August – National Civility Month Encourages respectful dialogue, kindness, and understanding in personal and professional interactions.

August – National Wellness Month

Promotes self-care, stress management, and healthy habits to support overall well-being.



August 2 – International Day of Friendship Proclaimed in 2011 by the UN General Assembly, recognizing that friendship

among peoples, cultures, and nations can inspire peace efforts and strengthen community bonds.

August 6 – Hiroshima Day

A day to promote awareness and peace in remembrance of the devastating effects of the atomic bomb attack on the Japanese city of Hiroshima in 1945.



August 9 – International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples Recognizes and honors the cultures, rights, and contributions of Indigenous communities globally.

August 12 – International Youth Day

Highlights the importance of empowering young people and addressing challenges they face worldwide.



August 15 – Independence Day (India) Commemorates India's independence from British rule in 1947.

August 19 – World Humanitarian Day

Honors humanitarian workers and advocates for people affected by crises worldwide.



August 23 – International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition Acknowledges the history of the transatlantic slave trade and calls for reflection on its lasting impact.

August 26 – Women's Equality Day (U.S.)

Marks the certification of the 19th Amendment in 1920, granting women the right to vote in the United States.



AUGUST 2026

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“Leadership is not about being in charge. It is about taking care of those in your charge.”
— Simon Sinek, Author and Leadership Expert



WMC Health
Westchester Medical Center Health Network

SEPTEMBER

EMPOWER THROUGH EDUCATION

Advancing Equity by Sharing Knowledge and Building Capacity

In September, we focus on the transformative power of education, awareness, and continuous learning in advancing equity and inclusion. Whether formal or informal, learning is a lifelong process, and allyship requires us to stay curious, informed, and open to new perspectives.



This month encourages us to explore how we can use education to challenge bias, expand understanding, and empower others. From mentoring and training to storytelling and self-reflection, knowledge-sharing is a powerful tool for building more inclusive workplaces and communities.

REFLECTION PROMPT

- What can I learn from those whose perspectives, backgrounds, or identities differ from mine?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: EXPAND YOUR UNDERSTANDING

- **Read:** [We all have the capacity to be allies](#) by Leanne Mair.
- **Watch:** [The Danger of a Single Story](#) TED Talk by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie.
- **Explore:** [Capacity Building in Communities to Create Equity-Centered Educational Opportunities](#).

2. CONNECT: SHARE KNOWLEDGE AND BUILD CAPACITY

- **Offer to Mentor or Coach.** Support a colleague or emerging leader by sharing your experience and guidance.
- **Facilitate Knowledge Exchange.** Organize informal learning sessions, cross-functional collaborations, or storytelling forums to share insights, strategies and lived experiences.

3. ACT: MAKE EDUCATION ACCESSIBLE AND INCLUSIVE

- **Support Equitable Access to Learning Tools.** Ensure materials, technologies, and platforms are accessible to individuals of all abilities, languages, and backgrounds.
- **Center Lived Experience in Learning.** Invite guest speakers, storytellers, or community members to share firsthand insights that deepen understanding and empathy.

KEY OBSERVANCES



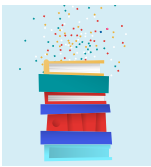
September – National Hispanic Heritage Month (Sept 15-Oct 15)
Celebrates the histories, cultures, and contributions of Hispanic and Latino/a Americans.

September – Suicide Prevention Awareness Month Raises awareness about mental health and suicide prevention resources.



September 5 – International Day of Charity Encourages acts of generosity and philanthropy worldwide.

September 7 – Labor Day (U.S.)
Honors the contributions of workers and the labor movement.



September 8 – International Literacy Day
Promotes literacy as a foundation for human rights and empowerment.



September 9-11 – Rosh Hashanah (Judaism) Marks the Jewish New Year, a time of reflection and renewal.

September 11 – Patriot Day (U.S.) Commemorates the lives lost during the September 11, 2001 attacks.



September 15 – International Day of Democracy Highlights the importance of democratic principles and participation.

September 20-21 – Yom Kippur
The Day of Atonement, observed with fasting and prayer.



September 21 – International Day of Peace Calls for global efforts to promote peace and nonviolence.

September 23 – Bi Visibility Day
Raises awareness and celebrates bisexuality and bi+ identities.



September 25-October 2 – Sukkot
A harvest festival celebrated with outdoor gatherings in temporary shelters (sukkahs).



September 27 – World Tourism Day
Promotes sustainable tourism and cultural exchange.

SEPTEMBER 2026						
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“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” — Nelson Mandela, Civil Rights Advocate



WMC Health
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OCTOBER

ADVANCE EQUITY, DRIVE CHANGE

TURNING INSIGHT INTO IMPACT

In October, we focus on translating awareness into action. Moving from learning and reflection to system-level change. As we observe [Global Diversity Awareness Month](#) and [National Disability Employment Awareness Month](#), we are reminded that allyship is not only about individual behavior, but also about transforming the structures, policies, and practices that shape our institutions.



This month encourages us to examine how we can use our knowledge, influence, and partnerships to drive sustainable change.

Whether through policy advocacy, inclusive hiring, or equitable program design, we all have a role in building systems that work for everyone.

REFLECTION PROMPT

- What systemic barriers exist in my sphere of influence, and how can I use my role to help remove them?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. LEARN: UNDERSTAND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

- Read:** [The Fearless Organization: Creating Psychological Safety in the Workplace](#) by Amy Edmondson.
- Watch:** [Belonging, A Critical Piece of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion](#) TED Talk by Carin Taylor.
- Explore:** [Race Forward](#) videos for advancing racial equity in organizations.

2. CONNECT: BUILD PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

- Host a Policy Review Session.** Examine your department's policies and practices through an inclusion lens to identify gaps and opportunities for improvement.
- Foster Strategic Collaboration.** Engage in cross-functional dialogue to align equity and inclusion goals with broader organizational strategy and impact.

3. ACT: DRIVE SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

- Conduct Accessibility Audits.** Evaluate both physical and digital environments to identify and address barriers, ensuring spaces are inclusive and usable for all.
- **Resource:** [National Disability Employment Resources](#) offers practical guidance for creating inclusive workplaces.

KEY OBSERVANCES



October – Global Diversity Awareness Month Celebrates the richness of diverse cultures, perspectives, and identities worldwide, encouraging inclusion and understanding.

October – National Disability Employment Awareness Month (U.S.) Promotes workplace inclusion and highlights the contributions of employees with disabilities.



October – Filipino American History Month Recognizes the history and contributions of Filipino Americans to U.S. society.

October – Italian American Heritage Month Honors the cultural heritage and achievements of Italian Americans.



October 2 – International Day of Non-Violence Commemorates Mahatma Gandhi's birthday and promotes peace and nonviolence.



October 2-4 – Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah Concluding days of Sukkot, celebrating joy and the Torah.

October 10 – World Mental Health Day Raises awareness about mental health issues and advocates for accessible care.



October 11 – National Coming Out Day Celebrates LGBTQ+ visibility and supports individuals in sharing their identities.

October 12 – Columbus Day Still observed in some regions, this day commemorates the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas in 1492. It also serves as a celebration of Italian American heritage, recognizing the cultural contributions of Italian immigrants and communities across the U.S.



October 12 – Indigenous Peoples' Day (U.S.) Honors the history, culture, and contributions of Indigenous peoples.



October 16 – World Food Day Highlights global efforts to combat hunger and promote food security.

October 17 – International Day for the Eradication of Poverty Calls for action to eliminate poverty and promote social justice.



October 31 – Halloween Observed in many countries as a cultural celebration with roots in ancient traditions.

OCTOBER 2026

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4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.” — Ralph Waldo Emerson, American essayist, lecturer, philosopher, and poet



WMC Health
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NOVEMBER

HONOR STORIES, DEEPEN SOLIDARITY

BUILDING CONNECTION THROUGH HERITAGE, GRATITUDE, AND REFLECTION

In November, we focus on the power of storytelling, cultural heritage, and gratitude as tools for connection and solidarity. As we observe [Native American Heritage Month](#) and enter a season of reflection, we are reminded that allyship includes honoring the histories, traditions, and lived experiences of Indigenous peoples and all communities whose stories have been marginalized.

This month invites us to listen deeply, acknowledge historical truths, and express gratitude in ways that are inclusive and respectful. Practicing allyship in November means recognizing the past, celebrating cultural resilience, and committing to a future rooted in justice and mutual respect.



REFLECTION PROMPTS

- Whose stories have shaped my understanding of equity?
- How can I honor those voices by listening deeply, learning continuously, and acting with respect and intention?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

1. **LEARN: EXPLORE CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HISTORICAL TRUTHS**
 - [Read: An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States](#) by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz.

- [Watch:](#) PBS documentary, [Native America](#).
- [Explore:](#) [National Museum of the American Indian](#), Smithsonian digital exhibits and resources.

2. CONNECT: CREATE SPACE FOR STORYTELLING

- [Host a Heritage Spotlight Session](#). Feature Indigenous voices, traditions, and histories to deepen understanding and honor cultural contributions.
- [Foster Gratitude Circles](#). Incorporate moments of appreciation into team meetings to build connection, trust and recognition.

3. ACT: PRACTICE RESPECTFUL ALLYSHIP

- [Advocate for Land Acknowledgment Practices](#). Encourage the inclusion of land acknowledgments in events, meetings and communication to honor Indigenous communities and histories.
- [Resource: Native Governance Center – Guide to Land Acknowledgments](#).

KEY OBSERVANCES

November – Native American Heritage Month Celebrates the history, culture, and contributions of Native American and Indigenous peoples.



November – National Family Caregivers Month Honors individuals who provide care and support to family members with health needs.

November 1 – All Saints' Day (Christian) Commemorates all saints and martyrs in Christian tradition.



November 2 – All Souls' Day (Christian) A day of remembrance for the faithful departed.

November 8-12 – Diwali (Sikhism, Hinduism) This five-day festival of lights celebrates new beginnings.



November 11 – Veterans Day (U.S.) Honors military veterans who have served in the United States Armed Forces.



November 13 – World Kindness Day Encourages acts of kindness and compassion globally.

November 16 – International Day for Tolerance Promotes respect, acceptance, and appreciation of diversity.



November 20 – Transgender Day of Remembrance Honors the memory of transgender individuals lost to violence and advocates for inclusion and safety.

November 25 – International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women Raises awareness and calls for action to end gender-based violence.



November 26 – Thanksgiving Day (U.S.) A day for gratitude and reflection, rooted in historical and cultural traditions.



NOVEMBER 2026

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“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.” — Chief Seattle (Duwamish/Suquamish)

DECEMBER

CARRY IT FORWARD

SUSTAINING THE WORK OF ALLYSHIP WITH PURPOSE AND HOPE

As the year draws to a close, December invites us to reflect on the journey we have taken, what we learned, and how we will carry this work forward. Allyship is not a one-time effort, it's a lifelong commitment to equity, justice, and belonging.



This month encourages us to celebrate progress, acknowledge challenges, and recommit to the values that guide us. Whether through quiet reflection or bold action, we each have the power to shape a more inclusive future, one step, one story, one act of advocacy at a time.

REFLECTION PROMPTS

- What lessons this year will guide my actions in the year ahead?
- How can I ensure my commitment to equity and inclusion remains strong?

SUGGESTED ACTIONS WITH RESOURCES

- 1. LEARN: REFLECT AND PLAN FOR GROWTH**
- **Read:** *The Art of Possibility* by Rosamund Stone Zander and Benjamin Zander.
 - **Watch:** TED Talk: *The Journey to True Allyship* by Talisa Lavarry.
- **Resource:** *Harvard Business Review*, "How to Create Your Own 'Year in Review.'"

- 2. CONNECT: SHARE GRATITUDE AND INTENTIONS**
- **Host a Year-End Gratitude Circle:** Bring your team or community together to reflect on shared experiences and express appreciation.
 - **Share Stories of Progress.** Highlight lessons learned and milestones achieved to inspire continued action and growth.
 - **Set Inclusive Goals for the Year Ahead.** Encourage individuals and teams to commit to equity and inclusion initiatives that build on past efforts and drive future impact.

- 3. ACT: COMMIT TO SUSTAINED ALLYSHIP**
- **Set and Share an Equity-Focused Goal.** Identify one meaningful equity goal for 2027 and share it publicly to foster accountability and inspire others.
 - **Support Equity Initiatives.** Contribute through donations, volunteer work, or advocacy to help advance inclusion and justice in your community or organization.

KEY OBSERVANCES

Universal Human Rights Month
Encourages reflection on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the ongoing work to protect dignity and equality for all.



December 1 – World AIDS Day Raises awareness about HIV/AIDS and honors those affected by the epidemic.

December 3 – International Day of Persons with Disabilities Promotes inclusion and accessibility for people with disabilities worldwide.



December 4-12 – Hanukkah (Judaism) An eight-day festival celebrating resilience and light.



December 10 – Human Rights Day
Commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948.

December 21 – Winter Solstice
Marks the shortest day and longest night of the year in the Northern Hemisphere, celebrated in many cultures as a time of renewal.



December 24 – Christmas Eve (Christian) Observed as a time of reflection and anticipation of Christmas Day.



December 25 – Christmas Day (Christian) Celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ and themes of hope, peace, and good will.



December 26 – Kwanzaa Begins A seven-day celebration honoring African heritage, unity, and culture.



December 31 – New Year's Eve A global observance marking the close of the year and welcoming new beginnings.



DECEMBER 2026						
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Looking Ahead to 2027: From Awareness to Action, From Intention to Impact
As we prepare to enter 2027, we carry forward the lessons, stories, and commitments that shaped our journey throughout 2026. This past year, we explored what it means to be an ally, how to listen with empathy, lead with equity, and advocate for lasting change. Together, we laid a foundation rooted in understanding and strengthened by action.
In 2027, we are called to deepen that work, to move from awareness to sustained impact. Let us continue to challenge inequities, elevate underrepresented voices, and build systems that reflect the dignity and worth of every individual. Let us lead with courage, collaborate with compassion, and remain grounded in the belief that inclusion is not a destination, it's a shared responsibility. May the year ahead be one of bold advocacy, renewed purpose, and collective progress.

"Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness." — Desmond Tutu, Bishop and Advocate

