

Heritage months and special days recognized by the MHU CDEI

Month	Heritage months and special days
January	Dr. Martin Luther King Jr Day (3rd Monday of Jan.)
February	African American History Month
March	National Women's History Month
April	None to date
May	Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Memorial Day (last Monday of the month)
June	Gay Lesbian Pride Month, Juneteenth (June 19 th)
July	Disability Pride Month
August	None to date
September	National Hispanic-Latino Heritage Month (Sept. 15-Oct. 15), September 11 th National Day of Service, (National Inclusion Week (Sept. 28-Oct.4)
October	Global Diversity Awareness Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, National Coming Out Day (LGBTQIA+) Oct. 11th, Indigenous people's Day Oct. 12th
November	National Native American Heritage Month, Veterans Day (Nov. 11)
December	Christmas, Kwanzaa
Special Days	Easter, Hanukkah, Ramadan, Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur

JANUARY:

Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is often referred to as MLK Day of service. Established in 1983 as a national holiday it is observed on the third Monday of January. Americans are challenged to make this a day of volunteer service in honor of Dr. King.

FEBRUARY:

African American History Month was started in 1926 when Dr. Carter G. Woodson instituted the first week-long celebration to raise awareness of African Americans' contributions to history. Prior to this time, little information could be found regarding African American history. Important achievements were left out of history books, and there was a general misconception that African Americans had made little contribution to U.S. society or history. 50 years later, the week became a month, and today February is celebrated as African American History Month. The month of February was chosen because it celebrates the birthdays of Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass, both of whom dramatically affected the lives of African Americans. Frederick Douglass (1817-1895) was a writer, lecturer, editor, and civil rights activist who escaped slavery at age 21 and went on to campaign for the abolition of slavery, establish a newspaper, and hold the office of Minister to Haiti. He was a major voice in the anti-slavery/civil rights movement of his time. Abraham Lincoln (born February 12, 1809), as the sixteenth president of the United States, issued the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, thereby declaring that all slaves within the Confederacy would be permanently free. Each year, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History, founded by Dr. Woodson, sets the theme for the month.

MARCH:

National Women's History Month was established by presidential proclamation in order to draw attention to and improve the focus on women in historical studies. It began in New York City on March 8, 1857, when female textile workers marched in protest of unfair working conditions and unequal rights for women. It was one of the first organized strikes by working women, during which they called for a shorter workday and decent wages. Also, on March 8, in 1908, women workers in the needle trades marched through New York City's Lower East Side to protest child labor, sweatshop working conditions, and demand women's suffrage. Beginning in 1910, March 8 became annually observed as International Women's Day. Women's History Week was instituted in 1978 to begin adding women's history into educational curricula. In 1987, the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to include all of March as a celebration of the economic, political and social contributions of women.

MAY:

Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month can be traced back to 1976, when Jeanie Jew, president of the Organization of Chinese American Women, contacted government officials in response to the lack of Asian Pacific representation in the U.S. bicentennial celebrations that same year. The observance began in 1979 as Asian Heritage Week, established by congressional proclamation. In May 1990, the holiday was expanded further when President George Bush signed a proclamation making it month-long for that year. On October 23, 1992, Bush signed legislation designating May of every year Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. The month of May was chosen to commemorate two significant events in history: the immigration of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869 (Golden Spike Day). The diversity and common experiences of the many ethnic groups are celebrated during Asian Pacific American Heritage Month with numerous community festivals as well as government-sponsored activities.

Memorial Day (last Monday of the month) is a federal holiday for honoring and mourning the military personnel who have died while serving in the US Armed Forces.

JUNE:

Gay and Lesbian Pride Month has evolved over recent years because, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) individuals did not have a specific month during which to celebrate and commemorate Pride Days in the United States. On June 11, 1999, President Clinton issued a proclamation designating June as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. In the spirit of honoring equality and freedom, the president said, "I encourage all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that celebrate our diversity, and to remember throughout the year the gay and lesbian Americans whose many and varied contributions have enriched our national life." The most significant June event in GLBT history was the Stonewall Inn Rebellion, a three-day protest in 1969 in New York City's Greenwich Village during which patrons protested against unfair police discrimination and harassment. It marked the first time the gay community joined together to fight for its civil rights, earning national attention and gaining a foothold in the struggle for equality. This month is dedicated to appreciating the contributions and significance of the GLBT community, and applauding gay, lesbian, bisexual, transsexual, and transgender pride.

Juneteenth (June 19th) The US Congress passed a bill and President Biden signed it into law on June 17, 2021. Making Juneteenth a recognized federal holiday. Juneteenth "Freedom Day" (June 19th) has been a day of celebration in the African American community since 1866 because it is seen as the true day slavery ended in America. The Civil War ended on April 9, 1865, and on June 19, 1865, 2,000 Union troops under the command of Maj. Gen. Gordon Granger arrived in Galveston Bay, TX. Gen. Gordon announced to the 250,000 enslaved black people of Texas that in keeping with the Emancipation Proclamation signed by President Lincoln and enacted on Jan. 1, 1863, they were now free. This was two years after the Emancipation Proclamation and two months after the end of the Civil War.

JULY:

Disability Pride Month celebrates The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which was founded on July 26, 1990. This document was the "world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities. In 2015, New York City Mayor de Blasio declared July Disability Pride Month in NYC in celebration of the ADA's 25th Anniversary. Disability Pride Month is not a nationally declared celebration, many in the disabled community have adopted New York City's declaration which is that: Throughout July, people with disabilities lift one another up for their uniqueness and to amplify each other's stories.

SEPTEMBER:

National Hispanic Heritage Month honors the culture, heritage, and contributions of Hispanic Americans each year. The event began in 1968 when Congress deemed the week including September 15 and 16 National Hispanic Heritage Week to celebrate the contributions and achievements of the diverse cultures within the Hispanic community. The dates were chosen to commemorate two key historic events: Independence Day, honoring the formal signing of the Act of Independence for Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (September 15, 1821), and Mexico's Independence Day, which denotes the beginning of the struggle against Spanish control (September 16, 1810). It was not until 1988 that the event was expanded to a month-long period, each year a different theme for the month is selected and a poster is created to reflect that theme.

September 11th National Day of Service federally recognized National Day of Service to transform the anniversary of the 9/11 attacks from a day of tragedy into a day of doing good.

National Inclusion Week (Sept. 28-Oct. 4) - This week is designed to celebrate everyday inclusion in all its forms!

OCTOBER:

Global Diversity Awareness Month - to remind us of the positive impact a diverse workforce of men and women can have on a society. More and more, the world becomes a place where cultures and customs come together, and we are uncertain what is appropriate.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month - Congress, with the aim of helping disabled veterans, designated the first week of October as National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week in 1945. Seventeen years later, the word "physically" was removed from the phrase in order to recognize the needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In the 1970s, a shift in disability public policy led to further emendation. For the first time, it was viewed as discriminatory to exclude or segregate people because of a disability, and activists were fighting strongly for legal revisions. As a result, the U.S. saw changes such as the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act in 1990 and the designation, by presidential proclamation, of a full month to increase public awareness of those with disabilities and appreciate the capabilities of the 30 million people in the U.S. of working-age who are disabled. Various programs throughout the month headed by The Office of Disability Employment Policy emphasize specific employment barriers that still need to be addressed and eliminated. Every year the president of the United States signs an executive order designating the month of October as National American Heritage Month, in recognition of the many achievements and contributions made to American culture by persons of Italian heritage.

National Coming Out Day (LBGTQIA+) (Oct. 11th) Annual day of awareness and support to members of the LBGTQIA+ community who've chosen "coming out of the closet" (public declaration of their chosen identity) and to those who haven't made the choice of "coming out of the closet."

Indigenous People's Day (Oct. 12th) In 2019 President Floyd acknowledged that MHU recognizes Indigenous People's Day instead of Columbus Day. This day celebrates and honors Indigenous peoples and commemorates their histories and cultures.

NOVEMBER:

National Native American Heritage Month is in response to an effort by many to gain a day of recognition for the great influence Native Americans have had upon the U.S., Congress designated a week of October to celebrate Native American Awareness Week in 1976. Yearly legislation was enacted to continue the tradition until August of 1990, when President Bush approved the designation of November as National Native American Heritage Month. Each year a similar proclamation is issued. President Clinton noted in 1996, "Throughout our history, American Indian and Alaska Native peoples have been an integral part of the American character. Against all odds, America's first peoples have endured, and they remain a vital cultural, political, social, and moral presence." November is an appropriate month for the celebration because it is traditionally a time when many Native Americans hold fall harvest and world-renewal ceremonies, powwows, dances, and various feasts. The holiday recognizes hundreds of different tribes and approximately 250 languages, and celebrates the history, tradition, and values of Native Americans. National Native American Heritage Month serves as a reminder of the positive effect native peoples have had on the cultural development and growth of the U.S., as well as the struggles and challenges they have faced.

November 11th Veterans Day is a federal holiday observed annually on November 11th to honor all who have served in the US Armed Forces and were honorably discharged from service.

DECEMBER:

Christmas (Dec. 25) is a religious and social holiday that is celebrated by most Christians and many non-Christians in a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ.

Kwanzaa is celebrated from December 26th - January 1st. It is an annual seven-day holiday affirming African family and social values. Mainly celebrated in the US as an African American holiday an increasing number of nations outside the US with large numbers of African descendants are celebrating this holiday. It is not a substitute for Christmas. Each day one of the seven Kwanzaa candles (in African colors of red, green, and black) is lit. The candles symbolizing the seven principles of Kwanzaa: unity (umoya), self-determination (kujichagulia), collective responsibility (ujima), cooperative economics (ujamaa), purpose (nia), creativity (kuumba), and faith (imani).

SPECIAL DAYS:

Easter is a Christian religious holiday that celebrates the Resurrection of Jesus Christ on the third day after he was crucified. In 325 it was decreed that Easter should be observed on the first Sunday following the first full moon after the spring equinox. (2022/April 17, 2023/April 9, 2024/March 31, 2025/April 20, 2026/April 5)

Hanukkah is a Jewish holiday usually celebrated within November and December. Known as the Festival of Lights or the Feast of Dedication it is an eight day/night holiday celebrating the rededication of the Holy Temple of Jerusalem following the Maccabean revolt against the Syrian-Greek army. Tradition states that the victorious Maccabees could only find enough oil to keep the commemorative Menorah lit for one night. However, the Menorah miraculously stayed lit for eight nights. During the eight-day celebration, each night a new candle is lit. (2021/Nov. 28-Dec. 6, 2022/Dec. 18-Dec. 26, 2023/Dec. 7-Dec. 15, 2024/Dec. 25-Jan. 2, 2025/Dec. 14-Dec. 22)

Ramadan is an obligation for every adult and healthy Muslim to fast during the month of Ramadan. Ramadan is the month in which the Holy Quran was sent down and revealed to the Prophet Muhammad over a 23-year period. Muslim fasting is a total abstention from eating, drinking, and sexual relations starting from dawn to dusk and repeated for 29 or 30 days of the month of Ramadan. (2022/April 2-May 2, 2023/March 23-April 21, 2024/ March 11-April 10, 2025/March 1-March 30, 2026/Feb. 18-March 20)

Rosh Hashanah refers to the first two days of the month of Tishri, one of the 12 months that make-up the Hebrew calendar. Since the Hebrew calendar is lunar based, the precise dates of Tishri and Rosh Hashanah vary each year but tend to take place in September or October. (2021/Sept. 7, 2022/Sept. 26, 2023/Sept. 16, 2024/Oct. 3, 2025/Sept. 23, 2026/Sept. 12)

Yom Kippur is a somber holiday. When Moses returned from Mt. Sinai with two tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments from God, he found that the Jews had begun worshipping a golden calf. Enraged he destroyed the idol and the tablets. Moses returned to Mt. Sinai and asked God's forgiveness. On the 10th day of the seventh month of the Jewish calendar, Moses received that forgiveness and from then on, that day has been known as Yom Kippur. It's not customary to wish someone a "happy Yom Kippur," it's better to wish them a good, easy or meaningful fast. For nearly 26 hours from sundown Tuesday until sundown Wednesday, Jew observing the holiday will abstain from food and drink, as a means of self-deprivation and compassion. (2021/Sept. 16, 2022/Oct. 5, 2023/Sept. 25, 2024/Oct. 12, 2025/Oct. 2, 2026/Sept. 21)

References:

[Electronic Diversity Resource Calendar, Diversity Resources, Inc.](#)

[Worldwide Public Holidays](#)