

# Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER BY THE DEI OFFICE

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## Making Connections Through DEI Discourse

### Honoring Alice Wong: Disability Justice, Storytelling, and Inclusion in the IDD Sector

Alice Wong, who passed away in November 2025 at the age of 51, was a trailblazing disability rights activist, writer, and founder of the Disability Visibility Project (DVP). Her life's work centered on amplifying people with disabilities voices, dismantling ableist systems, and showing the world that storytelling is not just a tool for awareness—it is a vehicle for justice and inclusion.

Disability justice is a framework that goes beyond accessibility—it insists on equity, dignity, and the leadership of people with disabilities themselves. Rooted in the activism of people of color with disabilities and queer communities, it calls for recognizing how disability intersects with race, culture, gender, and class. Alice Wong embodied this vision. As a people with disabilities Asian American woman, she showed that disability justice is not just about removing barriers but about valuing all bodies and minds and ensuring that those most impacted shape the systems around them. Her work reminds us that justice means more than compliance—it means creating spaces where people with disabilities voices are heard, respected, and celebrated.

#### The Power of Storytelling in Disability Justice

Wong believed that storytelling transforms culture. Through her anthology *Disability Visibility: First-Person Stories from the Twenty-First Century* and her memoir *Year of the Tiger: An Activist's Life*, she demonstrated that stories can be more than essays or books—they can be tweets, memes, or conversations that spark movements. For the IDD sector, this lesson is profound: when people with intellectual and developmental disabilities share their lived experiences, they challenge stereotypes and reshape how communities understand inclusion.

#### Inclusion in the IDD Sector

For the IDD sector, this is a powerful lesson. Disability justice challenges us to center lived experience: Wong's work reminds us that those most affected by systems must be at the center of decision-making. In IDD services, listening directly to people supported and families ensures programs reflect real needs. Wong talked about how systemic segregation and everyday microaggressions hurt people with disabilities more than their disability. For IDD professionals, this means actively dismantling barriers in housing, employment, and healthcare. Intersectional inclusion: Wong, who was a person with disability Asian American woman, showed how important it is to understand how race, culture, and disability all work together.



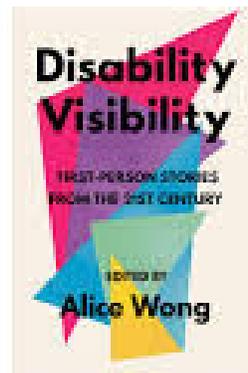
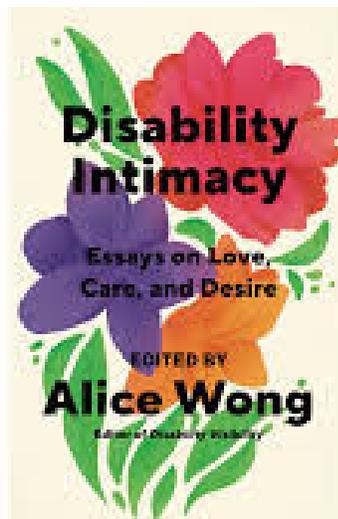
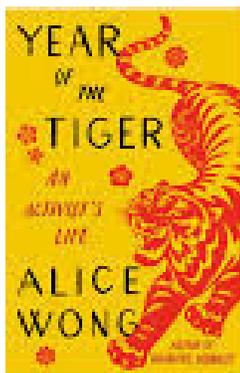
In the IDD sector, respecting intersectionality means that different identities are valued and supported. Storytelling as a form of advocacy: Wong's Disability Visibility Project showed that stories can bring people together. Getting people with IDD to tell their stories through art, media, or community forums makes people feel for them and brings about change in the system.

### **A Call to Action**

Alice Wong's legacy pushes us to see storytelling as a way to do justice. In the IDD sector, every story told by people with disabilities is an act of resistance against invisibility. By honoring these voices, we build a culture where inclusion is not a program but a practice woven into everyday life. As Wong once said, "Storytelling can become a movement for social change." Her vision invites us to ensure that the IDD community is not only included but celebrated for its contributions, resilience, and humanity.

### **Sources**

- 'I Know We Can Transform the World': Remembering Disability Rights Activist Alice Wong  
<https://www.kqed.org/news/12064928/i-know-we-can-transform-the-world-remembering-disability-rights-activist-alice-wong>
- Disability Rights Activist and Author Alice Wong Dies at 51  
<https://www.kqed.org/arts/13983848/alice-wong-disability-rights-activist-obituary>
- Alice Wong sparked a fire in all of us in the disability community  
<https://smanewstoday.com/columns/alice-wong-sparked-fire-all-us-disability-community/>
- Remembering Alice Wong: Disability Advocate and Changemaker  
<https://ucp.org/remembering-alice-wong-disability-advocate-and-changemaker/>



# Did You Know?

**The second principle of Kwanzaa—Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)—calls us to “define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves”?**

The second principle of Kwanzaa, Kujichagulia (Self-Determination), celebrated on December 27, emphasizes the right and responsibility to define, name, create, and speak for ourselves. It is a call to affirm identity, culture, and values rather than allowing others to impose them.

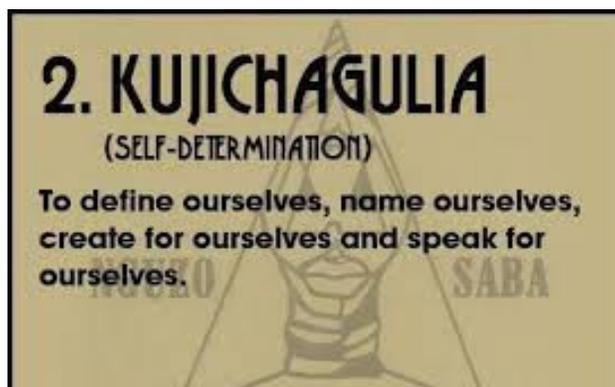
Kwanzaa is a seven-day cultural celebration based on African traditions. It takes place from December 26 to January 1. Each day highlights one of the Nguzo Saba (Seven Principles). These values, created by Dr. Maulana Karenga in 1966, serve as guiding lights for building strong, resilient, and inclusive communities.

Each day of Kwanzaa highlights one of the Nguzo Saba:

1. Umoja (Unity): To strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race.
2. Kujichagulia (Self-Determination): To define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves.
3. Ujima (Collective Work and Responsibility): To build and maintain our community together and solve problems collectively.
4. Ujamaa (Cooperative Economics): To build and support businesses that benefit the community.
5. Nia (Purpose): To make our collective vocation the building and development of our community.
6. Kuumba (Creativity): To do as much as we can to leave our community more beautiful and beneficial.
7. Imani (Faith): To believe in ourselves, our people, our leaders, and the righteousness of our struggle.

## Kujichagulia Detail Meaning

- Define ourselves: The principle insists that individuals and communities must shape their own identities rather than being defined by external forces.
- Name ourselves: It affirms the importance of claiming and honoring cultural names, traditions, and heritage.
- Create for ourselves: Kujichagulia calls for building institutions, practices, and futures that reflect our values.
- Speak for ourselves: It emphasizes the power of voice—telling our stories and advocating for our needs.



# Did You Know?

**The second principle of Kwanzaa—Kujichagulia (Self-Determination)—calls us to “define ourselves, name ourselves, create for ourselves, and speak for ourselves”?**

continued

## Cultural Significance

- Kujichagulia is not only about personal empowerment but also about collective liberation. It reminds communities of their right to self-govern, self-define, and contribute uniquely to society.
- As Dr. Maulana Karenga, founder of Kwanzaa, explained, self-determination rejects oppression and reaffirms the right of people to determine their destiny and daily lives.

## Connection to DEI in the IDD Sector

In the context of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), Kujichagulia resonates deeply with the IDD sector in the following ways:

- Empowerment: Encouraging people with intellectual and developmental disabilities to define their identities and futures.
- Voice: Ensuring that people with IDD can speak for themselves in decision-making processes.
- Respect: Honoring cultural, linguistic, and personal identities within care and support systems.
- Equity: Building inclusive structures that reflect the values and contributions of all communities.
- Unity: Strengthening collaboration across diverse teams.
- Self-determination: Empowering people with IDD to define their identities and futures.
- Collective responsibility: Ensuring that inclusion is everyone’s work.
- Creativity and purpose: Inspiring innovative approaches to accessibility and equity.

By weaving these principles into our daily practice, we honor cultural traditions while advancing justice and inclusion for all.

## Sources

□ International African American Museum – Kujichagulia: Embracing Self-Determination in the Spirit of Kwanzaa <https://iaamuseum.org/news/kujichagulia-embracing-self-determination-in-the-spirit-of-kwanzaa>

□ National Museum of African American History and Culture – The Seven Principles of Kwanzaa <https://nmaahc.si.edu/explore/stories/seven-principles-kwanzaa>



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Brookville Center for Children Services &  
Citizens Options Unlimited

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# Words & Concepts of the Quarter

## Equity vs. Equality: Understanding the Difference in the IDD sector

When we talk about diversity, equity, and inclusion in the Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) sector, the distinction between equity and equality is more than just semantics—it shapes how services are delivered and how lives are impacted.

Equality is often understood as giving everyone the same resources or opportunities. It assumes that fairness means sameness. In practice, this might look like providing identical educational materials, standardized job training, or uniform healthcare access. While well-intentioned, equality overlooks the reality that people with IDD have diverse needs, abilities, and starting points. Treating everyone the same does not guarantee that everyone can participate fully or achieve similar outcomes.

Equity, on the other hand, recognizes difference and responds to it. It means tailoring supports so that each person has what they need to succeed. In education, equity might involve offering materials in accessible formats—audio, large print, or simplified language—so that all students can engage meaningfully. In employment, equity could mean providing job coaching, flexible schedules, or assistive technology to ensure that employees with IDD can thrive alongside their peers. Equity is outcome-focused: it seeks fairness not by uniformity, but by responsiveness to individual circumstances.

This distinction is critical in the IDD sector because the goal is not simply inclusion in name, but inclusion in practice. Equity ensures that people with IDD are not just present in classrooms, workplaces, or communities, but are empowered to participate fully and meaningfully. Equality may open the door, but equity ensures that everyone can walk through it.

For organizations committed to DEI, embracing equity means shifting from a mindset of “fair treatment equals sameness” to one of “fair treatment equals meeting people where they are.” It requires flexible policies, individualized supports, and a willingness to dismantle systemic barriers. Only then can we move toward a society where people with IDD experience true belonging and opportunity.

### Sources

- [Oxford Review – Equality vs. Equity: Definition and Explanation](#)
- [Annie E. Casey Foundation – Equity vs. Equality: Differences & Examples](#)
- [George Washington University Online Public Health – Equity vs. Equality: What’s the Difference?](#)



# This Quarter...

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## October

### National Disability Employment Awareness Month

**NATIONAL DISABILITY  
EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH**



This month highlights the contributions of workers with disabilities and promotes inclusive employment practices. It's a reminder that workplaces thrive when accessibility and equity are prioritized.

[Learn more](#)

### Global Diversity Awareness Month



Celebrated worldwide, this month honors cultural differences and encourages respect for diverse perspectives. It's about embracing inclusion across communities and workplaces.

[Learn more](#)

### Global Diversity Awareness Month



This month recognizes the rich history and cultural contributions of Polish Americans, from traditions to achievements in arts, science, and public service.

[Learn more](#)

# October

## Bullying Prevention Month



October raises awareness about bullying and promotes kindness, empathy, and advocacy to create safe environments for children and adults alike

[Learn more](#)

## Domestic Violence Awareness month



This observance shines a light on the impact of domestic violence and calls for collective action to support survivors and build safer communities

[Learn more](#)

## Filipino-American Heritage month



Celebrated in October, this month honors the history, culture, and contributions of Filipino Americans, strengthening ties between heritage and community.

[Learn more](#)

# October

## German American Heritage Month



This month celebrates German-American culture, traditions, and the profound influence of German immigrants on U.S. history.

[Learn more](#)

## Italian American Heritage Month



October recognizes the vibrant heritage of Italian Americans, celebrating their contributions to U.S. culture, cuisine, and civic life

[Learn more](#)

## LGBTQIA+ History Month



This month honors the history and achievements of LGBTQIA+ communities, promoting awareness, inclusion, and equality.

[Learn more](#)

## Down Syndrome Awareness Month



October celebrates individuals with Down syndrome, raising awareness about inclusion, advocacy, and the importance of embracing abilities.

[Learn more](#)

# November

## National Native American Heritage Month



November honors the rich histories, cultures, and contributions of Native peoples. It's a time to celebrate resilience, traditions, and the ongoing impact of Indigenous communities.

[Learn more](#)

## National Veterans and Military Families Month



This month recognizes the service of veterans and the sacrifices of military families. It's a call to honor their dedication and provide support for their well-being.

[Learn more](#)

## National Family Caregivers Month



November shines a spotlight on family caregivers, acknowledging their vital role in supporting loved ones with health needs. It emphasizes appreciation, advocacy, and resources for caregivers

[Learn more](#)

# December

## Universal Human Rights Month

DECEMBER IS  
**UNIVERSAL  
HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
MONTH**



Observed every December, Universal Human Rights Month calls us to reflect on the inherent dignity and rights of all people. It commemorates the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, and encourages communities worldwide to promote equality, justice, and freedom.

[Learn more](#)

# Days of the Quarter

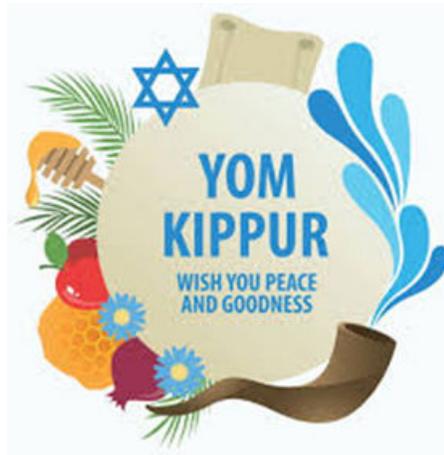
## October

**October 1 International Day for Older Persons  
(United Nations)**



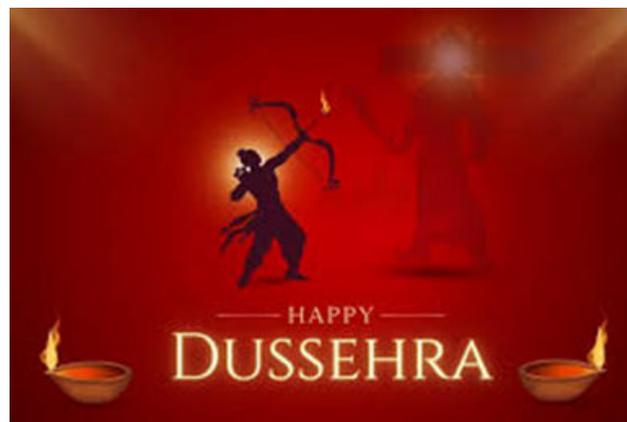
[Learn more](#)

**October 1 - 2: Yom Kippur (Jewish)**



[Learn More](#)

**October 2: Dussehra**



[Learn more](#)

## October 2 International Day of Nonviolence



[Learn more](#)

## October 6–13 Sukkot (Jewish)



[Learn more](#)

## October 10 World Mental Health Day



[Learn more](#)

## October 10 World Inclusion Day



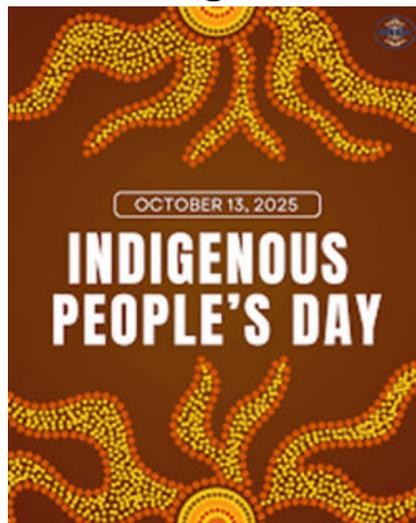
[Learn more](#)

## October 11 National Coming Out Day



[Learn more](#)

## October 13 Indigenous Peoples' Day



[Learn more](#)

## October 15 Pronouns Day



[Learn more](#)

## October 15 Blind Americans Equality Day & White Cane Awareness Day



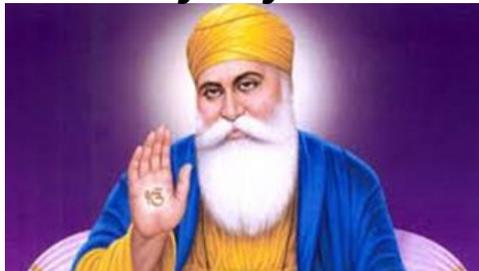
[Learn more](#)

## October 16: Spirit Day



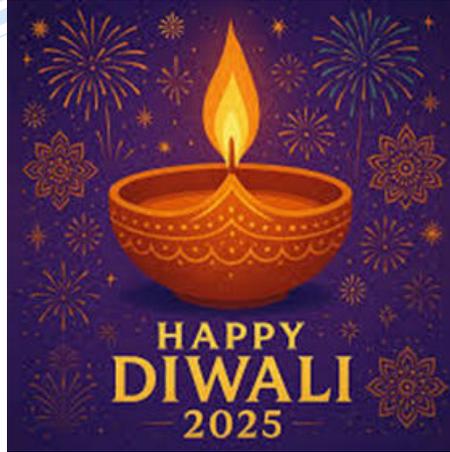
[Learn more](#)

## October 20: Sikh Holy Day (Birth of Guru Granth)



[Learn more](#)

## October 20 Diwali



[Learn more](#)

## October 21 Bandi Chhor Divas (Sikhism)



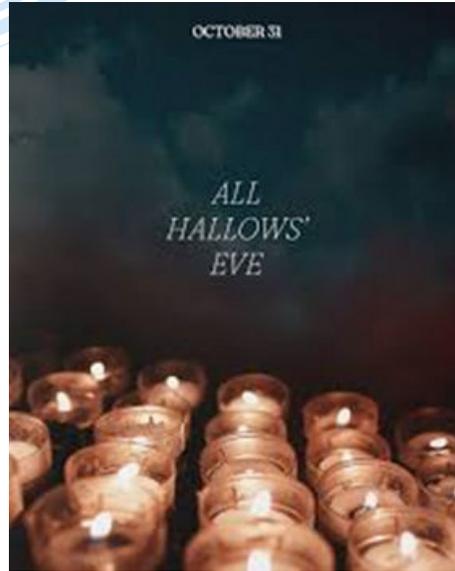
[Learn more](#)

## October 22 International Stuttering Awareness Day



[Learn more](#)

## October 31 All Hallows Eve



[Learn more](#)

## October 31 Samhain (Wicca/Paganism)



[Learn more](#)

## October 31 Beltane (Wicca/Paganism)



[Learn more](#)

# November

**November 1 Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead)**



[Learn more](#)

**November 1 All Saints' Day (Roman Catholic)**



[Learn more](#)

**November 5 National Stress Awareness Day**



[Learn more](#)

## November 9 World Freedom Day



[Learn more](#)

## November 11: Veterans Day (U.S.)



[Learn more](#)

## November 16: International Day for Tolerance (United Nations)



[Learn more](#)

## November 20 Transgender Day of Remembrance



[Learn more](#)

## November 20 Universal Children's Day (United Nations)



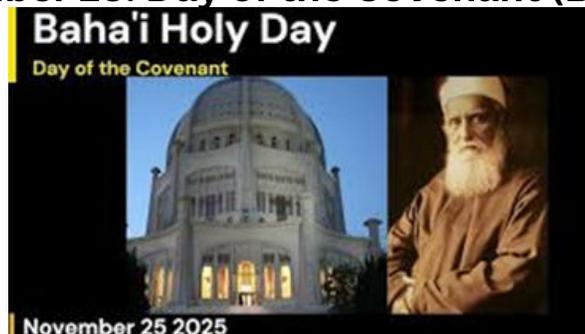
[Learn more](#)

## November 25 International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (United Nations)



[Learn more](#)

## November 25: Day of the Covenant (Bahá'í)



[Learn more](#)

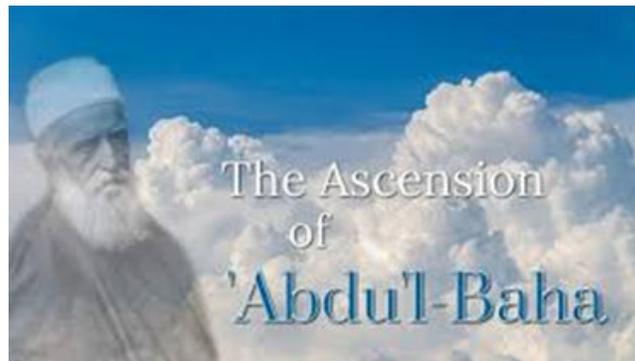
AHRC Nassau  
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**November 27 Thanksgiving (U.S.)**



[Learn more](#)

**November 27 Ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Bahá'í)**



[Learn more](#)

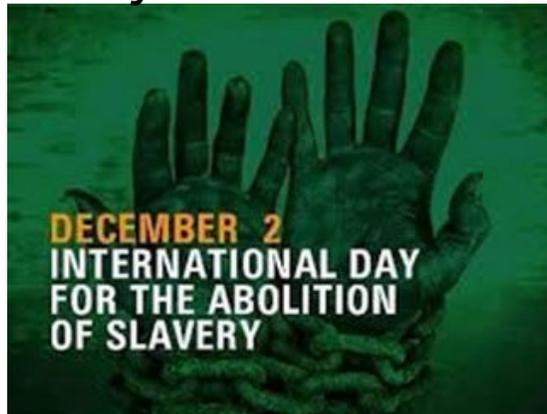
**November 28 Native American Heritage Day (U.S.)**



[Learn more](#)

# December

**December 2: International Day for the Abolition of Slavery (United Nations)**



[Learn more](#)

**December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations)**



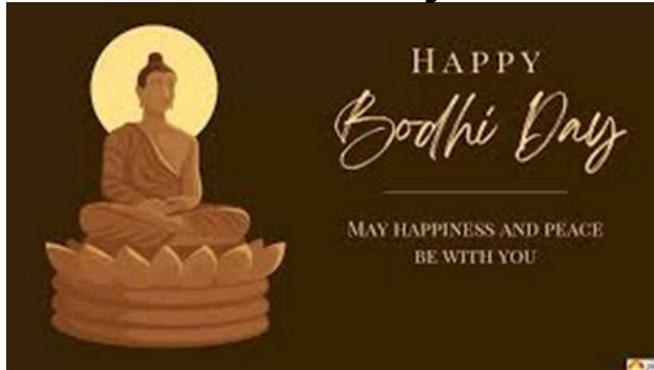
[Learn more](#)

**December 5: International Volunteer Day**



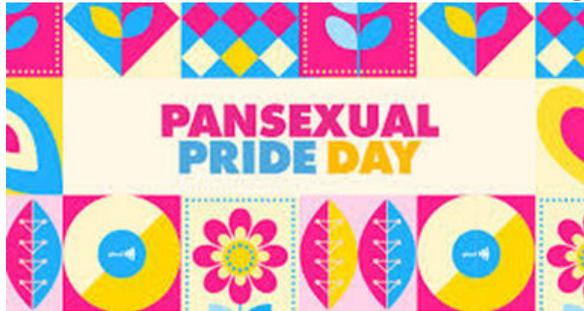
[Learn more](#)

## December 8 Bodhi Day (Buddhist)



[Learn more](#)

## December 8 Pansexual Pride Day



[Learn more](#)

## December 9 International Genocide Prevention Day



[Learn more](#)

## December 10: International Human Rights Day (United Nations)



[Learn more](#)

## December 14 Hanukkah begins at sunset (Jewish)



[Learn more](#)

## December 21 Yule – Winter Solstice (Pagan/Wiccan)



[Learn more](#)

## December 21: Litha – Southern Hemisphere (Wicca/Paganism)



[Learn more](#)

**December 22: Hanukkah ends at sunset (Jewish)**



[Learn more](#)

**December 25: Christmas (Christian/Gregorian Calendar)**



[Learn more](#)

**December 26 – January 1 Kwanzaa**



[Learn more](#)

**December 31 New Year's Eve (Gregorian Calendar)**



[Learn more](#)

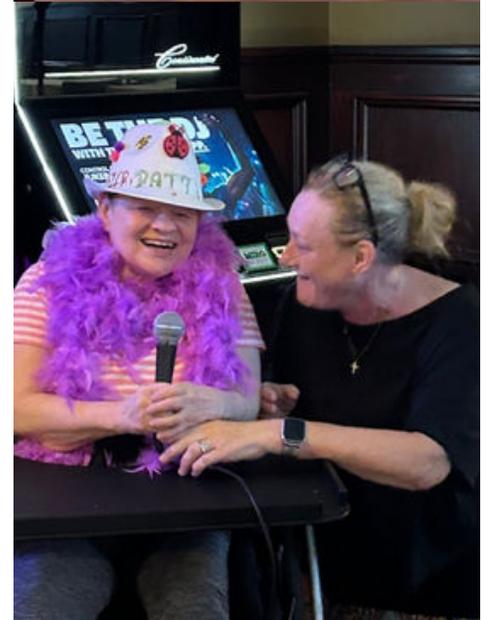
# Employee Inclusive Series

## Belonging Through Karaoke and Community Connections

This quarter's spotlight comes from Sallyanne Burgess, Vice President of Operations at Citizens Options Unlimited, whose ever-supportive leadership continues to highlight the power of inclusion and belonging.

At Citizens' Programs in Shoreham, an 82-bed Intermediate Care Facility, inclusion isn't just a principle—it's lived practice. For decades, the facility has been part of the Shoreham community, supporting individuals who are medically fragile, have dual diagnoses, or face behavioral challenges. The DEI Committee and CQL initiatives emphasize that true belonging means more than integration—it means being recognized as valued members of the community.

One highlight this year has been regular outings to the Rocky Point Ale House, a local sports bar that hosts karaoke nights. Beginning in May, about ten residents joined the community there, and the reception was extraordinary. Patrons welcomed them warmly, singing duets, sharing sports conversations, and even gifting microphones so everyone could participate. The Ale House now reserves VIP seating to ensure accessibility, making karaoke nights a cherished tradition twice a month.



## Belonging Through Karaoke and Community Connections

Beyond karaoke, residents have built ties with local restaurants, farm stands, and businesses across Long Island. They proudly entered the East Wind Scarecrow Contest, creating a SpongeBob-themed scarecrow that showcased creativity and community pride. These activities are not framed as “special inclusion events”—they are everyday experiences of belonging, where residents shop, eat, celebrate, and contribute alongside neighbors.

Looking ahead, the community is excited for a Holiday Karaoke Party on December 18th, continuing the tradition of joy, music, and connection. Other initiatives, like Friendsgiving celebrations with first responders and veterans, further demonstrate how DEI efforts extend beyond the facility walls, weaving residents into the fabric of local life.

**“It’s not community inclusion—it’s community membership. We are out, we are participating, and we belong.”**

Thanks to Sally Burgess’s support and vision, these stories remind us that inclusion is not about creating separate spaces but about ensuring everyone has the opportunity to share in the everyday rhythms of community life. Karaoke nights, farm stand visits, and scarecrow contests may seem small, but they are powerful affirmations of dignity, joy, and belonging.

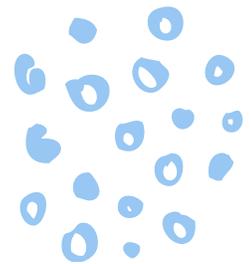
Takeaway: Belonging happens when people are welcomed not as guests, but as neighbors. With Sally Burgess’s leadership, Citizens Options Unlimited shows us that inclusion is most meaningful when it feels ordinary and joyful.



# Call for Submissions, Feedback and Suggestions

The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Monthly Newsletter invites contributions to our monthly publication that fits into the following categories:

- News items and announcements
- Short stories
- Recognitions
- Member profiles



Tell us what you want to see more of!

Send us your feedback!



**Submit your materials to:**  
**Dr. Sarah Gonzalez Noveiri**  
**DEI Officer**  
**[snoveiri@ahrc.org](mailto:snoveiri@ahrc.org)**