

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

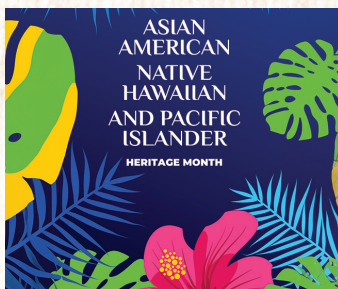
Advancing Equitable Opportunities



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May 2026 Cultural Heritage Highlights

Disclaimer: The Cultural Heritage Highlights is intended as a resource to encourage the recognition, exploration, and celebration of a wide range of cultural observances in schools and communities. Each monthly edition features selected observances that reflect both longstanding and emerging cultural traditions. While every effort is made to include diverse and meaningful content, the list is not exhaustive and should not be viewed as an intentional exclusion of any celebration. Educators and community members are encouraged to use this resource as a starting point for deeper learning, inclusive dialogue, and the continued honoring of all cultural identities throughout the year. Suggestions for upcoming highlights are welcomed and can be sent to ESBOCESdei@esboces.org.



Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

This month honors two significant milestones: the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869. Today, Asian-American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities continue to enrich our nation with a beautiful tapestry of cultures, languages, and traditions that make us all stronger.

Learn more:

[All About Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander Heritage Month](#)



Haitian Heritage Month

Haitian Heritage Month is a wonderful time to celebrate the vibrant culture, distinct art, and delectable cuisine of the Haitian community. This celebration grew from the annual **Haitian Flag Day** on May 18, honoring Haiti's legacy as the world's first Black republic to free itself from colonial rule. Today, that history lives on through incredible literature, faith, and traditions. On May 31, we also invite you to join us in honoring **Haitian Mother's Day**, a beautiful conclusion to a month of heritage and pride.

Learn more:

[Facts about Haiti](#)



Jewish-American Heritage Month

Jewish-American Heritage Month is a time to honor the over 350-year history of Jewish contributions to American life. While the celebration of Jewish heritage began earlier at the local level, it was officially recognized by presidential proclamation in 2006 following a coordinated effort by Jewish-American leaders and the Jewish Museum of Florida. From science and medicine, to the arts and civil rights, Jewish Americans have played a vital role in shaping the fabric of our nation. This month, we celebrate their enduring legacy of resilience, faith, and service.

Learn more:

[Learn About Jewish-American Cultural Heritage](#)



Lupus Awareness Month

May is Lupus Awareness Month, a time to shine a light on a chronic autoimmune disease that affects millions worldwide. Lupus is often misunderstood because its symptoms, like pain and inflammation, can strike any part of the body without warning. Because it is so unpredictable, it remains a challenge to diagnose and treat. This month, we join together to spread factual information, support those living with the disease, and advocate for the research needed to find a cure.

Learn more:

[What is Lupus?](#)



Melanoma and Skin Cancer Awareness Month

Melanoma and Skin Cancer Awareness Month is a vital time dedicated to educating the public on the most common cancer in the United States. Throughout the month, health organizations worldwide offer resources such as free skin screenings and essential sun-safety tips to help with early detection and prevention. On May 4, we also want to highlight **Melanoma Monday**, a day specifically focused on raising awareness about melanoma, the deadliest form of skin cancer, and the importance of regular skin checks.

Learn more:

[Key Facts to Know About Melanoma](#)



National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

May is National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month, a time dedicated to supporting the millions of people living with asthma and allergies. This month is all about sharing helpful resources, promoting better lung health, and ensuring everyone has the tools they need to breathe a little easier. We also invite you to join the global community on May 5 for **World Asthma Day**, as we work together to raise awareness and improve asthma care for everyone, everywhere.

Learn more:

[What is Asthma?](#)

[A Complete Guide to Allergies](#)



National Mental Health Awareness Month

This May, we are proud to celebrate National Mental Health Awareness Month with the 2026 theme, “More Good Days, Together.” Established by Mental Health America, this year’s message celebrates how far we have come in building awareness, while reminding us that everyone deserves support on their unique journey. By working together, we can provide the right tools at the right time to help everyone in our community experience more good days.

Learn more:

[Mental Health America](#)

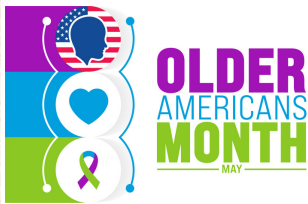


National Speech-Language-Hearing Month

Every May, we celebrate National Speech-Language-Hearing Month, a special time dedicated to raising awareness about communication disorders and the life-changing support available for those navigating hearing and speech challenges. This month, we also honor the incredible contributions of the audiologists and speech-language pathologists who work tirelessly to help everyone find their voice and connect more fully with the world around them.

Learn more:

[ACI Alliance](#)



Older Americans Month

Each May, we join the Administration for Community Living (ACL) in celebrating Older Americans Month (OAM). This year's theme, "Champion Your Health," invites us to transform how we perceive and approach the aging process. It is a powerful call to challenge outdated stereotypes and celebrate the diverse, vibrant ways older adults contribute to our communities. Join us as we reaffirm our commitment to supporting and honoring the seniors in our lives.

Learn more:

[Older Americans Month](#)



National Nurses Week (May 6-12)

Every year, we take time in May to honor the incredible dedication of our healthcare heroes. On May 6, National Nurses Week kicks off with **National Nurses Day**. On May 12, the week of celebration culminates with **International Nurses Day**, a global event established by the International Council of Nurses in 1974. This date was chosen to honor the birth anniversary of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing, and serves as a beautiful way to recognize the commendable work nurses do every day to keep our communities healthy.

Learn more:

[The Global Voice of Nursing](#)



May 1 – Beltane

Beltane is a traditional Gaelic festival that welcomes the arrival of summer and celebrates the earth's fertility. Often referred to as May Day, this vibrant holiday is rich with traditions. Some traditions include the lighting of symbolic bonfires, the weaving of flower wreaths, and the crowning of a May Queen. It is a beautiful time to gather and celebrate the blossoming season ahead.

Learn more:

[What is the Ancient Celtic Festival of Beltane?](#)

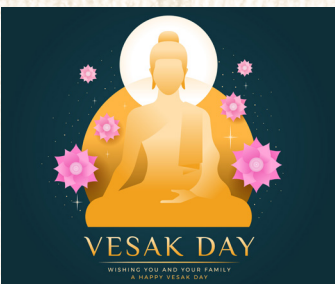


May 1 – International Workers' Day (Labour Day)

On May 1, we join communities worldwide in celebrating International Workers' Day, also known as Labour Day or May Day. This day honors the incredible contributions of laborers and the working class who have shaped our modern world. Promoted by the international labor movement, it serves as a meaningful time to reflect on the progress made in workers' rights and to celebrate the strength and diversity of the workforce.

Learn more:

[International Workers' Day](#)



May 1 – Vesak

Vesak is one of the most significant festivals for Buddhists worldwide. Often called Buddha Day, Buddha Jayanti, or Buddha Purnima, this holiday honors three major milestones in the life of Siddhartha Gautama: his birth, his enlightenment (Bodhi), and his passing (Parinirvana). Traditionally observed in South and Southeast Asia, as well as Tibet and Mongolia, it is a beautiful time of reflection, compassion, and the celebration of peace.

Learn more:

[PBS Video: All About Vesak](#)



May 5 – Cinco de Mayo

Every May 5, we celebrate Cinco de Mayo to honor the Battle of Puebla, a pivotal moment in history. In 1862, Mexican soldiers triumphed against the odds to defend their sovereignty against French forces. Today, this holiday is a vibrant celebration of Mexican culture, art, and food. It serves as a wonderful reminder of the strength found in unity and the importance of honoring the diverse history that shapes our community.

Learn more:

[Cinco de Mayo: Fiesta Fun!](#)



May 10 – Mother's Day

In the United States, we celebrate Mother's Day on the second Sunday of May. In 1908, this heartfelt holiday was established by Anna Jarvis to honor motherhood. In 1914, it became an official U.S. holiday. While Jarvis originally envisioned it as a day of personal and quiet reflection, it has grown into a worldwide celebration. Today, it is a wonderful opportunity to show appreciation for the mothers and maternal figures in our lives through cards, flowers, and quality time.

Learn more:

[PBS Video: All About Mother's Day](#)

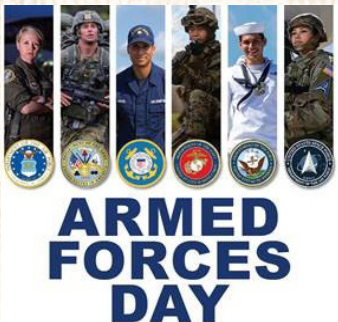


May 15 – International Day of Families

This year, we observe International Day of Families with the powerful theme, "Families, Inequalities and Child Wellbeing." The United Nations selects a new focus each year, ranging from education to work-life balance, to ensure we are addressing the most pressing challenges facing families today. This year's initiative highlights how reducing inequalities is essential for helping children and their families thrive in an ever-changing world.

Learn more:

[International Day of Families 2026](#)



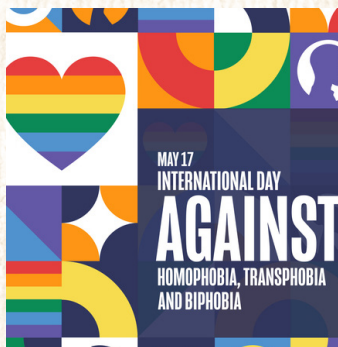
May 16 – Armed Forces Day

Every year, we join the nation in celebrating Armed Forces Day on the third Saturday of the month. Established in 1949 to unite the separate branch observances into one single day of honor, it is a special time for us to show our deep appreciation for those currently serving in the U.S. Army, Navy, Marine Corps, Air Force, Space Force, and Coast Guard. It is a wonderful opportunity to recognize the sacrifices made by our service members and their families to keep our country safe.

Learn more:

[Our Forces](#)

[Military Observances and Commemorative Dates](#)



May 17 – International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia

This day is a global call to action to raise awareness about the rights of the LGBTQ+ community and to advocate for a world free from discrimination. The date holds deep historical significance, marking the anniversary of the World Health Organization's 1990 decision to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder. It is a day to celebrate progress while reaffirming our commitment to equality and inclusion for all.

Learn more:

[History of International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia](#)



May 18 – International Museum Day

International Museum Day is a wonderful opportunity to visit and enjoy the museums that enrich our communities. Hosted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM), this day invites people worldwide to explore how museums contribute to our education and society's development. It is also a time to raise awareness about the unique challenges museums face and to support their mission of preserving history and culture for everyone.

Learn more:

[International Museum Day Awareness](#)



May 21 – Global Accessibility Awareness Day

On the third Thursday of May, we observe Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD), a global initiative dedicated to making the digital world more inclusive. Founded in 2012, GAAD challenges web designers, developers, and content creators to prioritize digital accessibility for the more than one billion people worldwide living with disabilities. It is a day to move beyond awareness and take concrete steps toward ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability, can navigate and enjoy the digital landscape.

Learn more:

[Facts About Global Accessibility Awareness Day and Ways You Can Help](#)

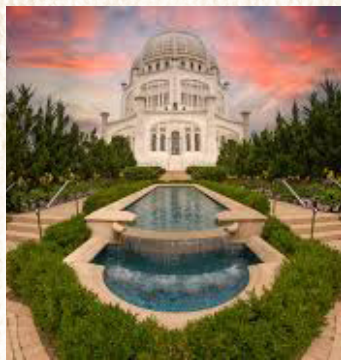


May 21-23 – Shavuot

In 2026, Shavuot (also pronounced Shavuot) will be observed from May 21 to May 23. This significant two-day holiday commemorates the anniversary of when the Torah was given to the Jewish people at Mount Sinai over 3,000 years ago. Following 49 days of eager anticipation during the "Counting of the Omer," the festival is celebrated with candle-lit dinners, all-night Torah study, and synagogue services featuring the reading of the Ten Commandments. It is also a beloved tradition to enjoy festive dairy foods, such as blintzes and cheesecake, with family and friends.

Learn more:

[Shavuot 101](#)



May 24 – Declaration of the Báb

This May is an opportunity to join our Bahá'í friends in celebrating the Declaration of the Báb, a significant holy day that marks a turning point in religious history. On May 22, 1844, a young man in Shiraz, Persia, announced he was a messenger of God with a mission to prepare humanity for a new era of global unity. Known as the Báb, or "the Gate," his message of spiritual renewal paved the way for the Bahá'í Faith. Today, it is a day of reflection and community, often celebrated with prayers and stories of the faith's early beginnings.

Learn more:

[Declaration of the Báb](#)



May 25 – Memorial Day

Observed annually on the last Monday in May, Memorial Day is a solemn federal holiday dedicated to honoring those who died while serving in the U.S. military. Originally known as Decoration Day, the tradition began after the Civil War when citizens would decorate the graves of fallen soldiers with flowers. While it often marks the unofficial start of summer, the day serves as a vital reminder of the ultimate sacrifice made by service members to protect our nation's freedoms.

Learn more:

[Memorial Day: A Commemoration](#)



May 26 – Day of Arafah

In 2026, the Day of Arafah is expected to fall on Tuesday, May 26, marking the most significant day of the Islamic year. Known as the "pinnacle of Hajj," millions of pilgrims gather on the plain of Arafat in Saudi Arabia to stand in prayer and seek divine mercy. For the billions of Muslims around the world who are not on pilgrimage, it is a day of profound reflection often observed through fasting, which is believed to expiate sins and bring one closer to God.

Learn more:

[Muslim Aid](#)



May 27-30 – Eid al-Adha

Eid al-Adha, also referred to as Eid ul-Adha, is one of the most significant holidays in the Islamic calendar. Often referred to as the “Festival of Sacrifice” or “Feast of Sacrifice,” this holiday honors the devotion and spirit of sacrifice. It is a time for Muslims worldwide to gather with family and friends, share festive meals, and engage in acts of charity. By providing for those in need, the holiday emphasizes the universal values of compassion, community, and gratitude.

Learn more:

[PBS Video: All About Eid al-Adha](#)

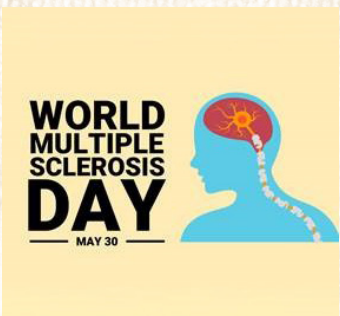


May 29 – Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh

On May 29, the Bahá'í community observes the Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh, a solemn holy day marking the anniversary of the passing of the founder of the Bahá'í Faith in 1892. This day is a time for deep reflection and spiritual renewal, as followers honor his life, his message of global unity, and his enduring vision for a peaceful world. It is traditionally observed with prayers and readings at 3:00 a.m., the hour of his passing, making it one of the most sacred moments in the Bahá'í calendar.

Learn more:

[Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh](#)



May 30 – World Multiple Sclerosis Day

On May 30, we observe World Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Day, a global initiative dedicated to raising awareness for the MS community. This day is a powerful opportunity to share stories, advocate for better access to care, and celebrate the resilience of those living with MS. By coming together, we can help break down barriers, reduce stigma, and foster a more inclusive world where everyone feels supported and understood. Let us wear orange and stand in solidarity with those affected by this condition.

Learn more:

[World Multiple Sclerosis Day](#)

