



# Carisk Kaleidoscope

May 2, 2025 | V05 . Q02

## DIVERSITY COUNCIL MISSION STATEMENT

*There are over 330 million people in the United States of America and everyone is diverse in their own way. At Carisk, we celebrate everyone's uniqueness.*

*Carisk Partners will be leaders by continuing to embrace the differences of its team members to expand its competitive edge; while promoting a diverse and inclusive environment through our commitment to education both internally and externally. We will leverage our unique capacity as change agents to strengthen our relationships with our Carisk team members, and with the communities and business partners we all serve.*

*Carisk Partners is proud of the diversity of its company's members, irrespective of genetic information, race, color, religion, age, sex, range of abilities, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin, or veteran's status.*

*We will strive to do well by doing good.*



*"I have always loved meeting new people from different backgrounds. It was always intriguing to me to hear someone else's "story". It is my strong belief that people and organizations make better decisions when they have diversity of thoughts. Each of us bring our life experiences into all we do. Everyone's life experiences generally created a perspective, whether consciously or unconsciously. Having a diverse workplace only strengthens the paths we choose to take."*

*–Joseph Berardo, Jr., Executive Chairman*



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Welcome to Carisk Kaleidoscope's 2025 spring edition. The Council wishes a fun filled season for the Carisk Team and their loved ones.

Bob presented Welcome Alcove, Celebrating Carisk's Diversity, Special Days, and "News from HR" series. He also contributed towards Women's History Month.

David, and our guest contributor Surina, provided Mental Health Awareness Month.

Diane delivered Giving Back to Our Community, Words to Live By, Fun Facts and contributed towards Women's History Month.

Lori T., and our guest contributor Rachel, presented Black History Month.

Sunita gave us Health Alert and contributed towards Women's History Month.

Please visit our Resources page for additional information.

Thank you CK planning committee (Bob, Diane, Lori H., & Sunita), as well as all Council members for all of your collaborations which include our serious conversations, light hearted banter, and participation in our Council meetings. Great job by all. See you in the summer.

Anabel 

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## UNITY IN DIVERSITY

Unified in Diversity.  
 That’s what people today should be.  
 Humans embracing harmony and happiness.  
 Hope that flowers from the seed.  
 That will allow us all to prosper.

Why does colour matter?  
 Why not join together, instead of being scrambled and scattered?  
 Why can’t we just not plainly see,  
 The unity in diversity?

People will be people all the same,  
 And under the setting sun,  
 Nothing may ever change,

But I am here to take a stand,  
 To show the world how to finally be,

Unified in Diversity.

**Peter Vector** 



## MEMBERS OF THE DIVERSITY COUNCIL



### LEADER OF THE DIVERSITY COUNCIL

#### Anabel Rawlins, FOUNDER

Provider Relations Specialist  
Miami, FL

*"We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color."*

– Maya Angelou



#### Jen Andrews

Executive Assistant  
Remote

*"The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people."*

– Unknown



#### Nubia Aparicio

Human Resources Executive Administrator  
Remote

*"Diversity is being invited to the party. Inclusion is being asked to dance."* – Verna Myers



#### Sally Balioni, FOUNDER

Senior Vice President of Sales, Amplified Intelligence  
Wall, NJ

*"You cannot change what you are, only what you do."*



#### Natasha Charleston

Director of Behavioral Health Services  
Miami, FL

*"Darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate, only love can do that."*

– The Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.



#### Emillie De Castro

Executive Assistant  
Miami, FL

*"Diversity is not about how we differ. Diversity is about embracing one another's uniqueness."* – Ola Joseph



#### Brian DeNichilo

Junior Data Scientist  
Florham Park, NJ

*"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."* – Nelson Mandela



#### Shannon Ehrola

Director, Brand Creative  
Wall, NJ

*"The beauty of the world lies in the diversity of its people."*

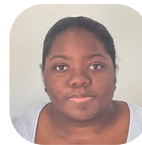
– Unknown



#### Peter Halas

Director of Operations  
Wall, NJ

*Diversity and inclusion were issues I never focused on because they were part of my every day life through sports and interactions with people of every race/religion/creed etc. Now, as the proud parent of a daughter with Down Syndrome diversity and inclusion are at the fore of everything we do trying to find places for everyone to be accepted and valued as they are.*



#### Nikia Harris

Arbitration Coordinator  
Florham Park, NJ

*"Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love."*

– Martin Luther King Jr.



#### Lori Height, FOUNDER

Senior Executive Assistant, Sales and Finance  
Wall, NJ

*Promoting a community of acceptance and belonging*



#### Anne Lepre

Sales Executive  
Wall, NJ

*"In diversity there is beauty and there is strength"* – Maya Angelou



#### Sunita Mathur, FOUNDER

Claim File Coordinator  
Florham Park, NJ

*"Our ability to reach unity in diversity will be the beauty and the test of our civilization."* – Mahatma Gandhi



#### Diane Nicolo, FOUNDER

Vice President of Administration  
Remote

*"Every person is a new door to a different world"*



#### Robert Post, FOUNDER

Senior Advisor  
Florham Park, NJ

*"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."*

– Jimmy Carter



#### Michael Rydman, FOUNDER

Senior Vice President, Sales  
Benicia, California

*"All men are created equal"* – Thomas Jefferson, 1776



#### Allen Spokane, FOUNDER

Chief Technology Officer/Chief Information Security Officer  
Florham Park, NJ

*"Nobody Wins Unless Everybody Wins"* – Bruce Springsteen



#### Lori Terraciano

Staff Accountant  
Florham Park, NJ

*"We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same."* – Anne Frank



#### David Vittoria, FOUNDER

Chief Behavioral Health Officer  
Miami, FL

*"Our diversity is the one thing we all have in common."*

## WELCOME ALCOVE

Congratulations on becoming a part of Carisk Partners! We welcome our five new team members who joined us in Q1, 2025, and wish all of you a successful journey.

- **Jacinta Anderson-Carter**, Collections Associate
- **Ilise Greer RN**, Care Coordinator
- **April Lima**, Staffing Associate
- **Nathan Scoggin**, Chief Product and Strategy Officer
- **Katherine Sosa**, Poster

**Jacinta, Ilise, April, Nathan and Katherine once again, WELCOME ABOARD from the entire Carisk Team!** 🎉



## THE TALK

Featuring topics on Diversity, Equality and Inclusion which trigger thought and conversation

### One in four countries report backlash on women's rights in 2024

On International Women's Day, UN Women calls on everyone to stand up for Rights, Empowerment and Equality for ALL Women and Girls

UN women's Report | 6 March 2025

Women's and girls' rights are facing unprecedented growing threats worldwide, from higher levels of discrimination to weaker legal protections, and less funding for programmes and institutions that support and protect women.

UN Women's latest report "[Women's Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing](#)", published ahead of the UN 50th International Women's Day on 8 March, shows that in 2024 nearly a quarter of governments worldwide reported a backlash on women's rights.

Despite important progress, only 87 countries have ever been led by a woman, and a woman or girl is killed every 10 minutes by a partner or member of her own family. Digital technology and artificial intelligence spread harmful stereotypes, while the digital gender gap limits women's opportunities.

In the past decade, the world registered a disturbing 50 percent increase in the number of women and girls living in conflict, and women's rights defenders confront daily harassment, personal attacks and even death. Recent global crises—like COVID-19, the climate emergency, soaring food and fuel prices—are only increasing the urgency to respond.

"When women and girls can rise, we all thrive. Yet, globally, women's human rights are under attack. Instead of mainstreaming equal rights, we're seeing the mainstreaming of misogyny. Together, we must stand firm in making



human rights, equality and empowerment a reality for all women and girls, for everyone, everywhere,” said António Guterres, UN Secretary-General.

“UN Women is committed to ensuring that ALL Women and Girls, everywhere, can fully enjoy their rights and freedoms,” affirmed UN Women Executive Director Sima Bahous. “Complex challenges stand in the way of gender equality and women’s empowerment, but we remain steadfast, pushing forward with ambition and resolve. Women and girls are demanding change—and they deserve nothing less.”

2025 marks 30 years of progress since the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the most visionary roadmap on women’s rights. The “Women’s Rights in Review 30 Years After Beijing” report, which draws on feedback provided by 159 Governments to the United Nations Secretary-General, shows progress that must be acknowledged - since 1995, parity has been achieved in girls’ education and maternal mortality has dropped by a third. Women’s representation in parliaments more than doubled, and countries continue to remove discriminatory laws, with 1,531 legal reforms between 1995 and 2024 in 189 countries and territories. It demonstrates that when women’s rights are fully upheld in their countries, families, communities, and economies flourish.

Yet, significant efforts are still required to achieve gender equality and bring us closer to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. That’s why today’s report also features the new Beijing+30 Action Agenda, a courageous roadmap to complete our unfinished business by focusing on:

1. A digital revolution for all women and girls: We must ensure equal access to technology, equip women and girls to lead in AI and digital innovation, and guarantee their online safety and privacy.
2. Freedom from poverty: Investments in comprehensive social protection, universal health coverage, education, and robust care services are needed for women and girls to thrive and can create millions of green and decent jobs.
3. Zero violence: Countries must adopt and implement legislation to end violence against women and girls, in all its forms, with well-resourced plans that include support for community-based organizations on the front lines of response and prevention.
4. Full and equal decision-making power: Temporary special measures like gender quotas have proven their effectiveness in rapidly increasing women’s participation.
5. Peace and security: Fully finance national plans on women, peace and security and gender-responsive humanitarian aid are essential. Frontline women’s organizations, so often the first responders to crisis, must receive dedicated, sustained funding to build lasting peace.
6. Climate justice: We must prioritize women’s and girls’ rights in climate adaptation, center their leadership and knowledge, and ensure they benefit from new green jobs.

Across these six Actions, putting young women and girls at the heart of our efforts is the best way to guarantee success, both today and tomorrow. These six plus one actions have the potential to unleash progress on women’s rights and put us back on track for 2030.

The Beijing+30 commemoration and the forthcoming UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW69) are clear opportunities to enshrine this Action Agenda into national policies, regional strategies, and global agreements.

In a pivotal year for women and girls, that is also a year of pushback and crises like no other, let us push women’s rights forward to create a world where all women and girls enjoy equal rights and equal opportunities. We can be the first generation that can live in an equal world.

[Read UN Women’s full report.](#)



# NEWS FROM HR

## How to Tweak 401(k) Programs for Fairer Outcomes

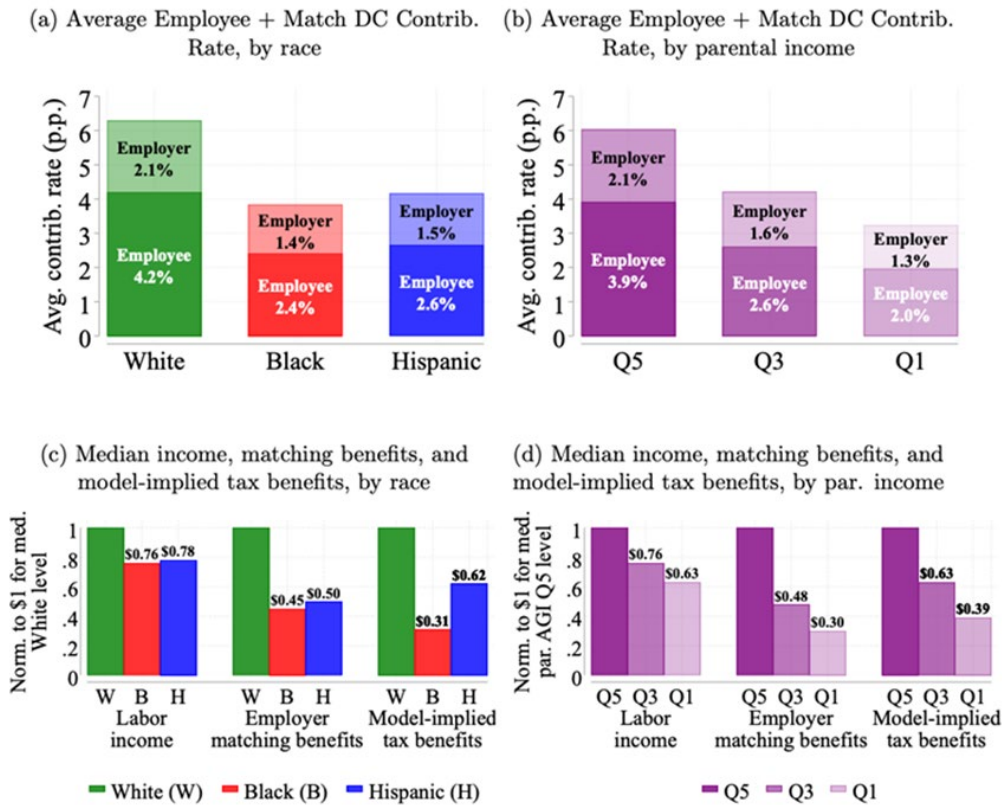


Employer contributions to retirement savings plans might seem like an uncontroversial benefit, available to all employees. But new research detailed in a working paper from the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) shows how employer-match programs and government tax policies actually exacerbate the retirement savings gaps between Black and Hispanic workers and those with lower-income parents on the one hand and their white counterparts and those with wealthier parents on the other.

The research suggests making modifications to 401(k) programs to help mitigate this unintended consequence. Here are the most important takeaways:

- Employer matching widens contribution gaps.** The authors note that Black and Hispanic workers and those with lower-income parents tend to contribute smaller shares of their income toward retirement, even when controlling for age, income, education, occupation, tenure, and employer. “These saving differences mean that median white earners receive more than double the matching benefits of their Black and Hispanic counterparts,” the authors write, “while those with parents in the top income quintile receive three times the matching benefits of those with parents in the bottom quintile.”

Figure 1: Differences by race and parental income in contributions, labor income, matching compensation, and DC tax benefits



Source: NBER working paper, *Who benefits from retirement savings incentives in the US?*

- **Early withdrawals minimize the lifetime tax benefits for certain groups.** Researchers have found that Black and Hispanic people and those with parents in the bottom quintile of income are more likely to make early withdrawals, increasing their likelihood of experiencing tax penalties—a discrepancy that further exacerbates the wealth gap. “We find, for instance, that the median white earner receives more than three times the simulated lifetime tax benefits of the median Black earner” because government policy penalizes early withdrawals, the authors write.
- **Redesigning employer matches and tax policy can narrow rather than widen gaps.** Researchers studied two interventions that would meaningfully reduce racial and intergenerational wealth gaps in retirement savings, especially for middle-class workers. The first would replace employer-matching programs with a set employer contribution as a percentage of employee income, regardless of individual contribution amount. The second would target government policy by replacing tax benefits associated with retirement savings with a one-time government contribution to an individual’s savings plan. The paper’s authors calculate that the Black-white gap for workers in this group would shrink from 37% to 24%, and the Hispanic-white gap would shrink from 16% to 11%. “The counterfactual reform is worth close to a year’s worth of average earnings for Black workers,” they write.

SHRM 401(k) Solutions by Raymond James makes it possible for companies of any size to help employees make meaningful progress toward their financial and savings goals. [Learn More.](#)

**What to do:** While there is little that organizations can do to alter tax policy apart from advocating for tax reform, the research reveals several areas where employers can step in to reduce racial and intergenerational wealth gaps in retirement accounts. Here are some ideas:

- **Encourage all employees to take full advantage of matching benefits.** Educate employees on the importance of retirement savings, as well as your internal matching benefits. Consider policies such as automatic enrollment in retirement savings accounts or automatic savings rate escalation, a feature that increases employees’ contribution rates on a set timeline. Both policies [have been shown](#) to increase participation and savings rates.
- **Provide financial wellness benefits to avoid early withdrawals.** The study’s authors note that early withdrawals are associated with economic need, whether to support family members, meet household expenses, or address financial emergencies. In recent years, employers have rolled out a number of financial wellness benefits to help address these needs, including financial literacy education programs, earned wage **access, flexible savings accounts, and digital financial wellness tools.**
- **Update retirement plan provisions.** A [recent report](#) from Vanguard recommended other options for reforming retirement plans for more equitable outcomes, such as dollar caps on employer contributions, along with “plan features that could promote savings for low-income workers, such as autoenrollment, a higher-default savings rate, and immediate eligibility and vesting.” (Both the Vanguard and the NBER research rebutted the idea that eliminating employee matching would disincentivize employee savings.)
- **Get specific with employee outreach.** Finally, partner with employee resource groups or other affinity groups to assess the needs of different demographic groups, and tailor your educational materials, resources, and other forms of support accordingly.

**Why it matters:** Among families with individual asset retirement accounts—a category that includes 401(k)s and other defined contribution retirement accounts—the median household held 65% of their total assets in their retirement accounts, according to a recent report from the Employee Benefits Research Institute. By rethinking approaches to retirement savings plans, employers can make a meaningful difference in racial and intergenerational wealth gaps.

Even more, workers have come to expect this kind of financial wellness support from their employers. Two-thirds of respondents ranked financial well-being as the top area where they want the most support from their workplaces in WTW’s [2024 Global Benefits Attitudes Survey](#), and 47% of employees said they wanted employers to help grow their savings and wealth.

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## HEALTH ALERT



### Young women are almost twice as likely to be diagnosed with cancer as young men: 'We're seeing a change'

By Jacqueline Howard, CNN | Published 8:00 AM EST, Thu January 16, 2025


Cancer rates have generally declined among men in the US early this century before leveling out, yet they appear to be climbing among women — especially young women. Cancer diagnoses are shifting from older to younger adults and from men to women, according to a new report from the American Cancer Society.

Middle-age women now have a slightly higher cancer risk than their male counterparts, and young women are nearly twice as likely to be diagnosed with the disease as young men, according to the report. It appears that breast and thyroid cancers in women are driving this increasing trend.

Men historically have had a higher overall cancer incidence than women, but in 2021, women younger than 50 in the United States had an 82% higher cancer incidence rate than their male peers, according to the new report.

"In my professional opinion, this phenomenon is multifactorial. We cannot point at one specific factor, but it's possible that changes in fertility patterns play a role," said Dr. Mariana Chavez-MacGregor, a professor at The University of Texas MD Anderson Cancer Center in Houston, referring to how pregnancy and breastfeeding have been associated with a reduced risk of breast cancer later in life.

"Obesity and alcohol consumption are likely contributing factors, as is a potential lack of physical activity," she said. "Other unknown variables may also be at play."

Please visit [Young Women and Cancer Rates](#) to read the entire article. 



## BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FEBRUARY 2025

Black History Month has been around since 1926, and each year, brings another opportunity to discover contributions that enrich our nation. Our honoree this year for both Black History Month and American Heart Month is Dr. Myra Adele Logan known as the first African-American female physician, surgeon, and anatomist to perform a successful open-heart surgery.

Myra Adele Logan was born in Tuskegee, Alabama, the daughter of Warren and [Adella Hunt Logan](#). She was the youngest of eight children. Her mother was college-



educated and involved in the suffrage and healthcare movements. Her father was treasurer and trustee of [Tuskegee Institute](#).

She enjoyed a relatively privileged upbringing; [Booker T. Washington](#) was a neighbor. Education and optimism were in the air of the Logan household, as was an interest in health care: in addition to her mother, Logan also had an aunt and sister who were or became involved in health matters, and her brother, Arthur, as well as a brother-in-law, was a physician.

Logan's primary school education was conducted at Tuskegee's Laboratory, the Children's House. After graduating with honors from Tuskegee High School, she attended [Atlanta University](#) and graduated as valedictorian of her class in 1927. She then moved to New York and attended Columbia University, earning her M.S. degree in psychology. She worked for the YWCA in Connecticut before opting for a medical career. Logan was the first to receive a four-year \$10,000 Walter Gray Crump Scholarship exclusively for aiding Black medical students to attend New York Medical College. She graduated in 1933.

She interned and did her residency in surgery at the [Harlem Hospital](#) in New York. In 1943, she became the first African-American female surgeon to perform open-heart surgery and the ninth operation of its kind. She developed her specialty in children's heart surgery. Logan married painter [Charles Alston](#) on April 8, 1944. They met while he was working on a mural project at the Harlem Hospital, where Logan was a medical intern; Logan served as a model for Alston's *Modern Medicine*, in which she appears as a nurse holding a baby.

She was a New York State Commission on Discrimination member during Governor Thomas E. Dewey's administration. In 1944, she resigned from the commission with seven other members after Dewey shelved anti-discrimination legislation they had drafted. Logan became an associate surgeon at Harlem Hospital, where she spent most of her medical career. She was also a visiting surgeon at [Sydenham Hospital](#) and maintained a private practice. She also worked to develop antibiotics, including Aureomycin. Logan and a team of physicians treated 25 lymphogranuloma venereum patients with Aureomycin, gaining positive results. Aureomycin was shown to reduce the gland size of eight Buboes patients after four days of treatment.


She published her results in the Archives of Surgery and Journal of American Medical Surgery. Logan also published her results on Puromycin and tri-ethylene melamine in the A.M.A. Archives of Internal Medicine and Acta-Unio Internationalis Contra Cancrum journals, respectively. In 1951, Logan was elected a Fellow of the American College of Surgeons and was the first Black woman to become a member of this group. Logan was a founding partner and treasurer of the Upper Manhattan Medical Group of the Health Insurance Plan, one of the first group practices in the United States. She also worked with the [NAACP](#)'s Health Committee, the New York State Fair Employment Practices Committee, the National Cancer Committee, the National Medical Association Committee, and Planned Parenthood.



Myra Adele Logan, MS, MD  
May 2, 1908-January 13, 1977



During the 1960s, she researched the early detection and treatment of breast cancer. She developed X-ray processes that could more accurately detect differences in tissue density, allowing tumors to be discovered earlier. She was published in several medical journals and was among the first Black women to be elected to the American College of Surgeons. Logan was also an accomplished classical pianist. She retired in 1970 and later served on the New York State Workmen's Compensation Board.

On January 13, 1977, at the age of 68, Dr. Logan died of lung cancer at Mount Sinai Hospital in New York. Her husband, Charles died a few months later. 

# IRISH AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

March 2025

*Irish-American Heritage Month* is celebrated during the month of March to honor the achievements and contributions of Irish immigrants and their descendants living in the United States. Kay McNulty was one of those achievers in more ways than one.

Kathleen McNulty Mauchly Antonelli, or 'Kay' to her friends, was born in a small Gaeltacht region of Donegal in 1921, at the height of the Irish War of Independence.

On the night of her birth, her Father was arrested for being a member of the Irish Republican Army. He was released 2 years later as the war ended and emigrated, with his family, to America – settling in Pennsylvania.

When Kay arrived in the US, she could only speak and understand Irish. This didn't hold her back, however, and she excelled in school – particularly in math. Her Mother was her biggest cheerleader and encouraged her "to prove that Irish immigrants could be just as good, if not better, than anybody."

Kay's hard work paid off when she received a scholarship to attend Chestnut Hill College. Here, she took every single math class that she could – making the most of an education that, in those days, a Donegal girl could only have dreamt of. She graduated in 1942 as one of only 3 Math grads in a class of almost 100.

At the time of her graduation, the second world war was raging across the globe and the American government was in dire need of Mathematicians. Kay signed up and was tasked with calculating ballistic trajectories – her official title for this position was simply 'Computer'.

Kay quickly distinguished herself in the role and was soon invited to form part of a secret team with five other female 'computers'. Their task was to begin programming the new ENIAC, one of the world's first electronic computers, which in turn made Kay one of the world's first ever computer programmers. The work led to the feasibility of the H-Bomb.

Their project was so highly classified, and the ENIAC so top-secret, that in the beginning they weren't actually allowed into the same room as the computer and instead, they worked off blueprints in a room nearby. That eventually changed and Kay's team would become so familiar with the giant 30-tonne machine that if an issue presented itself, they would check the switches and wires, and simply solve it themselves.

In 1948, Kay stepped down from her position and married one of the ENIAC's co-inventors – John Mauchly. In the following years, she would raise 7 children while continuing to help program, without credit, the new computers that her husband was developing.


For a very long time, Kay and her fellow female programmers didn't receive any recognition for the vital work that they undertook, but that has slowly started to change. In 1997, Kay was inducted to the Women in Technology hall of fame, and in Ireland, an academic award and university science building have been named in her honor.



Kathleen Rita McNulty, February 12, 1921-April 20, 2006



Kay McNulty died from cancer in Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania, on April 20, 2006, at the age of 85, but her legacy has continued to grow and in 2010, a documentary was released focusing on the rarely acknowledged efforts of Kay and her colleagues.

Today, Kay is rightly recognized as one of the mothers of modern-day computer programming. 

## TEAMWORK!

Teamwork is essential to complete the task at hand,  
we work closely together to meet the demand

Each person has their own important part,  
to deliver our service, straight from the heart.

The empathy we express, the willingness we share,  
can turn around a customer from pulling out their hair.

We have quite a few teams both offline and on,  
we do this so we don't miss anything wrong.

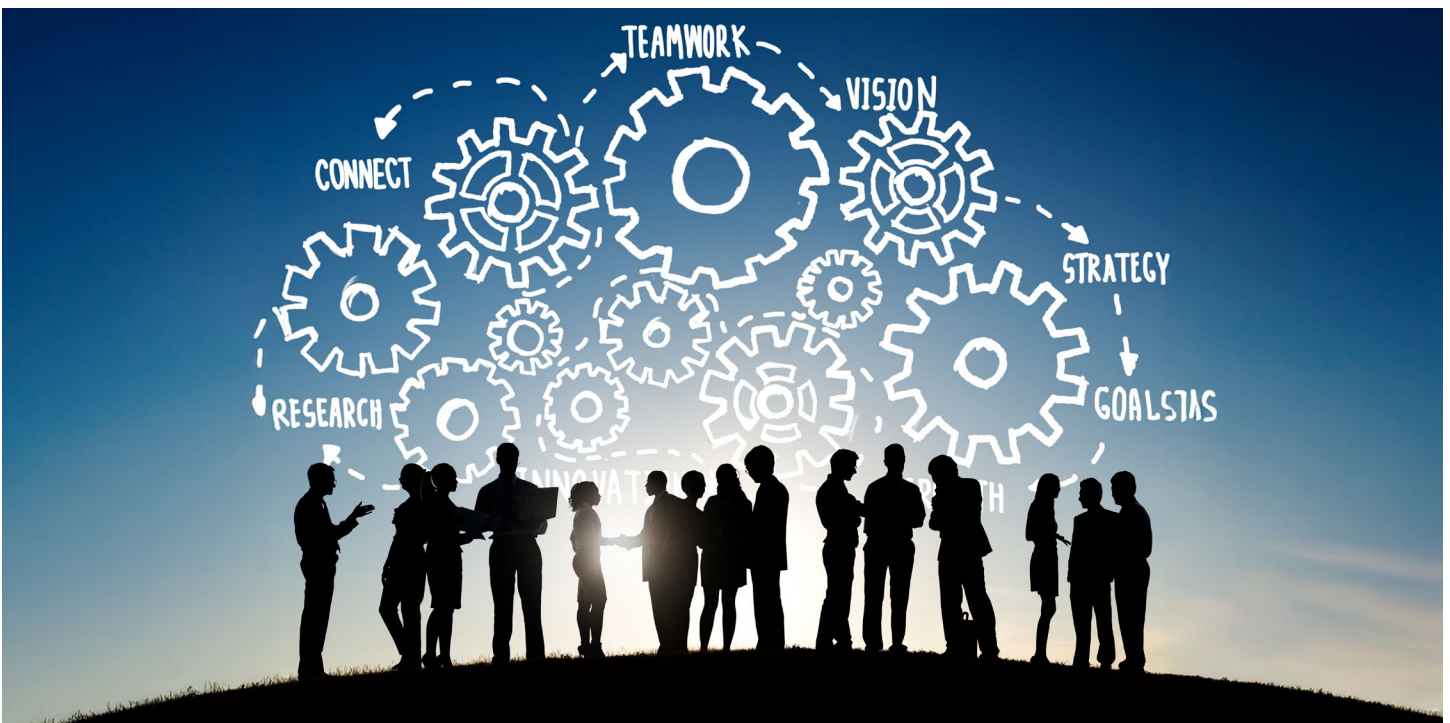
We support each other every single day,  
ensuring everything is covered, nothing left astray.

We work with pride and respect one another,  
we are indeed genuine, it is not a cover.

A team requires co-operation and communication between all,  
and when everyone participates, there is no way to fall.

We should be proud of our teams, and those that lead,  
always willing and ready to help those in need.

**Brenda Buckley** 





Our Fearless Pioneers



Elizabeth Acevedo, is a Latina, born in Harlem, New York, to Dominican parents, and one of the most acclaimed young writers on the contemporary literary scene. In September 2022, the Poetry Foundation named her the year's Young People's Poet Laureate. Acevedo is the author of the young adult novels The Poet X, With the Fire on High, and Clap When You Land. Elizabeth Acevedo was the New York Times–bestselling author of The Poet X (2018).

Sister Simona Brambilla, is an Italian Catholic religious sister. After almost 2000 years, the late Pope Francis named Sister Simona Brambilla the first female prefect of the Dicastery for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life. Brambilla, 59, had led the women's branch of the Consolata Missionaries from 2011 to 2023 when she was elevated to the secretary of the dicastery and is now the highest-ranking woman in the Roman Curia.





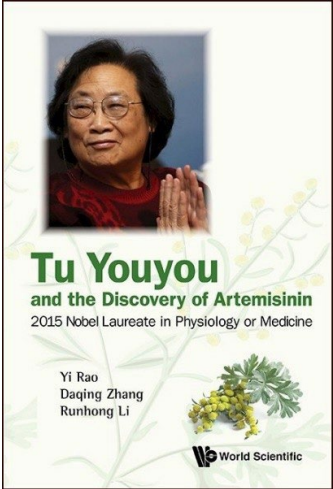
**Kirsty Coventry**, is a Zimbabwean politician, sports administrator and former competitive swimmer. She has been elected as the 10th President of the International Olympic Committee. In June, 2025 she will become the first woman, the first Zimbabwean, and the first African to hold that position, replacing Thomas Bach. She will have the most important job in world sports.

**Maggie Lena Walker**, was an African-American businesswoman, activist and teacher who defied the odds and made history during the Jim Crow era. In 1903, Walker became both the first African-American woman to charter a bank (St. Luke Penny Savings Bank), and the first African-American woman to serve as a bank president. The bank was considered the oldest continually African American-operated bank in America all the way into the early 2000s.



**Sunita Williams**, is a NASA astronaut of Indian and Slovene- American heritage. She has achieved a number of significant milestones in space exploration, including setting records for spacewalk time, spaceflight duration for women, and for participation in the Commercial Crew Program; including the first crewed flight of the Boeing Starliner. She recently returned to Earth after an unplanned 9 month stay in Space caused by safety concerns.

**Tu Youyou**, is the first Chinese woman to win a Nobel Prize in medicine for her discovery of a drug used to treat malaria, a breakthrough in twentieth-century tropical medicine. Her innovation has saved millions of lives in South China, Southeast Asia, Africa, and South America. After contracting tuberculosis at the age of 16, she became determined to study medicine in order to help others. 🌿



**A strong woman knows  
 she has strength  
 enough for the journey,  
 but a woman of  
 strength knows it is in  
 the journey where  
 she will become strong.**  
 ✨  
 UNKNOWN  
 GH

# MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

## Mental Health Awareness: Confronting the Elephant in the Room

REAN Foundation

Let's face the truth-No one wants to talk openly about mental health.

Sadly, despite technological, scientific, and medical advances, mental health remains plagued with stigmas and social taboos. The world is still in denial about everything related to mental health-the conditions, treatment options, and the importance of prioritizing it as much as physical health.

Are we deliberately sweeping this issue under the rug? Perhaps we are.

The National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) reveals that every year, about 21 percent of adults in the U.S. are affected by some kind of mental health issue. Unfortunately, does everyone seek professional help? Not all. The Alliance says that less than half of this population seeks professional guidance-with many of them reaching out for help after nearly a decade of hesitance and denial.

It is rather unfortunate that despite the various treatments available, many people with mental health issues rarely come forward to seek professional help. Why? The hesitancy stems from severe social discrimination and the stigma against those with mental health issues. Sometimes, people hesitate to reach out for help due to a lack of the right resources.

What is the point of people suffering in secret when they need medical treatment? Mental health awareness is probably the only solution to break the stigma and help people find professional help to treat their issues.

## Putting the Spotlight on Mental Health Issues that Require Attention

NAMI's statistics reveal that one out of five people currently undergoes or have previously experienced symptoms of mental illness. Statistics like these illustrate how common mental illness is. Mental health issues can be caused by a variety of factors, including:

Family history of mental health illnesses

- Traumatic life experiences like losing a dear one, financial crises, and physical or psychological abuse
- Brain chemistry and functioning
- Genetic factors
- Social factors such as economic depression

Whilst mental health issues can manifest themselves in many ways, some of the common disorders that need more awareness than others include:

- Depression disorder
- Suicidal thoughts
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar disorder
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Substance use disorders
- Anxiety disorders

Despite their varying symptoms, these conditions can massively impact every aspect of your daily life, affecting how you think, behave, and feel. Inadvertently, this also affects your social, personal, and professional life too.



Without the right medical help at the right time, the mental condition can take a toll on your quality of life.

This is precisely why we need to raise awareness about mental health issues and break the social stigma for those millions of people who are desperately and silently crying out for help. The purpose of raising awareness about mental health issues is to inspire others and to share information, tools, and support, regardless of whether or not you struggle with mental illness.

## **Mental Health Awareness: How Can You Help?**

Creating awareness about mental health conditions is, perhaps, the most powerful weapon we can wield to alleviate the shame and denial those suffering from these issues may feel. While we can adopt many approaches to raise awareness, what's most important is that we try.

We can improve our efforts by:

### **1. Openly discussing mental health issues**

So bad is the stigma and discrimination that even admitting to suffering from a mental disorder is taboo. What's worse is that people are often subjected to unnecessary scrutiny or ridicule, forcing them to hide and deny their struggles.

Therefore, the first step to bringing the hammer down on the stigma is openly discussing these mental health issues and making it known that they can affect anyone.

When you share your own experiences with mental health, listen to your family and friends' responses, and encourage them to speak out about their symptoms, you'll likely encourage them to seek the help they so badly need.

### **2. Shedding light on the signs and symptoms**

Mental illness is very hard to identify. It may seem that the person is perfectly fine and full of enthusiasm from the outside. On the inside, however, they may suffer unimaginable mental suffering.

Educating yourself on the symptoms and how you can assist your loved one should they receive a diagnosis will be instrumental in reducing the number of people suffering in silence without support.

A person suffering from a mental illness may exhibit any of these warning signs:

- Unexplained mood swings
- Antisocial behavior
- Sudden changes in eating and sleeping patterns
- An inexplicable feeling of sadness

Never ignore these warning signs when you see them in a friend or family member. Instead, encourage them to talk about what they are experiencing and help them get the right professional help.

With mental issues like depression, bipolar disorder, anxiety, and schizophrenia affecting millions, it's high time we advocate the causes, symptoms, and treatments available.

### **3. Checking your mental health condition**

Are you aware that mental health screenings are available just like physical health screenings? If yes, then well and good. If not, you aren't alone. Many people don't know such things exist. Screenings are beneficial tools for those who may think they have a mental illness and for those who don't. Since many people are unaware of this convenience, gathering a list of screening sites and sharing them in your social network is beneficial. Doing so could give many of your followers a tangible first step that could change their lives.

As a first step, you could undergo a mental health screening and share the experience openly on your social media profiles. This will encourage many others to do the same and maybe a life savior for some.

### **4. Volunteering in local mental health awareness programs**

You can increase mental health awareness in two ways:

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- 1. Using your online presence and actively participating in local campaigns.

Social media is a powerful tool to advocate awareness of mental health issues and the importance of seeking professional help. May is National Mental Health Month, which triggers an outpouring of online events related to mental health. By sharing these events on your profile, you can do your bit to encourage others to learn more about these pressing issues.

Whether you organize events during May or throughout the year, the goal is to spread awareness about the reality of mental health and how it affects the people around you.

### 5. Adopting a holistic approach to help others

Raising awareness is more than just educating people about identifying mental illnesses. Your awareness campaign should make a positive, lasting impact on their mental health. Your approach should also inform people about the importance of self-care and self-love. You can do this by helping them focus on their physical fitness by working out and following healthy practices to improve their well-being. One way to do it is to arrange hikes, marathons, and treks in the name of mental health awareness.


## REAN HealthGuru App: The Digital Solution to Track Your Mental Health

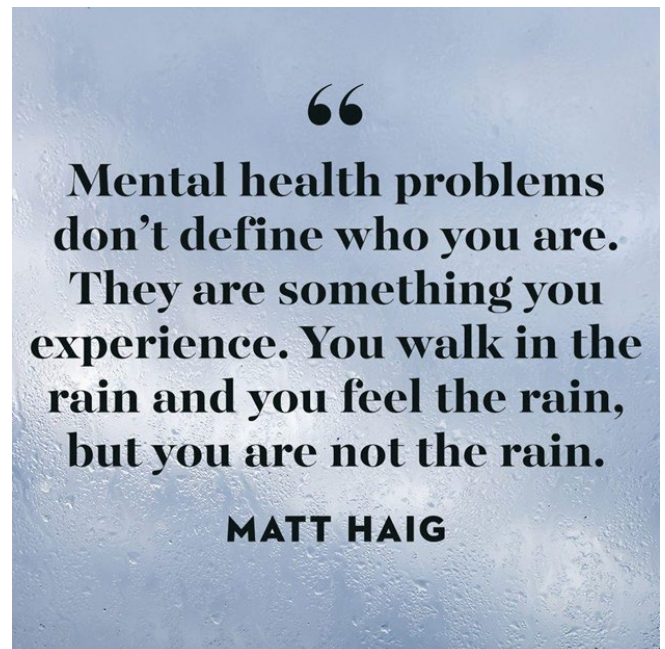
If you or your loved ones want to keep your mental health in check, it is crucial to track your moods, habits, and symptoms, if you have any. A tracking app can provide accountability and help you stick with specific practices that support your mental health.

Here's where REAN and the REAN HealthGuru app step in. Our digital platform helps you track your progress, plan your mindfulness practice, and cultivate a positive attitude. All these are necessary to spread mental health awareness. The platform also offers informative articles and workshops offered by professionals that can assist you in overcoming anxiety and build resilience.

### Mental Health is Important-Take Care Now!

It's okay not to feel okay. What's not okay is not seeking help when you desperately need it. Or not being able to help someone who needs a guiding hand. The onus is on everyone to help those suffering from mental illnesses.

Break the stigma today. Be open-minded and encourage people to talk about their issues and seek help. Be an advocate for mental health awareness. Your effort can make a big difference in many people's lives. 



## SPECIAL DAYS

### Influencing Our Humanity



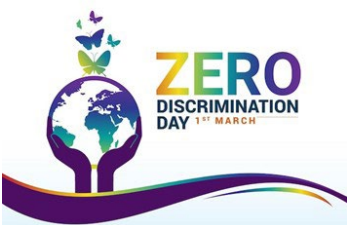
**January 11—National Human Trafficking Awareness Day**—is dedicated to raising awareness of sexual slavery and human trafficking worldwide. Today, there are between 21-30 million people enslaved in the world, more than at any time in human history. Every day, modern slavery can be recognized: children become soldiers; young women are forced into prostitution and migrant workers exploited in the workforce. Human Trafficking Awareness Day seeks to end this slavery, return rights to individuals and make the world a safer place for all inhabitants.



**January 20—Martin Luther King Day**—celebrates the life and accomplishments of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. MLK promoted Civil Rights through nonviolent civil disobedience. April 4, 2025 marked the 57th anniversary of this death. The speech *"I've Been to the Mountaintop,"* was made in support of the striking sanitation workers at Mason Temple in Memphis, TN on April 3rd, 1968 the day before he was assassinated. The first year this holiday was observed was 1986, and not by all states. In 2000, it became a nationally observed holiday in all states. Martin Luther King Jr. Day is observed annually on the third Monday of January. Please visit this link to hear an excerpt of his last speech. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zqVrlx68v-0>. The entire 43-minute speech may be viewed here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HlhGhu3ZKh4>



**January 27—Commemoration of Victims of the Holocaust**—is a day commemorating the millions of Jews and minority groups who were murdered by the Nazis during the Holocaust in the 1930s and 40s. The Holocaust, a systematic and state-planned program to kill millions of Jews and other minority groups in Europe, was one of the most horrific genocides in history with an estimated 11 million lives lost. The purpose of the day is to encourage discussion of this difficult subject in order to make sure that it never happens again.



**March 1—Zero Discrimination Day**—aims to celebrate individuality, inclusion and human rights while promoting tolerance, compassion and peace. Discrimination refers to the selective practice of unfairly treating a person or a group of people differently than others due to factors such as religion, gender, race, sexuality, age, or disability. Despite laws and education, discrimination continues to be a widespread problem throughout the world.



**March 21—World Down Syndrome Day**—World Down Syndrome Day (WDSDD) is a global health awareness day promoted by the United Nations. Its primary goal is to advocate for the rights, inclusion, and well-being of individuals diagnosed with Down Syndrome. This observance also serves as an opportunity for the public to learn more about Down syndrome, debunking myths and misconceptions about this genetic disorder.

## SPECIAL DAYS-CONTINUED

"A LIFE IS NOT  
IMPORTANT  
EXCEPT IN  
THE IMPACT  
IT HAS ON  
OTHER LIVES."  
- JACKIE ROBINSON



**April 15—Jackie Robinson Day**—Jackie Robinson Day honors and commemorates the first African-American to play in Major League Baseball (MLB) in the United States. Jackie Roosevelt Robinson played for the Los Angeles Dodgers from 1947 to 1956. In 1962 he was inducted into the Baseball Hall of Fame. In addition to his baseball legacy, Jackie Robinson made an impact on the civil rights movement in that his signing led to the end of racial segregation in professional baseball. In 1972 he was posthumously awarded the Congressional Gold Medal and the Presidential Medal of Freedom. Jackie Robinson Day was established in 2004 by the MLB as a commemoration for Robinson. It is observed annually on April 15th. Every year, players and on-field personnel wear his number 42 jersey in honor of his legacy. 🌐

The most important thing is to  
have a sense of responsibility,  
commitment, and concern for  
each of our fellow human beings.

Dalai Lama XIV

quotefancy

## DIVERSITY POSTER



## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN THE CARISK COMMUNITY



**Feb 28–Mar 29—Ramadan**, is the holiest month in the Islamic calendar. During the month of Ramadan, Muslims abstain from eating and drinking from sunrise to sunset. It is said God decreed this entire month holy for Muslims so that they can increase their remembrance of life after death. Muslims also abstain from all bad deeds and habits, like smoking, swearing, backbiting, and disrespectfulness. Muslims reflect upon themselves, their religion, and the characteristics of God. Fasting is one of the five pillars of Islam and as such, it is obligatory for Muslims. Fasting and abstaining from bad habits allow Muslims to learn self-control, humility, and generosity. Unlike the fast of Ashurah, the fasts of Ramadan are declared mandatory by God because like salah (praying towards Mecca), fasting helps Muslims maintain spiritual and physical health.



**March 13–March 14—Purim**, is a Jewish Holiday, which commemorates Jewish people being saved from extermination in Persia. The story of Purim comes from the Biblical book of Esther. In it, Haman, a high-ranking advisor to King Ahasuerus, sought to kill all Jews in ancient Persia. He is motivated by an incident in which Mordechai, a Jewish leader, defied the king's orders and refused to bow to Haman. Haman is stopped through the actions of Mordechai and his niece Esther, a beautiful and courageous Jewish woman. Esther initially disguises her Jewish Identity and eventually becomes Queen.



**March 14—Holi**, is the ancient Hindu Festival of Love and also known as the Festival of Colors. The origins of Holi lie in ancient Hindu traditions where Holi was celebrated to mark the arrival of spring. Holi is also related to the legend of Holika, the evil sister of demon king Hiranyakashipu, who tried to burn Hiranyakashipu's son Prahlada. Prahlada had maintained faith in god (Vishnu), while Hiranyakashipu contended that he was god. Wearing a cloak that guarded her from fire, Holika lured Prahlada into a fire but the cloak that was guarding Holika flew and protected Prahlada instead. Because of this Holi also celebrates the triumph of good over evil, knowledge over ignorance, and love over hate.



**March 17—St. Patrick's Day**, is a cultural and religious holiday observed by both Irish and non-Irish communities. It is traditionally a commemoration of Saint Patrick and the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. Furthermore, it is also a celebration of the heritage and culture of the Irish. The holiday has cultural and religious significance, displaying Irish symbols such as the shamrock and the color green. The celebration of Saint Patrick's Day in the United States goes back to the 18th century. It was first celebrated in Boston in 1737 and in New York City in 1762, mainly by Irish immigrants as a means of preserving and celebrating their Irish heritage. Today, it serves as a time for Americans of all backgrounds to celebrate Irish culture by wearing green, eating Irish meals, participating in parades, and engaging in celebrations across the country.

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## CELEBRATING DIVERSITY IN THE CARISK COMMUNITY-CONTINUED



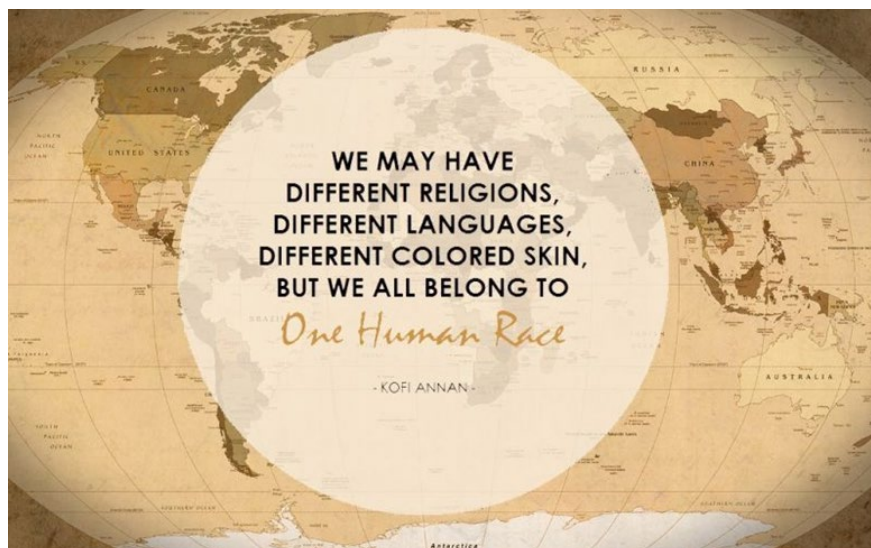
**April 12–April 20—Passover**, is a seven-day Jewish festival that celebrates the Israelites fleeing from Egypt about 3,300 years ago. Passover is called such because the Israelites marked their door frames with a sign. It is believed that because of this sign, God passed over their houses during the plague of the firstborn. The Israelites were servants from the days of Jacob until Moses. They lived through famine in most of Mesopotamia, including Israel. The Israelites built store cities for grain in Egypt (possibly, the pyramids). After 210 years of servitude in Egypt, the Israelites had become servant-minded and did not believe that they could flee. They eventually fled via the Wilderness of Sinai, where they resided for forty years.

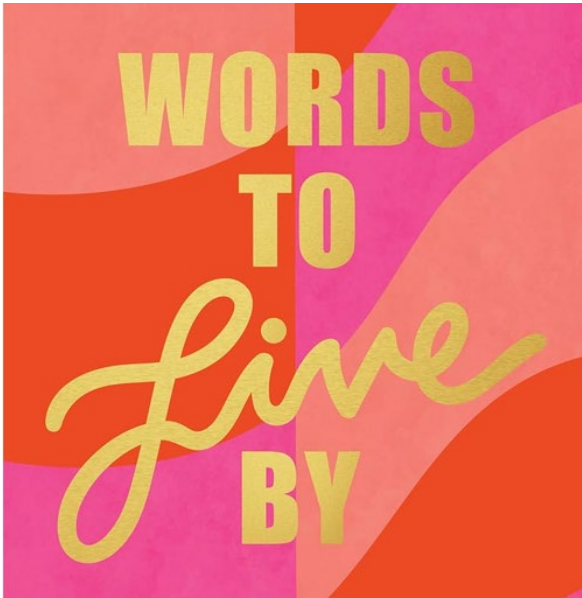


**April 18—Good Friday**, commemorates the day that Jesus was crucified. Following Jesus' arrest, he was found guilty of proclaiming himself to be the King of Jews. He was sentenced to crucifixion. This day is celebrated a number of ways. These include taking down the cross in the Orthodox faith to recounting the story of Jesus' last days, which is called the Passion of Christ



**April 20—Easter**, is a significant religious holiday observed by Christians worldwide to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, as described in the New Testament. The significance of the Observance translates into deep religious reverence, and this is often expressed through church services, fasting, praying, and acts of penitence. There is also a joyful undertone to the Observance as Easter symbolizes victory over death, promising eternal life to believers. The holiday resonates deeply with Christian faith and spirituality, while also encompassing a broad spectrum of cultural expressions and traditions. 🌐





**Use your voice for kindness, your ears for compassion, your hands for charity, your mind for truth and your heart for love.**

## GIVING BACK

# Giving Back To The Community



Rob and Reece Scheer are the proud fathers of five children from the foster care system who arrived at their home with trash bags. Growing up in foster care himself, Rob remembered feeling disposable as a child carrying a trash bag to his foster home, and he wondered how this could still be happening 30 years later.

In 2013, the Scheer family set out on a mission to eliminate the use of trash bags in the foster care system and provide children entering the system with brand new essential and comfort items. To date, Comfort Cases has impacted over 200,000 children in the foster care system.

Rob is currently the CEO of Comfort Cases, traveling the country to share his story and advocate for youth in foster care. He published his memoir in [2018: A Forever Family: Fostering Change One Child at a Time](#). Reece cares for their five children at home. They live on a farm in Darnestown, MD with 2 cats, 2 dogs, a bird, 3 goats, several chickens and ducks, and a pig named Penelope.

To learn more about Rob Scheer please visit this link:

<https://comfortcases.org/>



**To all the children  
in foster care:  
You are important.  
You are loved.  
You are seen.  
You matter.**



Comfort Cases-Donation Drives



Comfort Cases in the DC area





1. You can't see your ears without a mirror.
2. You can't count your hair.
3. You can't breathe through your nose with your tongue out.
4. You just tried No. 3.
6. When you did No. 3 you realized that it is possible, only you look like a dog.
7. You are smiling right now, because you were fooled.
8. You skipped No. 5.
9. You just checked to see if there is a No. 5
10. Share this with your friends so they can have some fun too.



**Have a nice day!** 🔄

## RESOURCES

“Reading is a discount ticket to everywhere” - Author Unknown



[Elizabeth Acevedo](#)

[Sister Simona Brambilla](#)

[Kristy Coventry](#)

[Dr. Myra A. Logan](#)

[Kay McNulty](#)

[Maggie L. Walker](#)

[Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore](#)

[Dr. Tu Youyou](#)

