

# DIVERSITY in DUBUQUE

**May 2025**

A newsletter from the City of Dubuque's Office of Equity & Human Rights

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## Holidays & Observances

### **May 1**

Yom Ha'atzmaut (Jewish)

### **May 5**

Cinco de Mayo

### **May 5**

African World Heritage Day

### **May 12**

Buddha Day / Vesak  
(Buddhism)

### **May 16**

Lag BaOmer (Jewish)

### **May 26**

Memorial Day

### **May 29**

Ascension Day (Christian)

## Asian American & Pacific Islanders Heritage Month

Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month, celebrated each May in the United States, honors the rich history, culture, and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. This month commemorates the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the U.S. on May 7, 1843, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad on May 10, 1869—an achievement largely made possible by Chinese immigrant laborers.

AAPI communities encompass a vast array of cultures, languages, and traditions from countries such as China, India, Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Samoa, and many more. These communities have made significant contributions in fields ranging from science and technology to the arts, politics, and education. Figures like Dalip Singh Saund, the first Asian American elected to Congress, and Kamala Harris, the first Asian American Vice President, have helped shape the nation's political landscape.

Despite their achievements, AAPI individuals have often faced discrimination, exclusion, and invisibility in American history. Heritage Month serves not only to celebrate their accomplishments but also to raise awareness about these challenges. It is a time to reflect, educate, and embrace the diversity that strengthens the United States. By honoring AAPI voices, we enrich the nation's collective story.

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**Dalip Singh Saund**



**Kamala Harris**

# Asian American & Pacific Islanders Heritage Month

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The Marshallese community in Dubuque, Iowa, represents a compelling narrative of resilience, cultural preservation, and adaptation. Originating from the Marshall Islands—a Pacific archipelago profoundly affected by U.S. nuclear testing during the mid-20th century—many Marshallese have sought new beginnings in the United States. Dubuque has emerged as a significant hub, now hosting the largest Marshallese population in the Midwest, estimated at approximately 1,400 individuals.

The migration of Marshallese to Dubuque began in the 1970s when several families relocated so that men could attend seminary school. Their positive experiences led them to settle permanently and encourage others to join them. This movement was facilitated by the Compact of Free Association (COFA), an agreement signed in 1982 between the U.S. and the Marshall Islands. COFA allows Marshallese citizens to live and work in the U.S. without a visa. However, despite this status, COFA migrants face challenges, such as ineligibility for certain federal services like SNAP benefits or cash assistance. Because of this, the benefits offered by free or low-cost health care provided by Crescent Community Health Center in Dubuque was also a big draw for Marshallese citizens.

In Dubuque, the Marshallese community has established a robust network of relationships and social connections. There are currently seven Marshallese churches operating in the area, serving not only as

places of worship but also as community centers where cultural traditions are preserved and shared. Despite their strong community bonds, the Marshallese in Dubuque face several challenges.

One significant challenge is chronic absenteeism among students. While more than 30% of Dubuque's K-12 students experience chronic absenteeism, the rate for Pacific Islander students is closer to 78%.

Health disparities also affect the community. Many Marshallese adults in the area live with chronic conditions like diabetes. The Crescent Community Health Center has responded by establishing the Dubuque Pacific Islander Health Project, which includes community health workers who provide culturally competent care and education.

The Marshallese community in Dubuque exemplifies the complexities of immigrant experiences in the United States. Their journey from the Marshall Islands to Iowa is marked by resilience in the face of historical injustices, a commitment to cultural preservation, and proactive efforts to address contemporary challenges. Through community engagement, health initiatives, and storytelling, the Marshallese in Dubuque continue to enrich the cultural tapestry of the region.



<https://iisc.uiowa.edu/news/2024/04/connecting-marshallese-students-dubuques-schools/>; <https://iisc.uiowa.edu/projects/dubuque-addressing-absenteeism-dubuques-marshallese-community/>; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQ8HTi6L3dY>; <https://progressive.org/magazine/paradise-reclaimed-tempus/>; <https://crescentchc.org/patients/population-health/dubuque-pacific-islander-health-project.html>; <https://facingproject.com/communities/facing-diversity-marshallese-stories-from-inclusive-dubuque-dubuque-iowa/>; <https://www.bvmsisters.org/clarke-student-video-raises-awareness-of-marshallese-in-dubuque>; This article was written with the assistance of ChatGPT.

## A Note from the Office of Equity & Human Rights

With Cinco de Mayo approaching, the question once again arises, is dressing up in a sombrero considered inappropriate and insensitive, or is it a festive way to celebrate this Mexican holiday? There isn't an easy answer to this question because there isn't a singular belief among the Mexican and Mexican American people. Some see it as a form of negative cultural appropriation. Some see it as a form of ridicule. Yet others see it as a celebration of the Mexican culture. Wearing a sombrero for Cinco de Mayo isn't automatically wrong, but it can be culturally insensitive, depending on context and intent.



Cinco de Mayo commemorates the Mexican victory over French forces at the Battle of Puebla—not Mexican Independence Day, as is commonly misunderstood in the U.S. For many Mexican Americans, it's a meaningful celebration of heritage, resistance, and pride. However, in the U.S., it's often reduced to a stereotypical party theme, where traditional Mexican symbols—like sombreros, fake mustaches, or serapes—are used in a mocking or exaggerated way.

If someone wears a sombrero as a costume or joke, without understanding or respecting the culture it comes from, that can be viewed as cultural appropriation or stereotyping—especially when it's done by people outside the culture. This kind of behavior can reinforce harmful clichés and marginalize the people whose culture is being imitated.

However, wearing a sombrero as part of a respectful cultural celebration, or in a genuine effort to honor Mexican heritage with awareness and appreciation, is viewed differently. The key difference lies in the respect, knowledge, and context behind the action. This year, perhaps forgo the sombrero and find another way to celebrate this festive holiday.

This article was written with the assistance of ChatGPT.

## Cultural Events Happening in the Tri-States

**First Friday** is a free downtown monthly community arts event with open galleries, artists' studios, and live entertainment. Events are held on May 2.

**Lori Bower-Stewart** – Outside the Lines Art Gallery @ 4:30 – 7:30 PM

**Priscilla Steele, and Fatherless Print Posse** – Voices Studios @ 5 PM

**Ben Dunegan and Marzipan Mailbox** – Carnegie-Stout Public Library @ 6 – 7:30 PM

**Rachel Daack** – Planted @ 6 – 8 PM

**Dasha Hamilton** – River Lights Bookstore @ 6 – 7 PM

### Carnegie-Stout Library Virtual Author Talks

Each month, a selection of authors discusses their books and expert topics. These events are virtual and live; however, recordings of the talks will be archived for later viewing. [Registration on the library website is required.](#)

**How to Use Anxiety to Thrive with Dr. David H. Rosmarin**  
May 7 @ 1 – 2 PM



**On Writing a Brilliant, Dark, & Diabolical Thriller with Liann Zhang**  
May 14 @ 6 – 7 PM



**How Judy Blume Rewrote Childhood for All of Us with Rachelle Bergstein**  
May 21 @ 1 – 2 PM



### Volunteer Opportunity of the Month

Convivium serves as a Food Box Distribution location every second and fourth Tuesday of the month. Volunteers are needed to help unload the boxes upon arrival and carry boxes to recipients' vehicles as needed. Visit [volunteerdubq.com](http://volunteerdubq.com) to sign up.

## Cultural Events Happening in the Tri-States

### Music @ Your Library: Ben Dunegan & Marzipan Mailbox

May 2 @ 5:30 – 7 PM

#### Carnegie Stout Public Library

Ben Dunegan is a singer songwriter, multi-instrumentalist, and troubadour. Marzipan Mailbox is fronted by singer-songwriter Addison Aronson on guitar and vocals. He is joined by Shannon Williams on bass, and Jonathon Purvis on drums.

### World Labyrinth Day Festival

May 3 @ 11:30 AM – 2 PM

#### Shalom Spirituality Center

Join thousands of people around the world by participating in this moving meditation for peace. Enjoy a short educational movie followed by discussion and opportunities to walk two different labyrinths as local musician Kristina Marie Castañeda offers meditative sounds and song. (cost \$15)



### Breakfast & Book Club: *A Line Meant* by Dasha Kelly Hamilton

May 3 @ 10 – 11:30 AM

#### Multicultural Family Center

Hear Dasha discuss *A Line Meant*, a collection written by poets across Wisconsin and edited by Dasha. Breakfast provided.



### Swan Lake

May 3, 4 @ Times Vary

#### University of Dubuque Heritage Center

For more than a century, Tchaikovsky's *Swan Lake* has enchanted audiences worldwide with its mesmerizing ballet and hauntingly beautiful score. This spring, the Dubuque Symphony Orchestra (DSO) is partnering with the Heartland Ballet to present this iconic masterpiece in a fully staged production. (cost varies)

### Lunch & Learn: The Columbian Exchange – A Culinary Revolution

May 7 @ Noon–1 PM

#### Convivium Urban Farmstead

Join Convivium for a deep dive into the Columbian Exchange and its lasting impact on global cuisine. Explore the historical significance of these foods, how they shaped culinary traditions worldwide, and the surprising ways they continue to influence what we eat today.

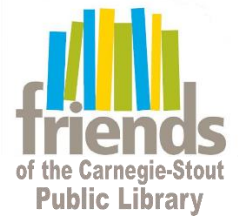
### Friends of the Carnegie-Stout Public Library Books & More Sale

May 15 @ Noon–6:30 PM

May 16 @ Noon–4:30 PM

#### Carnegie Stout Public Library

Find unbeatable prices on a wide selection of books and specialty items, all while supporting the library. Discover a treasure trove of newer fiction, history, biography, games, media, children's books, collectibles, and more.



### Galena LitFest: A Picnic with Laura Ingalls Wilder

May 18 @ 11 AM

#### Grant Park (Galena, IL)

In celebration of the 11th annual Galena LitFest, the Galena Public Library welcomes back Debra Miller who will portray Laura Ingalls Wilder. Through her letters, journals, and original text of *Pioneer Girl*, Laura speaks to you in her own words of the hardship, heartbreaks and harrowing events that inspired the *Little House* books.

### Free Line Dance Lessons

May 19 @ 5 PM

#### Adam's Dance Connection

Get ready to kick up your heels and learn how to line dance! Adam Kieffer will be your instructor, guiding adults ages 18+ through the basics of line dancing in four sessions held once a month.

