



October 2025

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

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## Holidays & Observances

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

**October 2:** International Day of Non-Violence

**October 3:** Vijaya Dashami (Hindu)

**October 6:** Sukkot (Jewish)

**October 12:** Día de la Raza

**October 13:** Native Americans' Day

**October 18:** Dhanteras (Hindu)

**October 21:** Diwali (Hindu)

**October 31:** Samhain (Pagan)

## National Disability Employment Awareness Month

The workplace reflects broader society, carrying both progress and persistent challenges. For individuals with disabilities, entering and thriving in professional environments presents unique struggles, but also opportunities for resilience, advocacy, and triumph. While barriers continue to exist, stories of empowerment remind us that change is possible—and necessary.

One of the most pressing struggles is accessibility. Despite laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), physical and digital barriers remain. Inaccessible buildings, inadequate transportation, and poorly designed technology can prevent qualified individuals from fully participating. A wheelchair user may face the stress of navigating offices without ramps, while a visually impaired employee may find company software incompatible with screen readers. These obstacles reinforce exclusion and place an additional burden on employees already advocating for accommodations.

Social attitudes and beliefs are equally challenging barriers. Stigma and misconceptions about disability persist, with some employers assuming people with disabilities are less capable or accommodations too costly. This can lead to subtle discrimination, such as being overlooked for promotions or excluded from projects. Comments like "You're so inspiring for just showing up"—create cultures where disabled employees feel patronized rather than respected.



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# National Disability Employment Awareness Month

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Fear of disclosure is another obstacle. Many employees with non-visible disabilities, such as chronic illness, mental health conditions, or neurodivergence, may hesitate to share their status, fearing prejudice or negative career consequences. This reluctance can result in working without needed accommodations, leading to burnout and isolation.

Yet alongside these struggles are powerful triumphs. Disability in the workplace is not just a narrative of hardship but also of resilience, innovation, and progress. One triumph is growing recognition of the value of varied perspectives. Employees with disabilities often bring unique problem-solving skills, creativity, and adaptability to their roles. Experiences navigating barriers cultivate perseverance and empathy — qualities invaluable in collaborative environments.

Legislation and advocacy have also opened doors. The ADA and similar laws worldwide provide a foundation for requiring accommodations, sending the message that accessibility is a right. Hiring practices that are open to all, and partnerships with advocacy groups are further expanding representation.

Technology has been transformative. Advances in assistive tools, from speech-to-text software to AI-driven accessibility, have expanded opportunities. Remote work options, accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, reduced physical barriers and allowed greater balance between work and health needs. These shifts highlight how universal design can benefit everyone.

Another form of triumph comes from advocacy and visibility. Disabled professionals are increasingly stepping into leadership positions, mentoring others, and shaping organizational culture. Employee resource groups focused on disability are creating safe spaces and influencing company policy, while social media has

amplified the voices of disabled workers who share their experiences and call for change. These efforts not only empower individuals but also educate colleagues and leaders, fostering empathy and dismantling stereotypes.

The coexistence of struggles and triumphs highlights the unfinished journey toward a truly welcoming environment for those with disabilities. The workplace has the potential to be a site of exclusion, depending on whether organizations choose to address barriers and embrace the lived experiences of others. This means designing workplaces—both physical and virtual—that are accessible by default, cultivating cultures of respect, and ensuring that accommodations are normalized rather than stigmatized.

Equally important is the shift in narrative. Disability in the workplace should not be framed solely as a challenge to be managed but as a vital aspect of the human experience. Celebrating the contributions of disabled workers reinforces the truth that belonging benefits everyone. Accessible environments often improve efficiency and creativity for the entire workforce, while cultures of openness encourage authenticity and belonging.

The struggles of disability in the workplace are real and often deeply ingrained, spanning from physical inaccessibility to societal bias. Yet the triumphs are equally significant, offering evidence of resilience, innovation, and the power of advocacy. By confronting challenges honestly and celebrating victories, workplaces can transform into spaces where disability is not a barrier but a valued part of the human experience. The journey toward belonging is ongoing, but with intentional action, the future of work can be one where all individuals, regardless of ability, are empowered to contribute and succeed.

This article was written with the assistance of artificial intelligence.

## A Note from the Office of Human Rights

Is your glass half full, half empty, or does it seem to fluctuate like the tide? Either way, positivity is contagious and has the power to improve our lives and uplift the lives of those around us. October is National Positivity Month and the perfect time to reevaluate whether we tend more towards the positive side of life or focus too much on the negative aspects and possibilities that present themselves.

Positivity is not about pretending everything is picture perfect. Hard things happen; bad things happen. We all experience tough times in life. Positivity though is about approaching those times with hope and optimism instead of focusing on the negative aspects of the situation. Instead of wallowing in the despair a situation might possess, positivity is about choosing to view setbacks as opportunities for growth.

Challenges and difficulties will happen. Being positive isn't about ignoring them or sweeping them under the rug. It's about choosing to view them in a different light or perspective. The key word is "choosing."

Viewing things with a positive mindset is a choice. While some personalities may be more inclined than others towards positivity, it's still a skill that can be learned and sharpened if you have the desire to try, and the benefits of positivity are the best reason to try.

To incorporate more positivity in your life, first consciously check what your inner voice is saying to you throughout the day. This will help you to identify negative self-talk and change the narrative in your head. Don't say anything to yourself that you wouldn't say to someone else.

You are valued, you are loved, and you are worthy. Don't let others tell you differently, but more importantly, don't tell yourself differently. Mindfulness is where a positive mindset starts and your positivity will inevitably spread to those around you.

## 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 October 3.

**Carnegie-Stout Public Library @ 5:30 – 7:30 PM**  
**Jenny Braig – Outside the Lines Gallery @ 4:30 PM**  
**Oracle Poets – The Stu @ 5 – 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; recordings of the talks will be archived for later viewing. [Registration on the library website is required.](#)

***Stories of 30 Inspiring Latinas/Latinos Who Have Shaped the United States with Smithsonian Educators***



October 2 @ 1 PM

***10 Years of Daring Heists and Lovable Outcasts in YA Fantasy with Leigh Bardugo***



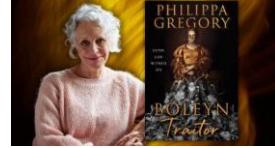
October 9 @ 6 PM

***Finding My Way with Malala Yousafzai (in-person watch party)***



October 27 @ 6 PM

***Intrigue and Whispers as Weapons with Philippa Gregory***



October 29 @ 1 PM

### Volunteer Opportunity of the Month

Latinx Fiesta is looking for volunteers to set up, help throughout the day, and help with tear down. Celebrate the diversity of Latin cultures at Dubuque's Latin American Festival. Visit [volunteerdbq.com](#) to sign up.

# Cultural Events Happening in the Tri-States

## [Lunch & Learn: Samhain: The Ancient Celtic Harvest Festival](#)

**October 1 @ Noon – 1 PM**

### **Convivium Urban Farmstead**

Samhain, pronounced “sow-wen,” is an ancient Celtic festival marking the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter. In this session, Convivium’s Culinary Resource Director, Chef Cena, will explore the rich food history of Samhain and its lasting impact on contemporary culinary practices.



## [Wendt Character Lecture – Josh Freedman](#)

**October 6 @ 7 – 8:30 PM**

### **University of Dubuque Wendt Center**

Josh Freedman, co-founder and CEO of Six Seconds: The Emotional Intelligence Network, will deliver his presentation on leading with emotional intelligence—an essential skill for navigating and driving positive change in today’s fast-paced, ever-evolving world.



## [Dubuque Area History Expo](#)

**October 12 @ 1 – 4 PM**

### **Loras College Alumni Campus Center**

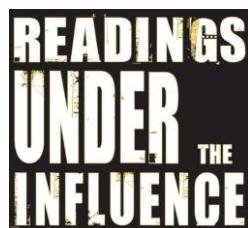
The Dubuque Area History Expo offers a unique opportunity for history enthusiasts, students, and the general public to explore the Dubuque area’s rich past through presentations, an exhibition hall, and networking.

## [Readings Under the Influence](#)

**October 29 @ 7 PM**

### **Smokestack**

RUI is a themed, interactive live and local arts showcase, featuring four local wordsmiths/musicians, different every time. Sometimes it’s edgy, sometimes sweet, sometimes controversial, sometimes downright vicious, but always artful.



## [Dubuque Latinx Fiesta](#)

**October 11 @ 1 – 7 PM**

### **10th & Washington St**

The party takes to the streets of the Millwork District for Dubuque’s Latinx Fiesta, a free indoor-outdoor festival of food, performance, and art celebrating Latinx culture—and then continues late into the night with dancing at Smokestack. Now in its fifth year, the Fiesta has grown into a signature cultural event for the city, offering a joyful space to experience the richness of Latin American heritage. Organized by Dubuque Unidos, a volunteer-led collective of Latinx professionals and community members, the Fiesta reflects the collective vision of a community committed to visibility, connection, and celebration.



## [Dubuque Annual Halloween Parade](#)

**October 18 @ 7 PM**

### **Downtown Dubuque**

The Parade will start at Washington Park and end at Jackson Park.



## [Galena 45th Annual Halloween Parade & Festival](#)

**October 25 @ 6:30 – 8 PM**

### **Main Street, Galena, IL**

Galena’s Halloween parade and festival is the largest, longest, and spookiest in the Tri-State area. This extraordinary display features spectacular floats, marching bands, costumed participants, prizes, and treats for kids and “ghouls” of all ages.

## [Black History and Reading Challenge](#)

**October 26 @ 3 PM**

### **Carnegie-Stout Public Library**

*How Far to the Promised Land: One Black Family’s Story of Hope and Survival in the American South* by Esau McCaulley

