



December 2025

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

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Holidays & Observances

December 3: International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 5: International Volunteer Day

December 14: Hanukkah (Jewish)

December 21: Winter Solstice (Pagan)

December 24: Christmas Eve (Christian)

December 25: Christmas Day (Christian)

December 26: Kwanzaa

December 31: New Year's Eve

Universal Human Rights Month

Human rights are the fundamental freedoms and protections that belong to every person simply because they are human. These rights—such as the right to life, equality, education, safety, and freedom of expression—are universal and inalienable. They do not depend on nationality, gender, religion, race, or any other identity. The modern global framework for human rights was shaped by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1948 in the aftermath of World War II. The UDHR laid out, for the first time in history, a shared vision for human dignity and equality, and it continues to guide governments, organizations, and individuals worldwide. Yet more than seventy-five years later, the struggle to make human rights a lived reality for all remains ongoing.

Despite progress, challenges persist in every region. Millions of people still experience systematic human rights violations, often at the hands of their own governments. Authoritarian regimes restrict freedom of speech, imprison political opponents, and censor the press. In some countries, journalists and activists face harassment, violence, or even death for exposing corruption or calling for reform. The right to participate in fair elections—an essential part of political freedom—is threatened in places where leaders manipulate voting processes or use intimidation to maintain power.

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Drafters of the Declaration include Eleanor Roosevelt of the US (top), Dr. Peng-chun Chang of China (middle), and Charles Duke of the UK (bottom). Other countries represented include USSR, Chile, France, Canada, Lebanon, and Australia.

Universal Human Rights Month

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Armed conflict remains one of the most devastating threats to human rights. Civilians caught in wars suffer from displacement, famine, torture, and indiscriminate violence. Refugee crises around the world continue to grow, as people flee their homes in search of safety. Yet many countries impose strict immigration policies or hostile conditions that deprive refugees and asylum seekers of their rights to protection and humane treatment. Humanitarian workers often face barriers that prevent them from delivering aid to those most in need.

Economic inequality is another major human rights concern. While global wealth has increased, its benefits are unevenly distributed. In many nations, marginalized groups still lack access to basic necessities such as clean water, education, housing, and healthcare. Economic rights—once considered secondary to civil and political rights—are now understood as essential to human dignity. Without economic stability and opportunity, individuals cannot fully exercise their freedoms or participate in society. Child labor, unsafe working conditions, and exploitation remain widespread in parts of the world, despite international labor standards designed to eliminate these abuses.

Human rights challenges also intersect with gender and identity. Women and girls continue to face discrimination, violence, and barriers to education and employment. Gender-based violence—ranging from domestic abuse to human trafficking—remains an urgent global issue. Members of the LGBTQ+ community face criminalization, stigma, and violence in many countries, where their rights to safety, expression, and family life are not protected. Indigenous peoples struggle to preserve their lands, cultures, and autonomy in the face of environmental destruction and political marginalization. Minority

groups, including racial, ethnic, and religious communities, often encounter systemic prejudice that limits their opportunities and threatens their safety.

Addressing universal human rights challenges requires cooperation, political will, and public engagement. Governments must uphold international commitments and strengthen legal protections. Transparency, independent courts, and free press systems are essential to preventing abuses and ensuring accountability. Civil society organizations, activists, and human rights defenders must be supported rather than silenced. Education plays a crucial role as well: teaching young people about human rights encourages empathy, strengthens democratic values, and empowers future generations to advocate for justice.

Individuals have a responsibility to promote human rights. Everyday actions, such as speaking out against discrimination, supporting humanitarian causes, and participating in civic processes, help build cultures of respect and inclusion. In a globalized world, the struggles of one community cannot be separated from the well-being of others. Human rights must be viewed not as abstract principles, but as practical commitments that require constant attention.

The pursuit of universal human rights is one of humanity's most important endeavors. Significant progress has been made, yet profound challenges remain. Violations persist in the form of political repression, conflict, inequality, and discrimination threats. Achieving universal human rights demands sustained effort from governments, institutions, and individuals alike. By promoting justice, dignity, and equality, the global community can move closer to a world where the rights of all people are recognized, protected, and fulfilled.

This article was written with the assistance of artificial intelligence.

A Note from the Office of Human Rights

Volunteering is a powerful way to create positive change, providing meaningful benefits for both individuals and the communities they serve. While people often volunteer to support others, the personal rewards can be just as significant.

For communities, volunteers help strengthen essential programs and services. Nonprofits, schools, shelters, and local initiatives often rely on volunteer support to reach more people and fill gaps in funding or staffing. Whether serving meals, mentoring youth, or participating in neighborhood cleanups, volunteers help create safer environments, stronger support networks, and a greater sense of unity. Communities with active volunteer engagement typically experience stronger social bonds.

For individuals, the advantages are equally compelling. Volunteering offers opportunities to learn new skills, gain practical experience, and explore personal interests. Many people develop leadership abilities, build confidence, or enhance communication skills through hands-on involvement. Volunteering can also improve mental and emotional well-being. Helping others reduces stress, boosts empathy, and provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment.

Another important benefit is connection. Volunteers often meet people who share similar values, forming friendships, mentorships, and even career pathways. These relationships strengthen a sense of belonging—something vital for both personal growth and community resilience.

Ultimately, volunteering creates a cycle of generosity and support. By giving their time, volunteers not only uplift others but also enrich their own lives. Their efforts help build stronger, more compassionate communities while fostering personal development and meaningful human connection.

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 December 5.

The Giving Show – Planted @ 6 – 8 PM

Henry Matthiessen – Stoned Art Studio & Gallery

@ 12 – 5 PM

Various Artists – Widdershins Artisan Gallery

@ 12 – 8 PM

Farolitos Night – Dubuque Museum of Art @ 4 – 8 PM

Various Artists – Outside the Lines Art Gallery

@ 4:30 – 7:30 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.](#)

Scheming Wives and High-Stakes Hilarity with Author Sue Hincenbergs

December 2 @ 1 PM



Volunteer Opportunity of the Month

City Girl Farming and Prepared Meals has a small but mighty team of dedicated foodies combining locally grown and sourced ingredients, many of which are grown in local urban plots, into wholesome and delicious meals at a very affordable price. They prepare and portion delicious meals for the community to be picked up each week on Wednesdays. This requires a few days of dedicated kitchen effort, which is what they need help with. Visit [volunteerdbq.com](#) to sign up.

Cultural Events Happening in the Tri-States

Reflections in the Park

December 1 – January 2 @ 5 – 10 PM

Louis Murphy Park

Louis Murphy Park will once again be transformed into a spectacular Christmas winter wonderland, featuring a stunning array of intricate and animated light displays. Proceeds benefit Hillcrest Family Services.

Traditions of the American Holiday Dinner

December 3 @ Noon – 1 PM

Convivium Urban Farmstead

Holiday dinners in the United States are a delightful blend of diverse cultural influences, with Christmas feasts showcasing a variety of cherished dishes. In this festive session, Convivium will delve into the history of holiday cooking in the United States, exploring how various cultural influences have shaped the traditional dishes we enjoy today.

Tree Lighting Ceremony

December 5 @ 5:30 – 7 PM

Carnegie-Stout Public Library

Enjoy light refreshments, get creative at the ornament-making station, and soak in the nostalgia as we spin classic Christmas records. Then gather for the highlight of the evening, the lighting of the library's Christmas tree, with trivia, a story, and more.



Dubuque Symphony Orchestra: Holiday Concert

December 6 @ 7:30 PM

December 7 @ 2 PM

Five Flags Theater

Usher in this season filled with joy, warmth, and wonder. The DSO is joined by the Dubuque Chorale, members of the Heartland Ballet, and vocal soloists in an enchanting collection of holiday favorites. Also featured is a very special performance on the bandura, a traditional Ukrainian harp. Prices vary.

The Nutcracker

Dubuque City Youth Ballet,

December 13 – 21 times vary

The Grand Opera House

Celebrate the season with

The Nutcracker, a heartwarming



ballet that brings dreams into reality for audiences of all ages. Performed annually for over 25 years, the Dubuque City Youth Ballet's production will be a highlight of your family's holiday celebration. Prices vary.

The Nutcracker

World Ballet Company

December 14 @ 2 and 6 PM

Five Flags Theater

Whirling snowflakes and waltzing flowers frame this beloved holiday classic. Featuring 40 world-class dancers, over 150 sparkling hand-sewn costumes, and breathtaking hand-crafted sets, World Ballet Company's enchanting production is the perfect way to make holiday memories together. Prices vary.

Toys for Tots

Christmas Party

December 10, 11, 16,

17, 22 @ noon – 3 PM

Five Flags Arena

The Five Flags Arena will transform into a yuletide display, as hundreds of Tri-State youngsters



converge for the biggest party around. The three-hour party will have music and dancing with a live DJ. There will be giant inflatables, a fire truck, photos with Santa, a toy giveaway, face-painting, games, and other goodies.