

DECEMBER 2020

Diversity & Inclusion MONTHLY

To amplify the voices of underrepresented communities and enable their ability to inspire us all.

"I believe Native Americans, women, and all of us deserve representation, and that we all need to fight with everything we have to make it so"
— Representative Deb Haaland



THE 12 DAYS OF A SOUL FOOD CHRISTMAS



Dr. LaShonda Stewart is a professor of Public Administration as well as a researcher. She recently wrote a children's book called *The 12 Days of a Soul Food Christmas*. Stewart said she was inspired to write the book during the Covid-19 pandemic; however, it is based on a song she wrote in 2001 which was a reworking of the 12 Days of Christmas.

"When we were in the lockdown, I wanted to make the best of the situation," Stewart said. "I realized during that time how much I truly loved and missed being in the presence of my family members, friends, colleagues and my students."

Stewart said she came up with the idea to write the song after going to a Christmas party where she and her colleagues and friends were reminiscing about the holidays.

"We were talking about all the great food that our grandmothers would make,

especially over the holidays. I shared how I loved black eyed peas, how that was my favorite that my mother and grandmother would cook. The conversation went on to all types of food. Of course, I took in all that information, and I rewrote a whimsical version of *The 12 Days of Christmas*." Stewart said.

The rewritten song itself had gained some prominence with organizations that wanted to use it as an icebreaker at events. Stewart's church used the song during the Christmas season.

"What I realized is that the song really uplifted peoples' spirits and put a smile on their faces," Stewart said. "So, I started sharing it with family and friends and just recently, considering all of the things that are going on with COVID-19 and with all of the unrest in the world, I thought to myself that this would be a great idea to pull this song out again and figure out how to touch a number of people with this song. I decided to convert it to a book."

Big Mama, the main character of the book, is like your grandmother. The book is a tribute to grandmothers and mothers. "Grandmothers going above and beyond, spending time with their grandkids. You know how grandmothers are when the grandkids come around.

They just want to spoil them! So, that is what this book is about. It is about a grandmother spending the time with her grandkids, going above and beyond, cooking all of their favorite soul food dishes during the 12 days of Christmas," Stewart said.

The book is currently available on Amazon, eBay, Barnes and Noble's website, Walmart's website and more.

SIU CARBONDALE NAMED AMONG THE TOP 20 WHEELCHAIR FRIENDLY COLLEGES

Lisa Caringer, Director, DSS

SIU Carbondale has been named among the Top 20 Wheelchair Friendly Colleges by New Mobility Magazine and the United Spinal Association. The Wheels on Campus guide was created for wheelchair users who are looking for universities which are physically accessible and those that go beyond the letter of the law to offer an inclusive college experience.

What does this designation mean for our historically inclusive campus?

SIU has enjoyed a reputation for excellence in access for wheelchair users. We were an early leader in removing physical barriers and assisting disabled college students, who have been traditionally marginalized. Our compact campus has a wheelchair-friendly campus terrain and independently accessible buildings. Staff from Plant and Service Operations ensure that the ADA Standards for Accessible Design are followed, but also go beyond the requirements whenever possible. One example is power-assist restroom doors in the SSB and the Library. The Paratransit program offered by Saluki Express and the Access Inclusive Recreation program are two programs which go beyond what other campuses provide and were a big part of why SIU received this designation.

SIU is a campus that showed others how inclusion of disabled students could be done. Today, wheelchair users have a lot of options from which to select their best college fit. Some of the programs that go beyond the letter of the law have been pared down over the years, but the spirit that engendered that work remains and is seen in our campus culture of access. We are hopeful that we can continue to improve our service delivery and more programs and services can be offered to students in the future. We continue to be a campus that says to disabled students “Welcome to SIU, we’ve been expecting you.”

What criteria were used for the guide?

SIU staff and students were interviewed, and the criteria used to score each campus were independently verified by the Wheels on Campus guide staff. The following quote from the guide gives insight into those criteria:

“Starting with a list of 400 colleges and universities highly ranked by U.S. News & World Report, researchers sent out an exacting survey to disability service offices throughout the United States. Respondents were scored on 45 criteria specific to wheelchair-using students, including wheelchair-friendly campus terrain, percentage of independently-accessible buildings, integrated accessible housing options, personal assistance programs, adaptive sports and recreation, accessible on-campus transportation, adaptive computer labs, inclusive fraternities and sororities and more.”

What does this designation say about SIU?

The following quote from the guide sums up our campus culture so well:

“The culture of inclusion can be extremely different at different institutions,” says project director Jean Dobbs. “We wanted to find those gems, those schools that really go above and beyond to say, ‘Your wheelchair is welcome here, your service dog is welcome here, you are welcome here.’”

DSS is working with the Office of Diversity to start a Disability Ally Center within the Multicultural Resource Center. The center will offer a platform for student-directed programming and peer support for disabled students using a Social Justice framework. The main goal of the work we do at DSS is to lead the campus in creating access and inclusion for disabled students, and we want to look to students for their leadership.

SEMESTER IN REVIEW

HISPANIC/LATINO HERITAGE MONTH

Cristina Castillo, Coordinator

Annually, the Hispanic/Latino Resource Center (H/LRC) sponsors the activities of Hispanic/Latino Heritage Month. This year's celebration was challenging due to the protocols in place for COVID-19. However, along with the restrictions came other types of opportunities for reaching out and collaborating with other campuses. The kick-off of the month's events went to another dimension of importance as it was celebrated system wide. For the first time, the leadership of SIU Carbondale and its School of Medicine, SIU Edwardsville and the SIU System Office took part in the virtual kick-off. Their participation marks the beginning of change as they acknowledged the presence, impact and contributions of Hispanic/Latinx students, staff and faculty.

Here are some highlights from our celebrations.

The H/LRC sponsored a virtual Salsa Dance workshop, Latinx Lotería, where we learned about 54 Hispanic/Latinx personalities which served as our deck of cards.



The “History of La Piñata and Piñata Making” workshop created great student participation. H/LRC collaborated with SIU Carbondale “GPhiO” Sorority, as well as with personnel from SIU Edwardsville. Several Piñata making supplies packages were distributed.



SIU Carbondale's Latin fraternity, "Lambdas," put together a panel of alumni and current students and presented "Proud to be the FIRST: Struggles and Successes of First Gen Latinx" where they shared their amazing stories. The turnout was great. We closed the month with a live cooking demonstration geared toward our students living in the dorms, or not, and with a low budget mind.

H/LRC hosted a Day of the Dead celebration and distributed "Day of the Dead Bread" with cocoa packages. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the celebration was limited to a small altar stand outside the H/LRC office. Nevertheless, we observed the day and celebrated life, as Latinos do!



You can watch the events mentioned here at facebook.com/SalukisUnidos

LGBTQ RESOURCE CENTER RECAP

Vern Cooper, Coordinator

The fall semester was always going to be tougher than usual because this year has been extraordinary. But SIU and Carbondale's LGBTQ community is also extraordinary. We planned and executed what has been my favorite LGBTQ History Month in my time here. We came together in online spaces and created virtual communities that so many people worried wouldn't be possible last summer. We watched films and discussed them, we traded clothing to express ourselves (even if that expression happened indoors only to ourselves), and we celebrated. We learned about the history of LGBTQ voting rights in America, we created digital art together, and we honored those who died in decades past and this year. We've shown everyone and ourselves that we can still organize and be there for each other. IF we could do what we did this year, under the outrageous circumstances we had, we must never wonder again if we have it in us to try.

CAMPUS PRIDE INDEX GIVES SIU CARBONDALE BEST OF BEST AWARD

The Campus Pride Index ranks universities from 1 to 5 stars when assessing their LGBTQ+ friendliness. SIU Carbondale was given a 5/5 stars ranking based on overall resources and campus inclusivity. The best of the best was awarded to SIU Carbondale based on programs and services offered through the LGBTQ Resource Center.

WOMEN'S RESOURCE CENTER RECAP

The WRC had a productive semester with programs promoting awareness of domestic violence in October and celebrating Native American Heritage in November. Throughout October, the office partnered with the Wellness Center and other campus and community groups to host conversations, workshops and virtual activities to serve and educate students about domestic and dating violence.

In November, the office worked with SIU Edwardsville to host virtual programs on local rock art, missing and murdered indigenous women, cultural appropriation and storytelling. Some of these events are still available online:

- Kick-Off
- Appropriation vs. Appreciation Panel
- Native American Storytelling

BLACK RESOURCE CENTER RECAP

Charah McKinzie, Coordinator

The Black Resource Center (BRC) is designed to create a safe haven for our students. BRC provides both resources and programming activities to enhance students' academic and social experiences. This past fall semester, BRC provided personal development programs that were both educational and culturally enriching. Here are some recap pieces we did to assist students with obtaining academic success.

- Motivation Mondays (motivational talks and goal assessments)
- Documentary filming/discussions
- Career assessments/advisement
- Community collaboration

We are also looking forward to hosting several upcoming programs and events in the spring semester such as Black History Month and mentoring and leadership programs, just to name a few.

DIVERSITY WEEK 2020 RECAP

Lisa Caringer

October 19 – 24 was SIU Carbondale's inaugural Diversity Week, and we are incredibly proud of how many voices we were able to include in the conversation. We wanted to illustrate the depths of what diversity includes because diversity is ever changing and intersects in the most complex yet beautiful ways.

With the current racial climate around the globe, it was important to us to host a week of events that would inspire change, provoke thought, and confront previous beliefs. Without diversity and inclusion, we may never challenge ourselves to learn something new. With much care in mind, we worked to provide an incredible learning experience for the SIU community.

With over 40 unique events to choose from, the campus community turned out in support of Diversity Week. There were several well-attended sessions with more than 30 attendees. In many of the smaller sessions, real conversations took place where the atmosphere allowed for questions and exploration of unfamiliar concepts.

SIU faculty and staff responding to our follow-up survey felt that the week was edifying to our campus community, and that the current social and racial issues affecting our world were adequately discussed. Here are a few of the comments:

"The week was well planned, organized, and full of events throughout the day."

"I loved the inclusion of disability into Diversity Week, and I appreciated that there were Rainbow Cafe events included."

"SO GLAD you included military stuff - I NEEDED that!"

"The keynote speaker was inspiring, hit the issues I was concerned with, and felt inclusive."

We are very proud of how it all came together and how much support we received from everyone. The Chancellor's Task Force on Diversity and Inclusion is already planning more opportunities for the campus community in 2021.

UPCOMING EVENT

Friday, December 11, at 4 pm

VIRTUAL HISPANIC/LATINX RECOGNITION CEREMONY

Live on www.facebook.com/SalukisUnidos

This fall a total of 64 students are completing bachelor's, master's, Juris Doctor, and doctoral degrees. This is the cherry on top of the semester. Congratulations to these students and their families. This is a proud moment for the Latinx community!

ACROSS CULTURES AND TIMES: HOLIDAYS CELEBRATED DURING DECEMBER

Buddhism

- **BODHI DAY:** December 8 – Day of Enlightenment, celebrating the day that the historical Buddha (Shakyamuni or Siddhartha Gautama) experienced enlightenment (also known as Bodhi).

Christianity

- **CHRISTMAS EVE:** December 24 – In many countries, e.g. the German speaking countries, but also in Poland, Hungary and the Nordic countries, gift giving is on 24 December.
- **CHRISTMAS DAY:** December 25 and January 7 – celebrated as a Christian and secular holiday alike.
- **TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS:** 25 December 25 – January 6
- **HOLY INNOCENTS' DAY:** December 28

Hinduism

- **PANCHA GANAPATI:** a modern five-day Hindu festival celebrated from December 21 through 25 in honor of Ganesha.

Historical

- **MALKH:** December 25
- **MÖDRANIHT:** Mothers' Night, the Saxon winter solstice festival.
- **SATURNALIA:** December 17 - 23 – An ancient Roman winter solstice festival in honor of the deity Saturn, held on 17 December of the Julian calendar and expanded with festivities through to 23 December. Celebrated with sacrifice, a public banquet, followed by private gift-giving, continual partying and a carnival.
- **DIES NATALIS SOLIS INVICTI (Day of the Birth of the Unconquered Sun):** December 25 – late Roman Empire

Humanism

- **HUMANLIGHT:** December 23 – Humanist holiday originated by the New Jersey Humanist Network in celebration of
“a Humanist's vision of a good future.”

Judaism

- **HANUKKAH:** usually falls anywhere between late November and early January.

Secular

- **NEWTONMAS:** December 25 – As an alternative to celebrating the religious holiday Christmas, some atheists and skeptics have chosen to celebrate December 25 as Newtonmas, due to it being Isaac Newton's birthday on the old style date.
- **KWANZAA:** December 26 – January 1 – Pan-African festival celebrated in the US
- **NEW YEAR'S EVE:** December 31 – last day of the Gregorian year
- **SOLSTICE:** On or about December 21.

Unitarian Universalism

- **CHALICA:** first Monday of December and lasts seven days – A holiday created in 2005, celebrated by some Unitarian Universalists.

Diversity & Inclusion

MONTHLY

is written by

Student Juniper Oxford

edited by

Office Administrator Jennifer Howell and Administrative Assistant Carol Jackson

overseen by

Interim Associate Chancellor for Diversity Todd Bryson

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