

BELONGING- the Value of Equity

March 2022



Welcome

Diversity, equity, and inclusion at DDS is ensuring everyone feels equally involved and supported in all areas of the workplace, that you are listened to and your unique talents matter. I hope that these monthly DEI newsletters and future DEI conversations can help create spaces, discussions, and proposals on how to ensure we all feel safe and will bring every one of our full, unique selves to work, every day!

*Enjoy Reading,
Jordan A. Scheff
DDS Commissioner*

*Our Stories
Matter*



In this issue:

During the month of March we celebrate many recognitions:

- Developmental Disability Month
- Women's History Month
- Irish American History Month
- Greek American History Month
- Gender Equality Month
- Ethnic Equality Month

Shared by Elisa Velardo

I was raised in Waterbury CT. My paternal grandparents both came from Italy via Ellis Island as teenagers. My dad was one of 6 children, 3 boys and 3 girls. My father did not graduate from high school. He joined the U.S. Navy as soon as he was able and upon discharge, came back to Waterbury to begin a 50+ year trade as a bricklayer. My grandfather and my uncle were also bricklayers. Waterbury has some beautiful brick buildings, and I'm proud to know my family members worked on many of them.

In high school, when I expressed my intent to go on to college, my father was completely opposed. It made no sense to him why we would waste money on college. In his experience, women were homemakers and mothers and men learned a trade. I would be the first person on either side of my family to go to college. He refused to provide information I needed to fill out financial aid paperwork and he refused to contribute to the cost. This served to strengthen my resolve not only to put myself through college, but to graduate with high honors.

The lesson that I learned from that experience was that people have difficulty comprehending what they have never been exposed to. It was probably 20 years after I graduated with my Bachelor's degree and had gone on to complete my Master's Degree at Brandeis that we came full circle. By that time, I was the Executive Director of an agency and my dad came to a function. He was well into his 70s at that time. At the end of the evening he said to me, "It worked out pretty well that you went to college. I never knew this could happen. I'm really proud of you". Women's History month is a time to both honor women who broke through barriers and preconceptions and encourage younger women to be fearless in pursuing their goals.

Fun Facts: Irish American Heritage Month

Irish-American Presidents

- Theodore Roosevelt
- George W. Bush
 - Joe Biden
- Ronald Reagan

Resource: [Census.gov/schools](https://www.census.gov/schools)



30 million (1 out of 10) or 9% of U.S. residents claimed Irish ancestry in 2019. The states with the highest percentage of individuals reporting Irish ancestry were Massachusetts (19%) and New Hampshire (20%).

IRELAND'S GREAT HUNGER MUSEUM

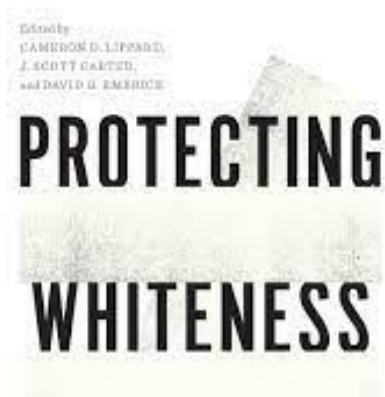
The world's largest collection of Great Hunger- related art.
3011 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT | 203-582-6500

The Great Famine also known as the Great Hunger or the Irish Potato Famine was an 8 year (1845-1852) period of mass starvation and disease in Ireland. During that time over 2.1 million people left Ireland, one of the greatest mass exoduses from an island known in history. The relationship between many Irish and their ruling British government worsened because of the famine, heightening ethnic and sectarian tensions, boosting nationalism in Ireland and among Irish emigrants .

Resource: Miller, Kerby A. Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration. Ireland, Field Day, 2008



EQUALITY



State of Connecticut
Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities
Central Office – 450 Columbus Blvd Ste 2, Hartford CT 06103
Promoting Equality and Justice for all People

SENT VIA EMAIL

March 16, 2022

Jordan A. Scheff, Commissioner
State of Connecticut
Department of Developmental Services
460 Capitol Avenue
Hartford, CT 06106

RE: 2021 Affirmative Action Plan - APPROVED

Dear Commissioner Scheff:

Pursuant to Section 46a-68(d) of the general statutes, the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities has reviewed the proposed affirmative action plan submitted by the Department of Developmental Services on January 5, 2022. The Commission at its regular meeting on March 9, 2022 voted that the plan be APPROVED.

The review and analysis of the proposed affirmative action plan was performed in accordance with Section 46a-68-103 and is transmitted herewith. **THE SCHEDULED DATE FOR YOUR NEXT FILING is December 30, 2022.**

The Commission requests that the attached evaluation be thoroughly reviewed to ensure that all deficiencies, omissions, and errors identified in the Evaluation be addressed.

For technical assistance or if you have any questions you may contact Neva Elaine Vigezzi, Supervisor, Affirmative Action Unit at 860-541-4706.

Sincerely,

Tanya A. Hughes
Executive Director

Attachment

C: Renee LaBarge, Equal Employment Opportunity Director
Neva Elaine Vigezzi, Supervisor, Affirmative Action Unit



Main (860) 541-3400 – Fax (860) 541-3432
www.ct.gov/chro – Toll Free in Connecticut (800) 477-5737 – TDD (860) 541-3459
Affirmative Action / Equal Opportunity Employer



The Affirmative Action Plan has been approved. If you are interested in seeing the plan contact EEO.

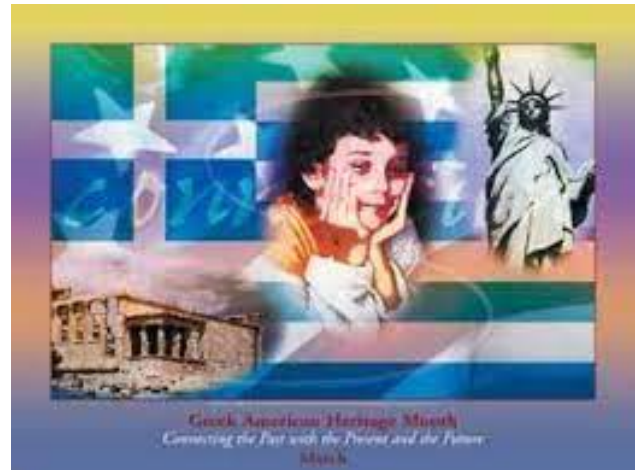
LET'S TALK - KEEP THE DIALOGUE GOING

April Coffee Conversation we will dialogue about Equity. Please join us.

Greek American!

excerpt of : When We Were Greek
American

written by Theodore Zervas January 31,
2020



Nervas quotes "I had to straddle two cultures all my life — not quite mastering either one.

At the turn of the 20th century, many Greeks came to the United States seeking a better life for their children. Zervas for this article interviewed Greek immigrants to find out "if immigrating was it worth it"? In his article he stated, their responses often sounded the same. "Yes, it was worth it. I have no complaints, my kids are educated, they speak Greek, we have our home our jobs, we have money, but I worry about my grandkids. If we lived in Greece, I think it would have been better. I see my friends in Greece today and hate to say this, but I am jealous of them or rather I envy them. The families there are together, and they will always be Greek. Their kids and grandkids will never be anything else." Zervas acknowledged many feared future generations would lose a sense of connection, lose their language, marry others who were not Greek. He noted for generations that were born in America with Greek ancestry felt the weight to keep culture and "be Greek" never quite "American".

DID YOU KNOW?

Elena Ford- a Greek American woman is the Chief Customer Experience Officer at Ford Motor Company and the first female Ford family member to hold an executive position at the company.

Jim Gianopoulos - chairman and CEO of Paramount Pictures

William S. Stavropoulos - past CEO and Chairman of The Dow Chemical Company



WOMEN'S HISTORY



Every year, March is designated as Women's History month by Presidential Proclamation. From the Native American women to the first European settlers, men and women have worked together to build this great nation. When the nation's founders went to work to frame the constitution of the new country, Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John and told him not to forget the ladies. But too often women's contributions went unnoticed. As the saying goes, for most of history, anonymous was a woman. But today that has changed! Women have taken their rightful place in history alongside men. From women like Malala to Michelle Obama to our very own DDS Self Advocate Coordinators, Jossie, Natasha, Yana, Paige and Kellie, women truly make a difference in the world! Click on the Power Point link below and click on "Slide Show", then "From Beginning", to hear a narrated presentation by Yana!

Submitted by:

Yana Razumnaya, Self-Advocate Coordinator, North Region
Jeremy Powell, Self-Advocate Coordinator, West Region

Link to the Powerpoint Presentation

https://ctgovexec-my.sharepoint.com/:p/g/personal/amy_blazawski_ct_gov/EbCCaqLfn7FHuEgIA2tt10oBQgQuL6JPqJdgNVdjXSzGrA?e=9JUTla

DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITY MONTH!



Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month (DDAM) is a nationwide event started in 1987 by then President Ronald Reagan to raise awareness about inclusion of people with developmental disabilities in all aspects of community life, and the barriers that people with disabilities still face. This was an important step to bring attention to the needs and potential of our community members with developmental disabilities. Over the past 34 years there have been a number of significant events, but there is so much more to do.

Take the pledge to reaffirm your commitment to seeing the person and not the disability

https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/AdvocatesCorner/docs/Take_the_Pledge.pdf

Timeline

- 1987: March designated "National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month"
- 1990: Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) signed into law, prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in public life
- 2004: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act reauthorized, ensuring that all children with disabilities have access to a "free appropriate public education"
- 2008: ADA amended, making it easier for an individual seeking protection to establish that they have a disability
- 2014: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act signed into law, helping individuals with disabilities gain access to employment, training, and support services



Inclusion is a philosophy that embraces the idea that everyone has something of value to contribute and that everyone has a right to belong.

Lisa Friedman