

# ARAB AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

The Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion is excited to share the heritage month newsletter to highlight diverse communities. We hope to increase our shared understanding and appreciation of the rich histories, cultures, and people from different heritages. For more information on diverse holidays and celebrations, please visit the [NIH Diversity Calendar](#).

## History and Significance

April is Arab American Heritage Month. This month recognizes and celebrates the invaluable contributions of Arab Americans in diplomacy, science, technology, art, culture, and social justice.

Arab American Heritage Month began as a modest initiative in a few states and cities in 2017. Since then, recognition has steadily grown, culminating in a significant milestone in April 2021 when President Biden issued the first-ever presidential proclamation acknowledging its observance.

Today's Arab American community is made up of individuals with roots in 22 countries located in the Middle East and North Africa: Algeria, Bahrain, the Comoros Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Each country contributes its unique cultural heritage, languages, religions, and traditions, enriching the fabric of American society.

As we honor Arab American Heritage Month, let's deepen our understanding, challenge stereotypes, and embrace diversity to foster a more inclusive society. This year's theme, 'Celebrating Arab American Resilience and Diversity,' reminds us of the strength and diversity within the Arab American experience.

## Ways to Celebrate in NYC

Here are a few ways to celebrate locally:

- [New York Public Library's Arab American Heritage Month Programs and Events](#)
- [NYC Public Schools' Events and Exhibitions](#)

## From Sunrise to Sunset: Fostering Understanding During Ramadan

Arab Americans come from diverse faith backgrounds, Islam being one of them. This year from March 10 to April 9, Muslims worldwide are observing Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic calendar. Ramadan holds great significance for the Muslim community and it is a sacred time marked by spiritual reflection, prayer, and community. During this holy month, Muslims fast from sunrise (*suhoor*, pre-fasting meal before sunrise) to sunset (*iftar*, fast-breaking meal after sunset) each day, refraining from food and drink. This practice fosters self-discipline, mindfulness, and empathy for those less fortunate.

Throughout this period, it's important to be mindful and respectful of the commitments and experiences of those observing Ramadan. As a community, we can recognize that fasting can be physically and mentally challenging, and offer support to those who are fasting. We can also offer the greeting of "Ramadan Mubarak" (blessed Ramadan).

By fostering understanding, empathy, and respect, we can create a supportive and inclusive environment for all members of our community during Ramadan and beyond.

## Community Spotlight



**Dr. Lamia Wahba brings a wealth of experiences and fresh insight to our community. Born and raised in Cairo, Egypt, she finds comfort in the hustle and bustle of city life, reminiscent of her vibrant hometown.**

**Dr. Wahba gravitated towards the sciences in high school as part of an IGCSE program while living in Saudi Arabia. During her undergraduate studies at William and Mary she delved into the world of scientific research. She was excited by the opportunity to pose questions and design experiments that pushed the boundaries of her knowledge.**

**Her journey led her to Johns Hopkins University for grad school, where she faced a pivotal decision midway through her training: relocate across the country with her mentor or stay behind and start anew. Driven by her passion for her thesis project and invaluable mentorship, Dr. Wahba embraced the challenge of the Bay Area, where she discovered new passions in academia amidst burgeoning technology.**

**As a postdoctoral fellow, Dr. Wahba's enthusiasm for scientific exploration continued to flourish. She realized how much genuine fun she had conducting research in academia, solidifying her aspiration to become a PI. She joined Rockefeller as a HOL in January 2023, coinciding with another joyous milestone: becoming a mother.**

**Dr. Wahba embraces her new role as HOL. She recognizes the profound impact mentorship can have on students' lives, an impact that is often more immediate than our scientific achievements.**

**Her approach to life reflects the importance of finding joy and fun in what you do, inspiring others in our community to pursue what excites them with conviction.**

**If you know anyone who may be interested in being featured in the Community Spotlight in our future newsletters, fill out a nomination form on [bit.ly/RockefellerSpotlight](https://bit.ly/RockefellerSpotlight)**