

# Main Line Health Diversity Message

## December 2018

### Hanukkah (December 2-10)

Hanukkah commemorates the physical and spiritual victory of the Jewish people over the Greeks more than 2,000 years ago. Hanukkah is also known as the Festival of Lights, since the flame in the Temple burned miraculously for eight days, and the Feast of Dedication, since the Temple was rededicated after being desecrated. Hanukkah is celebrated from 25 Kislev - 2 Tevet, according to the Jewish calendar, and it falls on different dates each year.

Each evening at sundown, the Hanukkah menorah, which has nine candles, is lit. The candle in the middle (called the Shamash - or Servant Candle) is used to light all the others. The other eight, four on each side, placed lower than the Shamash, are for each of the eight days that the Temple flame miraculously burned. On the first night, only the far right candle is lit. The second night, two candles are lit starting at the far right, and so it goes until the eighth and final night when all eight candles are lit.

### International Human Rights Day (December 10)

Human Rights Day is observed every year on December 10—the day in 1948 when the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This year, Human Rights Day marks the 70th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a milestone document that proclaimed the inalienable rights every person is inherently entitled to as a human being—regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. It is the most translated document in the world, available in more than 500 languages.

International Human Rights Day is a day to empower one another to continue to stand up for our rights and the rights of others.

## Yule (December 21– January 1)

Yule, or Yuletide, is a pagan religious holiday that lasts for 12 days and begins on December 21, the Mother Night of Yule and the official first day of winter. It is a time of rebirth, to renew the old, and to celebrate the start of longer and brighter days (also known as the winter solstice in the northern hemisphere and summer solstice in the southern hemisphere).

The ceremonial Yule log is the highlight of the Solstice festival. Traditionally, the log must either be harvested from the householder's land or given as a gift. Once the log is in the fireplace, it is decorated in seasonal greenery and saturated with cider or ale, and dusted with flour before being set ablaze by a piece of last year's log. The log will burn through the night, and then smolder for 12 days before being put out.

## Winter Solstice (December 21)

The Winter Solstice is the day that, in the depths of a bleak midwinter, celebrates the coming of longer, brighter days. In the Northern Hemisphere, it's the day with the shortest period of daylight and the longest night of the year, all thanks to the tilt of the earth. After Winter Solstice, you'll see gradually shorter nights and longer days, which also means the coming of spring.

## Christmas (December 25)

Christmas is a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide commercial phenomenon. For two millennia, people around the world have been observing Christmas with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular. Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus, whose teachings form the basis of their religion.

Popular Christmas traditions include decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends, exchanging gifts, and of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. Christmas Day has been a federal holiday in the United States since 1870.

## Kwanzaa (December 26—January 1)

The word Kwanzaa is derived from the phrase "matunda ya kwanza" which means "first fruits" in Swahili. Kwanzaa is a celebration that marks the seven principles of Nguzo Saba—values of African culture that contribute to building and reinforcing community among African-Americans. On each of the seven nights of Kwanzaa, family gathers and a child lights one of the candles on the Kinara candleholder, and one of the seven principles of Kwanzaa is discussed. The seven principles focus on unity (Umoja), self-determination (Kujichagulia), collective work and responsibility (Ujima), cooperative economics (Ujamaa), purpose (Nia), creativity (Kuumba) and faith (Imani). As part of the Kwanzaa celebration, an African feast (Karamu) is held each year on December 31.

**For sources of the information included in this document, please email [FitzpatrickSmithK@mlhs.org](mailto:FitzpatrickSmithK@mlhs.org).**

