

# *Diversity, Equality & Inclusion*

## DEI Committee Friday Thoughts

*Published on Occasion*



### **How We Connect with Our Heritage and Celebrate Our Ancestors by Hannah Fields**

When we think about heritage and where we come from, people often turn to DNA tests and stories passed down through their families to connect with and celebrate those parts of who they are. As November begins, many of us focus on holidays like Thanksgiving, Hanukkah or Christmas as ways to celebrate and come together as a family, but some cultures have other ways to celebrate our heritage and those who have come before us.

In some religious and cultural traditions, the first few days of November are significant for celebrating those who have passed. In some Christian practices, [All Saints Day](#) (Nov 1) and [All Souls Day](#) (Nov 2) are times when churches and families celebrate those who have died. In Ireland, All Souls Day follows a very traditional holiday called [Samhain](#) (pronounced "Sow-in"). We know this day as Halloween in the United States. To those of Celtic descent and who practice Wicca, Samhain marks the Celtic New Year, and a time when the veil between the living and the dead is believed to be thinnest. The act of creating an altar to leave food and photos to feed visiting spirits is just one way that people who observe these traditions can connect with their ancestors.

That last description might seem familiar to some, and it should. One of the most well-recognized celebrations during this time is [Día de Muertos, or Day of the Dead](#). This is a traditional Mexican holiday that runs annually from Nov 1 to Nov 2, though many people celebrate it around the world. According to the tradition, these two days are a time that reunites the living and the dead.

My family is Hispanic, and this time is for us to connect with those of our family who have passed and spend time reminiscing with those who are still here. [Ofrendas](#) (home alters) are created with pictures and some of our relatives' favorite objects and food to welcome them home. We also use yellow marigolds to guide them to the ofrenda from the afterlife. We don't use these days to mourn, but to celebrate our family. It's a time full of activities and laughter to honor those who have passed.

There are many other celebrations that happen year-round in different countries, different religions and different cultures that celebrate family heritage and honor those who have passed – too many to list at one time and many I may not be aware of. With Thanksgiving just around the corner, a time when many families in the U.S. come together, take some time to think about what your family and heritage mean to you and how can you celebrate them more than once a year. Find ways to celebrate in a way that is meaningful to you and share those traditions with others. Create wonderful memories and traditions that can be passed on to your loved ones and remember that “our dead are never dead to us, until we have forgotten them” ([George Eliot](#)).

**Goodwin Living DEI Committee: Statement of Purpose:** Educate, Embrace and Empower team members, residents, members\* and all served by Goodwin Living to support Diversity, Equality and Inclusion.

**Goodwin Living DEI Committee Desired Outcome:** The Diversity, Equality and Inclusion Committee (DEI) will seek open and honest communication and collaboration that will inform and celebrate the age, culture, ethnicity and sexual orientation of team members, residents, members\* and all served by Goodwin Living without bias.

\*Members include Priority Club members and Goodwin Living At Home.

**Questions or comments?** Please contact us [DEI@GoodwinLiving.org](mailto:DEI@GoodwinLiving.org)