

Equity Heroes: Asian American and Pacific Islander Month

The Illinois State Board of Education celebrates the contributions of the Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community.

In 1990, Congress passed Public Law 101-283, expanding Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week to an entire month. In 1992, Congress dedicated May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month.

Tammy Duckworth



Tammy Duckworth is the first Thai American woman elected to Congress and the first disabled woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives. Duckworth, decorated combat veteran of the Iraq War, advocates for veterans with disabilities.

Bushra Amiwala



Bushra Amiwala is a member of the Board of Education at Skokie School District 73.5. She was elected in 2019 when she was 21 years old, becoming the youngest Pakistani American elected official in the United States.

Patsy Mink



Patsy Mink is a Japanese American who was the first woman of color elected to the U.S. House of Representatives and the first Asian American to serve in Congress. She advocated for academic and athletic equity in schools.

Ram Villivalam



Ram Villivalam is the first African American and Indian American elected to the Illinois Senate. He was the chief Senate sponsor for the Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History (TEAACH) Act.

Terisa Siagatonu



Terisa Siagatonu is a Samoan queer poet who performed at the U.N. Conference on Climate Change. She merges her background as a mental health clinician with her poetry to bridge gaps and advocate for collective hearing and liberation.

Chella Man



Chella Man is a Jewish, Chinese, transgender, and deaf actor. He is an activist for voter mobilization and education in the LGBTQ and disability communities.

Did You Know

- "Asian Pacific" encompasses the Asian continent plus the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia), and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, and Easter Island).
- In 2021, Governor JB Pritzker signed the TEAACH Act making Illinois the first state in the nation to require public schools to add Asian American history to their curriculum.
- Chicago hosts the fifth largest Asian American population in the United States, according to the University of Chicago.
- The largest AAPI groups in Illinois are Indian, Chinese, Korean, Pakistani, and Japanese, according to AAPI Data.

How can
you support
the AAPI
community?

- Shop at AAPI-owned businesses.
- Learn how to pronounce and call your neighbors, colleagues, and fellow community members by their given or chosen names.
- Stand against and report hate crimes against the AAPI community.
- Donate to AAPI organizations.
- Learn about the vast array of cultures and histories represented by the AAPI community.
- Avoid cultural appropriation, such as costumes that perpetuate cultural stereotypes for Halloween.

Resources

- [AAPI Resource Center](#)
- [Asian Pacific American Heritage Month](#)
- [Stop AAPI Hate](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice](#)
- [Asian Mental Health Collective](#)

If you have a suggestion for an Equity Hero theme, please email equity@isbe.net.

Photo Credit:

Tammy Duckworth: RespectAbility
Bushra Amiwala: Wikipedia
Patsy Mink: Biography

Ram Villivalam: Illinois Senate Democratic Caucus
Terisa Siagatonu: Terisasiagatonu.com
Chella Man: Paper Magazine