

THE TACKLE BOX

Awareness Month & Days

- [Disability Pride Month](#)
- [Bebe Moore Campbell National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#)
- [Thurgood Marshall's Birthday](#) - July 2nd
- [International Non-Binary Peoples Day](#) - July 14th
- [International Nelson Mandela Day](#) - July 18th
- [Black Women's Equal Pay Day](#) - July 21st
- [International Self-Care Day](#) - July 24th
- [National Disability Independence Day](#) (commemorates the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act) - July 26th
- [International Day of Friendship](#) - July 30th

Lael Wilcox: Pushing the Limits of Endurance Cycling

In 2024 Lael Wilcox became the fastest woman to cycle around the world, covering over 18,000 miles in 108 days, 12 hours, and 12 minutes.

Astonishingly she has set off to do it again. In fact, she set out on June 7 from Chicago with the goal of setting a new overall record, which is currently held by Mark Beaumont, who made the trip in 78 days, 14 hours, and 40 minutes. Unlike last time, this time she has sponsors helping to cover expenses and supporters handing her water and snacks as she traverses the globe one revolution at a time

Her team includes her wife Rugile "Rue" Kaladyte, a professional photojournalist and filmmaker, who is documenting Lael's ride. As with her first ride, Rue plans to release a movie about Lael's incredible journey. If you are interested in her first ride, you can watch [Lael Rides Around the World](#).

As of June 17, Lael was passing La Flamengrie, France, and had covered some 3075 miles. You can track her ride on her website [Lael Rides Around the World](#). Supporters have shown up for every leg of Lael's ride, including her 4 a.m. start in Chicago, making her feel supported and inspired. Lael's story isn't simply about a woman attempting to set a new record; it isn't about a wife wanting to share the story of her incredible partner. At its heart, it is about giving people something to believe in. Regardless of our backgrounds or beliefs, cheering Lael on reminds us of our shared humanity and our capacity to support one another. We're all pulling for you, Lael!



Lael sits smiling on her endurance bike wearing a rusty red puffer jacket and a white helmet.



The Michigan Chapter of the American Fisheries Society invites you to join the

MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

ACADEMIC YEAR 2026 - 2027

Hosted by the
Michigan FishCAST

What's MI AFS?

- MI AFS is a professional organization interested in maintaining high standards for the fisheries profession and ensuring conservation of Michigan's aquatic resources.
- Activities of the Michigan Chapter revolve around annual meetings, continuing education workshops, newsletters, and committees.

Mentorship Program:

- Participants will be paired with individuals in different stages of their career to foster a sense of belonging and provide mutual learning opportunities
- People of all experience levels and backgrounds are welcome
- AFS Membership is not required

Fisheries Community Advocacy and Sustainability Team Mission (FishCAST):

- Cultivate a chapter culture that ensures all members feel welcome and respected
- Recruit and retain members with underrepresented identities and backgrounds
- Create and advocate for policies and procedures that promote DEIJ at the chapter, regional, and international levels

If interested, scan QR Code or email mifishcastafs@gmail.com
michigan.fisheries.org

Featured Artist:

Charlie French

Abstract painter Charlie French (he/him; @charriefrenchfineart) is celebrated for his use of color, texture, composition, and blending of geometric and freeform shapes in his beautiful and calming paintings. Born in New York and educated internationally, Charlie now works from his studio in Boulder, CO. He has collaborated with major corporations, such as Michaels and Crayola, and his paintings have been sought by private and corporate collectors from around the world, including the Texas Rangers.



A smiling Charlie stands in front of a large canvas with paint brush in hand.

Charlie is a dedicated and prolific painter whose process is founded on imagination and the freedom to embrace a blank canvas as an adventure. In response to questions about his process, he has said "I like colors and shapes. Sometimes I do (paint) a lot. Sometimes not. I don't think about it. I have fun" ([ArtLifting](#)). Charlie also finds painting to be not only a source of joy but also a therapeutic experience. When Charlie was 16, he developed Down Syndrome Regression Disorder (DSRD), a condition that profoundly affected his ability to communicate and engage with the world for more than five years. He turned to his passion for painting as he worked toward regaining stability. Charlie finds meaning and purpose in his art, knowing that his paintings share both the joy of his imagination and a piece of his happiness with the world.



Above: inspired by a Florida beach sunrise Good Morning 1 is a seascape created by layering paint using scrapers, foam brushes, sponges and regular brushes. This painting is part of a two-piece collection commissioned by a collector.

Right: ART in the Desert III was inspired by the colors Charlie experienced during a trip to Death Valley National Park. This work is filled with his love of nature and his happiness from seeing the beauty in our shared world.



Above: inspired by listening to his pool fountain while working Shh... Can You Hear the Water? combines his favorite shapes, squares, and the sense of fun and relaxation he gets from his pool.

Ally Corner: A Few Do's and Don'ts

Building from June's Ally Corner, where we defined terms associated with the LGBTQ community, this month we are going to walk through some do's and don'ts of terminology and language use. Just as important as knowing what terms to use is understanding why some words should be avoided. Not only does it help your LGBTQ friends and family feel more comfortable, it also helps you to gain a better appreciation for the struggles and condemnation the LGBTQ community faces. Small changes in language can have a big impact on the lives of the people around you by helping to move our society towards being more inclusive and supportive. Language and terminology continue to evolve, and individual preferences may vary. When possible, it is always best to respect the words people use to describe themselves. For more details and additional information, we recommend you visit GLAAD's [Glossary of LGBTQ Terms](#).

Don't use "Homosexual"

Due to its clinical history and its use by some anti-LGBTQ groups, many people today consider "homosexual" outdated or stigmatizing. Due to its negative connotation, many mainstream media style guides restrict the use of the term "homosexual". Avoid using "homosexual" except in direct quotes.

Do use Gay; Gay Man or Lesbian; Gay Person/People

In addition to gay and lesbian where appropriate you can also use bisexual, pansexual, or queer to describe someone who is attracted to people of the same gender or more than one gender. It is always best to ask people how they describe themselves or prefer to be described before labeling their sexual orientation.

Don't use "Homosexual" Relations/Relationship, Couple, Sex etc.

Again, due to anti-LGBTQ activists using these terms to denigrate LGBTQ people, couples, and relationships, identifying someone's relationship as "homosexual" should be avoided.

Do use Relationship, Couple (or, if necessary, gay/lesbian/same-sex couple), Sex, etc.

A good rule to follow is not to label an activity, emotion, or relationship gay, lesbian, bisexual, or queer unless you would call the same activity, emotion, or relationship "straight". When possible, it is always best to ask how people describe their relationship.

Don't use "Sexual Preference"

The use of "sexual preference" inaccurately suggests that being attracted to the same sex is a choice and therefore can be "cured" or "changed."

Do Sexual Orientation or Orientation

Sexual orientation is an inclusive way to accurately describe a person's enduring physical, romantic, and/or emotional attraction to people of the same and/or different gender.

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Don't use "Gay Lifestyle," "LGBTQ Lifestyle," "Homosexual lifestyle," or "Transgender lifestyle"

These phrases are used to denigrate LGBTQ people by inaccurately suggesting that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity is a choice and therefore can be "cured" or "changed." LGBTQ people are diverse in the ways they lead their lives and there is no single "LGBTQ lifestyle".

Do

Avoid combining "lifestyle" with terms used to describe LGBTQ people and their lives. You can simply say LGBTQ people.

Don't use "Gay rights" or "Special rights"

Individuals in the LGBTQ community are not asking for rights that are different from the rights everyone has. In addition to seeking full equality under the law LGBTQ activists, also push to end discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Do

LGBTQ people are advocating to be treated equally so when writing and talking about this it is best to describe it as "equality for LGBTQ people".

Don't Use or tolerate Anti-LGBTQ language

Do not ever use or condone the use of derogatory terms such as “fag,” “faggot,” “dyke,” “homo,” “sodomite”. These slurs are harmful and should be regarded with the same seriousness as derogatory language directed toward any marginalized group. The only time it is appropriate to use these terms is in a direct quote that reveals the bias of the person quoted or when LGBTQ people reclaim certain words for themselves. However, terms that are self-applied by some members of the community are not necessarily appropriate for others to use.

Do

There are several things you can do, as long as you feel safe, when you encounter someone using a derogatory term. First and most importantly stay calm. Many people use this derogatory language out of ignorance and approaching the conversation from a place of education can improve their self-awareness and foster change. You can respond by asking for clarification (i.e., I'm curious, why did you choose to use that word?), as this causes the speaker to consider their language choice without making them defensive. Follow this with an impact statement that focuses on why the word is hurtful rather than their intentions. For example, “that language makes me uncomfortable, please don't use it” or “please don't use that word as that language is offensive to our LGBTQ coworkers, friends, and family members”. If you don't feel confident speaking up, choosing not to engage immediately can also be an effective response, as it creates immediate discomfort and prompts the person to think about their word choices.

Don't repeat or tolerate false claims that associate LGBTQ people with pedophilia, child abuse, sexual abuse, bestiality, bigamy, polygamy, adultery and/or incest

These insults and innuendoes spread a false narrative that LGBTQ people are a threat to society. These claims are not only false but also dangerous as they create fear, distrust and anger among individuals and groups that do not have connections to the LGBTQ community. These false narratives contribute to prejudice and discrimination, which slows the LGBTQ community's fight for equal rights.

Do

When you encounter this false narrative being conveyed you can use the same approach you would to address someone using Anti-LGBTQ language. It's important that we all do what we can to dispel the misinformation and disinformation being spread about the LGBTQ community.

From Access to Inclusion

From autocorrect to automatic doors, the policies, modifications and technologies developed to assist people with disabilities shape and improve our daily lives, often without us even realizing it. Known as the “Curb Cut Effect”, the widespread use of disability-friendly features by non-disabled individuals is now commonplace in our society, with many hard-won accessibility aids now being taken for granted. For example, curb cuts themselves originated from guerrilla activism in the 1970s and it took years of advocacy before these, and other accessibility accommodations became federally protected under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) (1).

In previous July editions of the Tackle Box, we covered the history of the Disability Rights movement and the ratification of the ADA. So, this year, to honor National Disability Independence Day, we would like to provide more detail on what is considered a disability. The ADA defines a person with a disability as “someone who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, has a record of such an impairment, or is regarded as having such an impairment”. Rather than covering a specific list of impairments and diseases, the ADA recognizes categories of conditions, which include physical disabilities, chronic and systemic illness, mental or neurological conditions, and sensory and learning disabilities (2). In general, temporary or minor conditions are not considered disabilities under the ADA. Whether an impairment qualifies depends on how substantially it limits one or more major life activities, and in some cases the law specifies whether mitigating measures—such as ordinary eyeglasses—should be considered. For example, consider Charly and Roger. Both are young men with impaired vision. While Charly's glasses correct his vision so that he can complete daily tasks, Roger's glasses do not and he requires assistive technology to assist him. Under the ADA, only Roger is considered disabled as Charly's glasses correct his vision impairment to the

point where it does not affect his ability to complete daily tasks, such as reading a text on a smart phone or driving a car (3).

Broadly, disabilities can be divided into two categories, visible and invisible. While it may seem obvious, visible disabilities are those that have outward physical or medical indicators (i.e., mobility aids, speech impairments, and/or missing limb(s)), while invisible disabilities are conditions that are not immediately apparent but still impact a person's daily ability to function. While any type of disability carries unique challenges, people with invisible conditions often face social dismissal and misunderstanding, which can limit support and take a deep emotional toll (4, 5). Unfortunately, regardless of their condition, people with disabilities not only must overcome the difficulties associated with existing in a world not fully built to meet their needs, but they must face and overcome ableism, stereotyping, avoidance, infantilization, and discrimination. While the ADA guarantees reasonable accommodation, it can do very little to change the perception and societal treatment of people with disabilities.

This is where you, as an individual, can step in. Consider your own assumptions and unconscious biases, and when possible, speak up to educate others about their impact. Amplify lived experience by including the voices of people with disabilities in discussions concerning policy, accessibility, work environments, and hiring practices. Practice inclusive communications and incorporate principles of universal design, as this helps to lift the burden of requesting accommodations from the shoulders of people with disabilities. It is worth reflecting on the fact that many accessibility features have become everyday conveniences, while people with disabilities continue to face barriers to obtaining reasonable accommodations and equal access. Small, intentional actions by each of us can contribute to meaningful improvements for the 1.3 billion people worldwide living with disabilities (6).

References:

- [The Curb-Cut Effect](#) | Stanford Social Innovation Review – 2017
- [The Americans with Disabilities Act](#) | ADA.gov
- [How is Disability Defined in the Americans With Disabilities Act?](#) | ADA National Network
- [Types of Invisible Disabilities & Where to Get Support](#) | Cerebral – 2025
- [Exploring Invisible Disabilities](#) | DirectEmployers Association – 2023
- [Disability: The global picture](#) | Humanity & Inclusion US

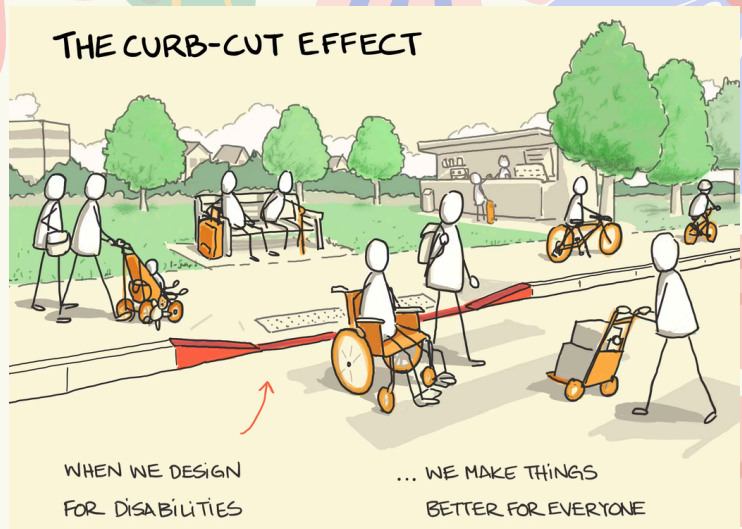


Illustration showing the curb-cut effect using stick figures. Curb cuts were originally installed to improve access for wheelchair users but are now used every day by parents pushing strollers, travelers pulling luggage, delivery workers, cyclists, and countless others.

The FishCAST committee remains dedicated to creating a welcoming, inclusive, and diverse MI AFS chapter. Remember you are never alone and are always welcome here! To share your thoughts or to become involved, reach out to us at mifishcastafs@gmail.com or submit your ideas anonymously.

Warm Wishes -

Dana Castle (she/her), Lydia Doerr (she/her), Kynzie House (she/her), Maggie Haite (they/them), Taylor Skiles (she/her), Kathleen Quebedeaux (she/her)