



March 2025

Tackle Box



Empowering Change: Celebrating International Women's Day & Gender Equality Month

International Women's Day (IWD), celebrated on March 8, is a global celebration to bring awareness to women's rights and gender equality. This day is used to highlight the achievements of women across the world and throughout history. Furthermore, it helps call attention to the persistent challenges faced by women, such as gender-based violence, pay inequality, and underrepresentation in leadership roles. This year IWD shares the joint theme of "For All women and girls: Rights, Equality and Empowerment" and "Accelerate Action".

Gender Equity Month (GEM), observed in March this year, complements IWD as it emphasizes the need for equitable treatment and opportunities for all genders. This awareness month helps to bring attention to the need to improve gender equity in various sectors of society, including education, healthcare, and the workforce. GEM is not just about addressing the challenges faced by women, but rather it's about ensuring individuals of any gender have full access to all aspects of society. For example, GEM is about making space for men in disciplines historically dominated by women (i.e., nursing, caregiving, and teaching), as well as making sure individuals from the LGBTQIA + community feel supported and safe enough to express their true identities.

The link between IWD and GEM is significant as both aim to address systemic inequalities and promote a more inclusive society. By encouraging dialogue, they can help change policies so that it supports gender equity, empowers women, and challenges stereotypes. These observances both celebrate progress made, as well as foster understanding and collaboration. This in turn inspires action, which will hopefully create a future where gender does not dictate one's opportunities or rights.

Awareness Month & Days

- Bisexual+ Health Awareness Month
- Women's History Month
- National Multiple Sclerosis Awareness & Education Month
- Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month
- Gender Equality Month
- Greek American Heritage Month
- Irish American Heritage Month
- National Women's History Month
- National Colon Cancer Awareness Month
- National Kidney Month - Kidney Equity for All
- International Women's Day - March 25
- Equal Pay Day - March 14
- National LGBTQ Health Awareness Week - 21 - 25
- World Down Syndrome Day - March 21
- International Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Slavery and the Transatlantic Slave Trade - March 25
- International Transgender Day of Visibility - March 31

Pop Culture: the meaning behind the rhymes

Kendrick Lamar's Superbowl halftime performance had several important references related to African American culture:

- "40 acres and a mule" - reference to reparations that were promised to African Americans by Sherman, later revoked by Andrew Jackson
- "The revolution will not be televised" - reference to poem and liberation song by Gil Scott-Heron
- Uncle Sam - Samuel L. Jackson represented Uncle Sam, which was used as a wartime propaganda to recruit soldiers. In the performance, Uncle Sam calls Kendrick too "loud, reckless, and ghetto" indicating similar terms used to prescribe a negative connotation to Black culture and art.



There are many, many other references that Black creators have written and shared about on various social media platforms that we encourage you to seek out. While we recognize rap is not everyone's favorite style of music, we can still recognize and respect the incredible layers of the performance demonstrated by Pulitzer Prize Winner, Kendrick Lamar and the importance of this performance in celebrating Black culture during Black History month.

Highlights from the 2025 MI AFS Annual Meeting

It's hard to imagine that another Michigan AFS Annual meeting has already come and gone. This year attendees braved snowy roads to meet at Northern Michigan University in Marquette on February 20th and 21st. Jerry Jondreau joined us this year as the plenary speaker, with a powerful presentation on Anishinaabe Treaty Rights. Jerry hails from the Wiikwedong, or the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, and is the co-founder of Dynamite Hill Farms. At Dynamite Hill Farms they use intentional and Indigenous agriculture to seed, nurture, produce and harvest in a way that protects the environment, while also educating and giving back to the community. During his presentation, Jarry shared the story of their "grandfather's, William Boyzie" Jondreau, fight to retain his treaty reserved harvest rights. The results of the Jondreau decision represent the first time the Michigan Supreme Court denied state regulatory power over tribal treaty rights. This marked a major turning point in U.S. history and set the precedent for numerous treaty reserved rights lawsuits and other legal actions. To learn more about this important story and Anishinaabe Treaty Rights please watch Gathering the Pieces: The Jondreau Decision. After the interesting and thought-provoking plenary, the student and professional presentations began. Speakers covered topics ranging from Deep-bottom coastal fishing development in the Republic of Vanuatu (South Pacific) to local research focused on connecting reproductive and early life history variation in Lake Superior burbot. Although there were many excellent student speakers, Evan Hill (*Uncovering Age Estimation Biases: implications for cisco (Coregonus artedi) growth models and restoration efforts*) and Gwendolyn Phillips (*The occurrence, concentration, and type of microplastics in larval Lake Whitefish (Coregonus clupeaformis) in relation to water depth and anthropogenic land use*) stood out, being deemed the Student Presentation



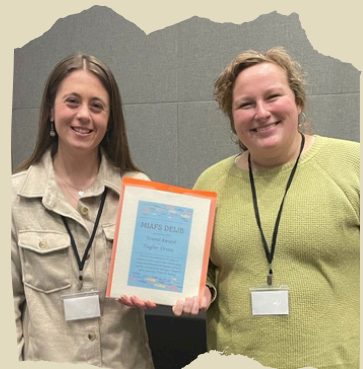
Dana Castle (right) with student Presentation Award winners Even (left) with student award) and runner up Gwendolyn (middle)

Award winner and runner up, respectively. The excellent quality of student work continued into the poster session, with Anna Hill receiving the Student Poster Award with their poster titled *Preliminary observations of hematocrit in wild-caught and captive-held burbot*. The honorable mention for student posters went to Nick LaFrance for their work titled *Burrowing Behavior: Ammocetes performance in diverse substrates*. Student presenters were not the only ones being honored for their hard work at this year's meeting. Jory Jonas received the Cisco Award for their outstanding contributions to promoting diversity and inclusion in Michigan's fisheries professionals. Not only does Jory lead diversity and inclusion efforts here in Michigan, but she is also heavily involved at the regional and national levels both within her



Dana Castle (right) with student Poster Award winners Anna (left) and runner up Nick LaFrance (middle)

organization and within AFS. Taylor Gross received the DEIJB Travel Award for their work with Lake State University Fisheries and Wildlife Club and Michigan AFS Executive Committee. As president of the Fisheries and Wildlife Club, Taylor boosted club membership by running recruiting events that reached students of all majors and backgrounds and ensured that new members felt personally welcomed. The dedication of Jory and Taylor has not only made AFS a more welcoming place but has helped to open the door for new members. The Michigan Chapter also awards students with the annual Hazzard Award and other professionals with the Leonard and Grayling Award.



Dana Castle (right) with DEIJB Travel Award winner Taylor (left)

As always, the annual meeting offered a great opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues. That said, this year things felt a little different due to the absence of 14 federal employees, who had to withdraw from the meeting due to recent changes within the federal government. Many of our federal colleagues are facing uncertainties about their future within the agencies they work for, with some already being released from their positions. **Please stand with the federal employees you know, by reaching out to them and offering what support you can.** These are uncertain times and finding support in one another will help create a much-needed sense of community and help to identify a positive path forward.

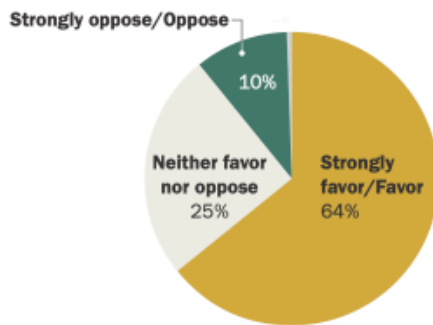


Dana Castle (left) with Cisco Award winner Jory (right)

Ally Corner: Don't fear of the Unknow

Most favor protecting trans people from discrimination, even as growing share say gender is determined by sex at birth

% saying they would ___ laws or policies that would protect transgender people from discrimination in jobs, housing and public spaces



According to the [Pew Research Center](#), transgender or non-binary people make up 1.6% of the U.S. population. Despite this, transgender and non-binary people are currently at the forefront of policies coming from governments of all levels. Also, according to [Pew research](#), just over 40% of Americans report personally knowing someone as trans and only ¼ of Americans report knowing someone that prefers gender neutral (non-binary) pronouns.

Fearing something you don't know or understand is common. Fear is something we have grown with evolutionarily through time. However, the best way to become less fearful of something is to seek to understand it. Because so many Americans do not know trans or non-binary people, they continually fear or misunderstand them and especially as this relates to bathroom usage. Trans and non-binary people simply want to exist as the person they are and this includes using a bathroom that fits best with their gender identity. Trans and non-binary people are humans that want to simply exist without fear of being harmed, with no desire to harm others.

Book recommendation:

- *Mad Honey* by Jennifer Finney Boylan and Jodi Picoult

Recommended actions:

- Seek understanding by researching trans and non-binary people
- If you are asked to verify your sex, refuse to do so. See famous [Lady Gaga addresses trans rumors](#) response. Even if you identify with your sex at birth, this continues to protect trans and non-binary people from having to prove their identity matches their sex.
- Review the research at Pew – most Americans largely support the protection of trans and non-binary people.
- Call Congressional representatives if you support legislation that protects trans and non-binary people

LGBTQIA+ Community and Healthcare

As we celebrate LGBTQIA+ Health Awareness Week this month and Bisexual Awareness Month, we will take a focus on the healthcare issues that the transgender community face. Many transgender people have fears seeking out primary healthcare, which in result causes long term issues including not having pre-screening for cancer, mental health, primary care, etc. According to The Washington Post survey, 37% of Trans Adults find it difficult to find a health care provider who treats them with dignity and respect (KFF/The Washington Post).

HOW DO WE MOVE FORWARD?

- Healthcare providers creating a safe space
- Educating those that do not understand transgendered community and the struggles they face
- Pushing back on hate and laws that take away healthcare rights for all
- [ACP American College of Physicians](#)
- [ACLU Michigan- Big Win for MI's Transgender Youth](#)
- [Kaiser Family Foundation, New Study Shows LGBT Adults Face More Discrimination in Health Care](#)
- [KFF/The Washington Post: Transpeople Survey](#)

The push backs listed above and continuing to spread awareness of the challenges the transgender community faces will make Michigan and other states safer for the transgender community in the future. This past month Corewell Health announced that they will stop all gender affirming care for new patients under the age of 19 (ACLU Michigan). However, Attorney General Dana Nessel issued a warning that the stop would go against Michigan's anti-discriminatory laws. Corewell Health reversed their decision a few days later. The "little" wins are the big steps to fighting for healthcare rights for all.

Natural Resource Professional Societies Issue Collaborative Statement on the Impact of Federal Workforce Reduction.

The Parent Society, Society of American Foresters, Society for Range Management, and the Wildlife Society collaborated on a statement that expressed concerns about recent federal workforce reductions and their impacts on conservation and resource management efforts in the U.S. In the statement, they emphasized that federal employees are specialists in their fields and that their specialized knowledge is critical to managing the nation's natural resources for the benefit of the American people. They went on to explain that budget cuts and staffing reductions will not only negatively affect the public trust resources stewarded by federal agencies but also diminish public education and health. The societies urged continued federal investment in resource management and conservation, as such investments have significant benefits for both public health and the economy. The authors noted that for every dollar spent on conservation in the U.S., there is a 2.4 times positive return on the original investment. While the leaders of these societies support auditing federal agencies for efficiency, they stress that the process needs to be transparent and focused on the economic returns of conservation and management efforts. The audit process should also engage the citizens and legislators who are directly impacted by changes to conservation and natural resource management. The statement went on to highlight that federal bureaus and agencies have long faced declining monetary support, hindering their ability to support private land conservation and public land management. They noted that current staffing levels are inadequate, and further layoffs will have long-term negative effects on those reliant on natural resources for their livelihoods and well-being. The authors also highlighted that the termination of federal employees with probationary status is especially troubling, as it unduly impacts early-career professionals. This next generation of civil servants is the future of resource management, and the federal workforce reduction will set back the landscape of career development for our professions for years, if not decades.

Although the statement did not directly address recent executive orders that had significant negative impacts on diversity, equity, and inclusion incentives throughout the nation, the hope is that such support will come soon. How can we worry about the future of science, conservation, and natural resources without making space for everyone? Improved representation within our fields will enhance our ability to better help not only the species, systems, and resources we are all passionate about, but also the people we serve.

If you would like to learn more or read the statement, it can be found on the [Parent Societies website](#). Furthermore, the Parent Society [Federal Workforce and Budget Cuts](#) page has resources for those impacted by terminations and funding cuts; a place for affected individuals to share their stories; as well as instructions and a template letter for contacting your legislators to show support for federal employees.

International Transgender Day of Visibility

There are over 1.6 million transgender, non-binary, and gender-expansive youth (aged 13+) and adults in the United States. Transgender people are part of every aspect of our society, being parents, family members, coworkers, neighbors, and friends. They represent a vibrant community composed of individuals from all races, ethnic backgrounds, and faith traditions. International Transgender Day of Visibility celebrates and honors all transgender and non-binary individuals, working to bring attention to the disinformation, discrimination, and hatred that impacts this community. For more information about the International Transgender Day of Visibility please visit the [Human Rights Campaign](#) website. Although notable strides for equality have been made in recent years, transgender and non-binary individuals are still fighting for basic human rights. At present, the trans community is confronting significant political assaults from extremists who are promoting regression of their rights through legislation at both state and federal levels. Furthermore, there is a persistent epidemic of fatal violence, especially targeting Black and Brown trans women. While the International Transgender Day of Visibility is a good reminder to act, we need to stand with the transgender and non-binary community every day by speaking out against the unfounded oppression they are facing.

Featured Artist:

Félix González-Torres

Félix González-Torres (1957 - 1996) was a Cuban-born American artist and a leading pioneer of conceptual art in the 1980s and 1990s. The profound impact of his art combined with his advocacy work makes no artist more identifiable with the AIDS crisis than Félix. By taking a softer and more indirect approach, Félix was/is able to circulate his work in museums and galleries that were otherwise hostile to more provocative queer art activists. Although this allowed him to bypass censorship and homophobic resistance, it by no means made his work less powerful than his contemporaries, such as David Wojnarowicz and Robert Mapplethorpe.

What at first glance appears to simply be brightly colored candies heaped in a corner, is actually a deeply meaningful allegorical portrait of his partner Ross Laycock. The haunting inspiration for this work was Ross's fight with AIDS and eventual death from a related illness in 1991. When installed the pile of candy weighs 175 lbs., representing



Ross's ideal weight, but as visitors remove candy the pile diminishes, mirroring his partner's inability to maintain a healthy weight. The renewal of the candy in this simple installation, called "Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.), is a way to grant Ross eternal life. Furthermore, as viewers consume the candy it allows them to directly participate not only in Ross's diminishment but also evokes the Catholic ritual of communion and the idea of taking contagion into oneself. The interaction of these complex metaphors elevates the simple pile of candy into something hauntingly beautiful and deeply meaningful. To learn more about "Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.) we recommend you watch this [description by Jonathan Katz](#) from the National Portrait Gallery. Recent omissions of key themes of Félix's work (e.g. homosexuality, personal loss, and the AIDS crisis) from museum placards describing his art has raised concerns about queer erasure. For example, within the last year both the [Art Institute of Chicago](#) and the [Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery](#) both altered their displays to omit, modify or severely downplay the meaning behind Félix's works. These erasures are even more concerning in today's climate; where books with LGBTQ+ themes are banned, trans people face active prosecution, and lawmakers introduce and pass anti-LGBTQ+ bills. This type of censorship is dangerous as it isolates individuals from the LGBTQ+ community and allows miss-information to spread. If homophobia and prejudice was not allowed to run rampant in the 80's - 90's the lives of so many individuals from the gay male community would not have been needlessly lost in the [AIDS crisis](#). Today individuals from the LGBTQ+ community still face prejudice and hostility from medical professionals limiting their access to physical and mental health services. History is there for us to learn from, and there is no reason for a community of people to have barriers to health care because of fear and bias. While Félix's "Untitled" (Portrait of Ross in L.A.) and "Untitled" (Perfect Lovers) (i.e. side by side identical clocks that are synchronized at installation but eventually fall out of sync) are unarguably hauntingly beautiful, there is no need to create a new generation of artists born from personal loss driven by isolation, prosecution and prejudice.

We understand that times have been challenging recently, and uncertainty abounds. It's natural to feel a bit overwhelmed, which is why prioritizing self-care and leaning on our support systems is crucial. Remember, you are not alone! As always, feel free to reach out if you'd like to get involved or if you have any items to share. You can contact us at mifishcastafs@gmail.com, or you may reach out to us [anonymously](#).

Warm Wishes -

Kyle Brumm (he/him), Dana Castle (she/her), Lydia Doerr (she/her), Tracy Galarowicz (she/her), Kynzie House (she/her), Maggie Haite (they/them), Taylor Skiles (she/her), Kathleen Quebedeaux (she/her)