



MUTUAL RESPECT THROUGH INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

By Hannah A. Mancoll, North End resident, Vice Chair, Tidewater Chapter, Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities Chief Program Officer

The Virginia Center for Inclusive Communities (VCIC) serves the Commonwealth of Virginia with interfaith and intergroup education, collaboration and facilitation. VCIC is increasingly called upon to help schools, businesses and communities across Virginia achieve success through inclusion. The organization's programming has expanded dramatically in recent years, and VCIC is widely recognized locally, regionally and nationally. In fact, VCIC's Project Inclusion program was named in the book *No COLORS: 100 Ways To Stop Gangs From Taking Away Our Communities* as "The best program we have seen in the nation for sowing the seeds of non-violence, inclusiveness and understanding in a high school population."

Visit www.inclusiveVA.org for more information and educational resources.

The Jewish High Holy Days

As the academic calendar begins, it coincides with the Jewish High Holy days that are observed in September this year. It is often a challenge for Jewish students and educators to resolve scheduling conflicts resulting from their concurrent religious obligations and school or work responsibilities. When educators and administrators are aware of important dates and holidays, they can respectfully plan events, major school projects, quizzes and tests to not conflict with religious and cultural observances.

The High Holy Days begin with Rosh Hashanah, which starts this year on the evening of Monday, September 6th and concludes on the evening of Wednesday, September 8th. Following is Yom Kippur, which starts this year on the evening of Wednesday, September 15th and ends at sundown on the 16th.

A calendar of major Jewish holidays can be found at www.JewishVA.org/CRCHolidayCalendar. An additional calendar of observances including holidays and festivals for many religious, ethnic, and public occasions provided by VCIC can be found at www.inclusiveVA.org/interfaith.

VCIC encourages school administrators to provide all students and educators the opportunity to observe their holidays without penalty. An atmosphere of mutual respect can be further built by educating students about diverse religious practices, especially when tied to existing academic content. With knowledge, intention and preparation, schools can be places of belonging and success for students from all religious backgrounds and traditions.

"The pomegranate, a "new fruit" (fruits that have not been eaten in a long time), are typically eaten on Rosh Hashanah. Pomegranates are also said to have exactly 613 seeds, connecting it to the 613 commandments of the Torah. One of the most popular Rosh Hashanah customs involves eating apple slices dipped in honey, sometimes after saying a special prayer. Ancient Jews believed apples had healing properties, and the honey signifies the hope that the new year will be sweet.

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