

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

The world is culturally diverse. That means it is made up of many different cultures—and ethnic groups, races, languages and religions.

This is true across America. It is true in Marathon County. Everybody is different.

Why should you care about people who are different?

The U.S. Census Bureau has projected that so-called minority races are the fastest-growing populations in the country.

In your lifetime, you can expect to live and work in a world where white Americans become a minority population (less than 50% of all Americans.) The same trend could affect mainstream religions, cultures and languages, too.

In other words, just as you leave school to enter and progress in the “real world,” that world will be more diverse than ever.

You can choose whether to embrace or ignore the opportunities a diverse society presents. That choice will determine how well you make your way in a world of cultural, ethnic and linguistic variety.

How can you become culturally aware?

The first step is to become aware of your response to groups or individuals who are different. Some positive responses include:

RESPECT FAIRNESS
GENEROSITY FRIENDSHIP

But there are some well-known negative responses to the unfamiliar, too:

- **RACISM** – false belief that race causes a person to be better or worse than someone of a different race
- **PREJUDICE** – basing judgment or disapproval on unsupported information about a group
- **STEREOTYPING** – preconceived or oversimplified beliefs about a group in general
- **DISCRIMINATION** – treating someone unfairly because of their group
- **SCAPEGOATING** – deliberate policy of blaming a group when the fault actually lies elsewhere

The next step is to replace fear of differences with an appreciation for differences. This is sometimes hard, but at least it's not impossible – if we can learn negative responses, then we can learn to replace them with positive responses. Only then can we fully participate in our multicultural society.

To learn more about cultural diversity, consider the following programs:

The Neighbors' Place(715) 845-1966

Drop-in center offers opportunities for all races to socialize and learn together.

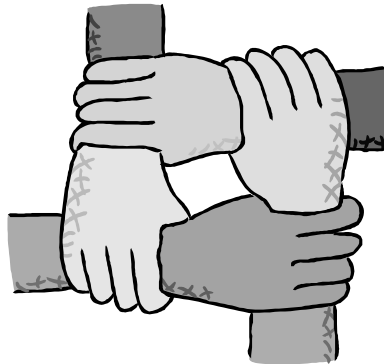
YWCA(715) 842-3381

Youth programs and activities that support the goal of eliminating racism.

Wausau Area Hmong Mutual Association(715) 842-8390

Services promote cultural transition and racial diversity.

Some schools have special diversity programs, like the **Youth Culture Club** at Wausau East or **International Club** at Wausau West.



Wisconsin law prohibits discrimination in public schools on the basis of race, religion, national origin or ancestry. The law requires local school boards to develop policies to help protect students in the classroom, during extra-curricular events, and while participating in school recreational programs.

So if you think you need protection from unlawful bias at school – or wonder if you're guilty of it – ask your principal or counselor who is in charge of the discrimination policy in YOUR district. They can tell you about your legal RIGHTS and OBLIGATIONS.