

Town of Amherst Community Diversity Commission 2024 Calendar: Significant Dates

Months and Dates	Title	Description
JANUARY		
December 26th - January 1st, 2024	Kwanzaa	A celebration honoring African American Heritage
January 1st	New Year's Day	In the Gregorian Calendar, New Year's Day is the first day of the year.
January 1st	The Circumcision of the Jesus	A Catholic holy day.
January 1st	Haitian Independence Day	Haitian Independence Day commemorates the day Haiti declared itself as an independent nation on January 1, 1804. This declaration made Haiti the first black nation to gain independence from its colonizers, as well as the first nation in the world to outlaw slavery.
January 4th	World Braille Day	Celebration of human rights for blind and partially sighted individuals
January 5th	Birth of Guru Gobind Singh	Anniversary of the birth of the tenth guru (Sikh)
January 7th	Orthodox Christmas	A Christian holiday
January 10th	Vodoun Festival	Also known as Traditional Day or Fête du Vodoun, the Vodoun Festival is a celebration of traditional religions in the West African country of Benin. In particular, the public holiday celebrates Benin's history involving the religion of Vodoun.
January 13th	Korean American Day	Korean American day celebrates those in America of Korean descent and their role in history. Koreans were first documented to have immigrated to America in 1903.
January 15th	Martin Luther King Jr. Day	A day honoring the life and legacy of civil rights activist and Martin Luther King Jr.
January 16th	National Religious Freedom Day	Declared a national holiday in 1993, National Religious Freedom Day celebrates the anniversary of the adoption of the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom by the Virginia General Assembly on January 16, 1786. The purpose of this day is to honor the right for those of any religion to practice in America, as well as the right for people not to practice at all.
January 27th	International Holocaust Remembrance Day	This day was created by the United Nations in 2005, to remember the approximately six million Jewish men, women and children murdered by the Nazi government during World War II, and the other five million victims as well including Romani people, people with disabilities and gay people.
FEBRUARY		
Whole month	Black History Month	Celebrates black history and African American culture.
February 1st	National Freedom Day	Commemorates the signing of the 13th Amendment which abolished slavery in 1865.
February 4th	Tadeusz Kosciuszko's Birthday	A Polish army officer who provided leadership throughout the American Revolution and in a national insurrection in his homeland.
February 6th-7th	Isra' and Mi'raj	An Islamic holiday that celebrates the night Allah took Muhammad on a journey from Mecca to Jerusalem and then to heaven.
February 10th	Lunar New Year	The beginning of a lunar calendar or lunisolar calendar year, whose months are moon cycles. It is celebrated in multiple cultures including the East Asian cultural sphere most significantly, such as Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese cultures.
February 13th	Shrove Tuesday	A Western Christian celebrating a day of penitence as well as the last chance to feast before Lent begins. This holiday is also known as Mardi Gras, Fat Tuesday, and Carnival Day.
February 14th	Ash Wednesday	This holiday falls on the first day of Lent for Western Christian churches, a 40-day period of spiritual preparation for Easter, not counting Sundays.
February 14th	Valentine's Day	Originated as a Christian feast honoring a martyr named Valentine and through later folk traditions. It has become a significant cultural, religious and commercial celebration of romance and love in many regions of the world.
February 15th	Parinirvana Day (Nirvana Day)	A Buddhist holiday commemorating the Buddha's death/ when he reached the zenith of Nirvana.
February 15th	Susan B. Anthony Day	A commemorative holiday to celebrate the birth of Susan B. Anthony and women's suffrage in the United States.
February 18th	Maha Shivaratri	A Hindu holiday celebrated on 13th or 14th day of the waning moon in the Hindu calendar.
February 19th	President's Day	A day honoring the presidents of the United States.
February 20th	World day of Social Justice	United Nations day to recognize efforts to achieve fair outcomes for all through employment, social protection, social dialogue, and fundamental principles and rights at work.
February 21st	International Mother Language Day	Observed throughout the world since 2000, this observance promotes awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism.
February 24th	Chinese Lantern Festival	Observed on the 15 day of the first month on the lunar calendar, the lantern festival coincides with the full moon -- as bright lanterns answer the call for even more light to dispel the winter.
MARCH		
Whole month	Women's History Month	This day honors women as significant agents of historical change.
Whole month	National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month	Calls awareness towards the inclusion and achievements of those with developmental disabilities in everyday life, as well as the challenges they still face.
Whole month	National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month	Aims to spread awareness and education regarding the central nervous system disease known as multiple sclerosis, or MS, as well as to show support towards those affected by the disease.
March 4th	Pulaski Day	It is a local holiday that commemorates and celebrates the birthday of Casimir Pulaski -- a Polish soldier who contributed to the Independence of the United States and is often called the "Father of the American Cavalry."
March 8th	International Women's Day	The celebration of the economic, political, and social achievements of women worldwide.
March 10th (sundown) to April 8th (evening)	Ramadan (Muslim)	Occurs during the ninth month of the Muslim year, during which strict fasting is observed from sunrise to sunset. It is observed by Muslims worldwide as a month of fasting to commemorate the first revelation of the Qur'an to the Prophet Muhammad.
March 17th	St. Patrick's Day	A Christian holiday which is a feast day of the patron Saint of Ireland. In the United States, a secular version is celebrated by people of all faiths through appreciation of all things Irish.
March 18th	Clean Monday	The beginning of Great Lent for Eastern Christian churches, which starts 40 days before Orthodox Easter, counting Sundays.
March 19th (evening) - March 20th	Naw-Rúz	Bahá'í and Iranian New Year
March 21st	International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	A call to action to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination worldwide.
March 23th (sunset) – March 24th (nightfall)	Purim	A Jewish holiday, also known as the Feast of Lots, which marks the salvation of the Jews of ancient Persia from extermination.
March 24th (sunset) – March 25th (sunset)	Holi	A Hindu celebration of the beginning of good harvest season, or spring.
March 28th	Holy Thursday	A Christian holiday, also known as Maundy Thursday, is celebrated on the Thursday before Easter commemorating the Last Supper, at which Jesus and the Apostles were together for the last time before the Crucifixion.
March 29th	Good Friday	A Christian holiday, also known as Holy Friday in Eastern Christianity, it commemorates the Crucifixion of Jesus on the Friday before Easter/Pascha.
March 31st	Easter Sunday	Known as Pascha in Eastern Christianity, it celebrates the resurrection of Jesus.
March 31st	Cesar Chavez Day	A Mexican holiday which honors the Mexican American farm worker and celebrates the contributions of labor leader and activist Cesar Chavez.
March 31st	International Transgender Day of Visibility	This day supports the right of transgender people to freely express and take pride in their identities while also raising awareness regarding the challenges and prejudice trans people continue to face.
APRIL		
Whole month	Arab American Heritage Month	Celebrates Arab American heritage, culture and contributions.
Whole month	Genocide Awareness Month	A month that marks important anniversaries for past and contemporary genocides. Throughout the month, individuals, communities and organizations join together to remember and honor victims and survivors of mass atrocities.

Whole month	Deaf History Month	A month celebrating the history, achievements, and culture of those who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. This month used to be celebrated specifically from March 13th to April 15th but has recently been changed to all of April.
April 7th	Day of Remembrance of the Victims of Rwandan Genocide	A day that memorializes the horrific 1994 genocide of the Tutsi people of Rwanda, in which an estimated 800,000 people were killed.
April 9th (evening) to April 10nd (evening)	Eid al-Fitr	The "Festival of Breaking the Fast" and is celebrated by Muslims worldwide marking the end of Ramadan. (Islamic)
April 13th	Vaisakhi	A Sikhism and Hinduism holiday. It marks the first day of the solar year. Also celebrated as the occasion to transform the Sikhs into a family of soldier saints, known as the Khalsa Panth.
April 17th	Sri Rama Navami	A Hindu holy day that celebrates the birthday of Rama, the seventh incarnation of the God Vishnu. During the previous eight days, Hindus read the Ramayana, a Hindu epic, which tells the story of Rama.
April 20th (evening) to May 2nd	Ridván	Commemorates the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh to his followers in 1863. Work is suspended for the 1st, 9th and 12th day. (Bahá'í)
April 22nd (before sundown) – April 30th (evening)	Passover	A Jewish celebration that commemorates the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery.
April 24th	Palm Sunday	A Christian holiday observed the Sunday before Easter/Pascha to commemorate the entry of Jesus into Jerusalem.
April 29th	Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare	A day raising awareness regarding the consequences of chemical warfare and honoring those who have fallen victim to chemical warfare.
MAY		
Whole Month	Asian Pacific American Heritage Month	It recognizes the contributions and culture of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States.
Whole Month	Jewish-American Heritage Month	Observed in May, Jewish-American Heritage Month (JAHM) celebrates the history and culture of Jewish people living in the United States, highlighting their contributions to the nation's culture and society.
Whole Month	Haitian Heritage Month	Haitian Heritage Month is a celebration in the United States of Haitian heritage and culture. It was first celebrated in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1998.
May 1st	International Workers' Day	Also known as May Day, it celebrates the social and economic achievements of workers worldwide. The day commemorates the Haymarket Riot of 1886 in Chicago, in which police and protesters clashed following a workers' strike for an eight-hour work day.
May 1st	Beltane	Traditionally celebrated throughout Ireland and Scotland, Beltane is a spring festival that takes place roughly between the spring equinox and summer solstice.
May 3rd	World Press Freedom	Serves as an occasion to inform the public of violations of the right to freedom of expression and as a reminder that many journalists brave death or jail to bring people their daily news.
May 3rd	Polish Constitution Day	This holiday celebrates the declaration of the Polish Constitution of May 3rd, 1791.
May 3rd	Orthodox Good Friday	A strict day of fasting for many Greek Orthodox Christians in the United States.
May 5th	Orthodox Easter	Orthodox Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.
May 5th	Cinco de Mayo	Cinco de Mayo is a Mexican holiday that commemorates the Mexican army's 1862 victory against France during the Franco-Mexican War. This battle came to be known as the Battle of Puebla.
May 5th (evening) to May 6th (evening)	Yom HaShoah	"Holocaust Remembrance Day" memorializes the heroic martyrdom of six million Jews who perished in the Nazi Holocaust.
May 9th	Ascension Day	A Christian holiday celebrated 40 days after Easter/Pascha, it commemorates the ascension of Jesus into Heaven.
May 17th	Malcolm X Day	Celebrated on his birthday or on the third Sunday in the month of May, Malcolm X Day celebrates the life and legacy of civil rights activist and revolutionary Malcolm X.
May 20th	Mother's Day	Celebration to all mothers and motherhood.
May 21st	World Day for Cultural Diversity	A day that recognizes cultural diversity as a source of innovation, exchange and creativity.
May 22nd (evening) to May 23rd	Declaration of the Báb	The Declaration of the Báb commemorates the day in 1844 on which He announced His identity as The Báb, or Gate, the Herald of the new age. (Bahá'í's suspend work on this day)
May 19th	Pentecost	Is the Christian festival celebrating the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples of Jesus after his Ascension, held on the seventh Sunday after Easter.
May 27th	Memorial Day	A federal holiday in the United States for remembering the people who died while serving in the country's armed forces.
May 27th (evening) to May 28th	Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh	Marking the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1921 (Bahá'í)
JUNE		
Whole month	LGBTQ Pride Month	Commemorates the anniversary of the June 28, 1969 Stonewall riot in New York City, the incident that initiated the modern gay rights movement in the United States.
June 9th	Odunde Festival	Developed in 1975 by Lois Fernandez, the Odunde Festival takes place on the second Sunday of June in South Philadelphia every year and is one of the largest African-American street festivals in the United States.
June 11th	King Kamehameha I Day	First established as a holiday in 1871 of the Kingdom of Hawai'i, King Kamehameha I Day honors the legacy of Kamehameha the Great, who was Hawai'i's first king.
June 11th (evening) to June 12th	Shavuot	Jewish Festival of Weeks; celebrates harvest of first fruits and commemorates the giving of the Torah and Commandments at Mt. Sinai.
June 14th	Flag Day	Flag Day is the day the country celebrates its national flag and holds events related to its flag, such as flag-raising ceremonies, displaying the flag on public buildings and in homes, as well as holding parades and salutes.
June 16th	Martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev	Anniversary of the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev in 1606 C. E., the fifth guru who had built the Golden Temple of Amritsar (Sikh)
June 16th	Father's Day	Children of all ages show appreciation for their fathers and father figures.
June 16th (evening) to June 17th (evening)	Eid-Al-Adha	An Islamic holiday commemorating of Prophet Ibrahim's willingness to sacrifice his son in obedience of a command from God. Marks the end of the annual Hajj (pilgrimage to Mecca).
June 19th	Juneteenth	Originally commemorating the announcement of the abolition of slavery in Texas in 1865, it is now celebrated throughout the U.S. to honor African- American freedom and achievement.
June 20th	World Refugee Day	Raises awareness about the plight of refugees and displaced persons.
June 26th	Anniversary Of Legalization Of Same-sex Marriage in the US	On June 26, 2015, in the case of Obergefell v. Hodges, the Supreme Court ruled that the fundamental right to marry is guaranteed to same-sex couples.
June 26th	International Day in Support of Victims in Torture	Day of action calling to an end to the use of torture globally and to providing support to survivors.
JULY		
Whole Month	Disability Pride Month	First officially recognized in Boston in 1990 and in New York City (NYC) in 2015, Disability Pride Month celebrates the collective pride in the identities of people with disabilities, emphasizing that disability is a natural aspect of human diversity, does not necessitate being "fixed" or "cured" and connects to the larger movement for disability justice.
July 21st	Dharma Day	A Buddhist holiday also known as, Asalha Puja, it commemorates the historical Buddha's first discourse following his spiritual awakening.
July 4th	Independence Day	It is the anniversary of the publication of the Declaration of Independence from Great Britain in 1776. Patriotic displays and family events are organized throughout the United States.
July 9th	Martyrdom of the B'ab	Anniversary of the martyrdom of the B'ab, the forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh, in 1850. (Bahá'í)
July 11th to July 15th	Naadam	The largest national holiday celebrated in Mongolia, Naadam is a traditional festival that features aspects of traditional Mongolian nomadic culture.
July 18th	Nelson Mandela Day	This holiday was created to inspire people to embrace the values of democracy and contribute towards the ideals of ensuring a just and fair society.
July 7th to August 5th	Muharram	The month of Muharram marks the beginning of the Islamic liturgical year. This first day, al-Hijra, remembers the migration of Muhammad and his followers from Mecca to Medina in 622 CE.

July 26th	Americans with Disabilities Act Day	Commemorates the 1990 signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act, which guarantees equal opportunity for people with disabilities.
July 16th (evening) to July 17th (evening)	Ashura	An Islamic holiday consisting of a day of fasting observed on the 10th day of the month of Muharram to celebrate Moses' exodus from Egypt. For Shi'a Muslims, it also marks the climax of the ten-day Remembrance of Muharram, which mourns the martyrdom of Hussein at the Battle of Karbala.
AUGUST		
August 9th	International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples	Celebrates the richness of indigenous cultures and recognizes the challenges indigenous peoples face today, ranging from poverty and disease to dispossession, discrimination and denial of basic human rights.
August 12th	International Youth Day	Celebrates young people and the integral role they play in helping to create a world fit for children.
August 12th (evening) to August 13th	Tish'a B'Av	A day of mourning and repentance in remembrance of the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem.
August 15th	The Feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Mother	This Christian Day commemorates the belief that at the end of her life, the Blessed Virgin Mary was taken body and soul into Heaven.
August 19th	Raksha Bandhan	A Hindu holiday, also called Rakhi, this festival celebrates the protective relationship between brothers and their sisters.
August 21st	Senior Citizen Day	Recognizes the many contributions older adults make in communities across the United States.
August 23rd	International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition	Memorializes the tragedy of the transatlantic slave trade, coinciding with the anniversary of the uprising in Santo Domingo (today Haiti and the Dominican Republic) that initiated its abolition.
August 26th	Women's Equality Day	Commemorates the 1920 passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution, granting women the right to vote.
SEPTEMBER		
September 15th - October 15th	National Hispanic Heritage Month	Celebrates the contributions, heritage and culture of Hispanic and Latino Americans.
September 2nd	Labor Day	Celebrated the first Monday in September in recognition of U.S. workers.
September 5th	International Day of Charity	Recognizes the role of charity in alleviating human suffering, as well as of the efforts of charitable organizations and individuals, including the work of Mother Teresa.
September 11th	Patriot Day	This day honors the memory of those people killed in the September 11 attacks in 2001.
September 15th (evening) to September 16th (evening)	Mawlid Al-Nabi	The observance of the birthday of Prophet Muhammad, which is celebrated in Rabi' al-Awwal, the third month in the Islamic calendar.
September 17th	Constitution and Citizenship Day	Commemorating the ratification of the United States Constitution in 1787 and also honors all who have become U.S. citizens.
September 17th	Mid-Autumn Festival	Also known as the Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival, is a traditional festival celebrated in Chinese culture. The festival is a joyous celebration with family reunions, mooncakes, parades, and lanterns.
September 21st	World Peace Day	A day dedicated to working towards world peace, World Peace Day is the day that the United Nations General Assembly begins its deliberations each year.
OCTOBER		
Whole month	Global Diversity Awareness Month	A month that aims to increase awareness and acceptance of diverse cultures
Whole month	National Disability Employment Awareness Month	Recognizes the contributions of workers with disabilities.
Whole month	LGBT History Month	Marks and celebrates the lives and achievements of lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender people in the United States.
Whole month	Polish American Heritage Month	Created in 1981 by an Act of Congress which was originally observed in August, but now is celebrated in October to commemorate the first Polish settlers, as well as the millions of freedom loving Poles who came to the United States to build a new land and life.
October 2nd	International Day of Nonviolence	Marked on the birthday of Mahatma Gandhi, leader of the Indian independence movement and pioneer of the philosophy and strategy of nonviolence, a U.N commemoration promoting the principle of non-violence and the desire to secure a culture of peace, tolerance and understanding.
October 2nd (evening) to October 4th (evening)	Rosh Hashanah	Beginning of the Jewish New Year and first of the High Holy Days, which marks the beginning of a ten-day period of penitence and spiritual renewal.
October 3rd – October 12th	Navratri and Dussehra	A Hindu holiday consisting of a nine-day festival celebrating the triumph of good over evil. It worships God in the form of the universal mother commonly referred to as Durga, Devi or Shakti, and marks the start of fall.
October 5th	World Teachers Day	Held annually to commemorate teacher organizations worldwide.
October 11th (sundown) – October 12th (nighfall)	Yom Kippur	The "Day of Atonement" marks the end of the Ten Days of Penitence that begin with Rosh Hashanah.
October 11th	Coming Out Day	Encourages honesty and openness about being lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender.
October 12th	Dia De La Raza, "Day of the Race"	Commemorates October 11, 1987, when 500,000 people marched on Washington, DC, for gay and lesbian equality.
October 14th	Indigenous Peoples Day (Native American Day)	Celebrated in Spanish-speaking countries and communities.
October 14th	Columbus Day	Celebrates and honors Native American history and culture.
October 16th (evening) – October 23rd	Sukkot	Recognizes Christopher Columbus's voyage across the Atlantic in 1492.
October 16th	Feast of Saint John Paul II	A Jewish holiday that is a week-long "Feast of Booths" commemorating the 40-year wandering of the Israelites in the desert on the way to the Promised Land.
October 17th	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	October 22 was chosen as his feast day to remember the anniversary of the liturgical inauguration of his Papacy in 1978.
October 17th	International Day for the Eradication of Poverty	Call to action for the eradication of poverty and destitution worldwide.
October 24th (evening) - October 25th	Simchat Torah	Jewish joyous festival in which the reading of the Torah is completed and its first book begun again. Symbolized by singing, dancing and marching around the synagogue with Torah scrolls.
October 31st	Reformation Day	A Christian holiday which commemorates the beginning of the Protestant Reformation in 1517.
NOVEMBER		
Whole month	National American Indian Heritage Month	Honoring the history and culture of Native Americans and indigenous people in the United States.
Whole month	National Adoption Month	Adoptees, birth families, adoptive families and adoption professionals reflect on, educate and celebrate adoption practices.
November 1st	All Saints' Day	Commemorates all known and unknown Christian saints. Eastern Christianity observes it on the first Sunday after Pentecost.
November 1st	Diwali	A Hindu holiday also called Deepavali, "Festival of Lights", it celebrates the victory of good over evil, light over darkness, and knowledge over ignorance.
November 2nd	Birth of Báb	Anniversary of the birth of one of the twin prophet founders of the Bahá'í faith.
November 2nd	All Soul's Day	Commemoration of all faithful Christians who are now dead. In Mexican tradition it is celebrated as Dia de los Muertos between October 31 and November 2, and is an occasion to remember dead ancestors and celebrate the continuity of life.
November 3rd	Birth of Bahá'u'lláh	Commemorates the birth of the founder of the Bahá'í faith in 1817.
November 9-10th	Kristallnacht	Commemorates the 1938 pogrom against Jews throughout Germany and Vienna.
November 11th	Veterans Day	Honors military veterans and the U.S. Armed Services.
November 11th	Polish Independence Day	A National Day in Poland to commemorate the anniversary of the restoration of sovereignty as the second Polish Republic in 1918 from the German, Austro-Hungarian and Russian Empires.
November 15th	Birth of Guru Nanak	Birth of Guru Nanak Dev Ji, founder of the Sikh faith and first of the Ten Gurus, was born in 1469 CE.
November 16th	International Day for Tolerance	Emphasizes the dangers of intolerance and is a call to action for the advancement of human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, as well as a day to encourage tolerance, respect, dialogue and cooperation among different cultures and peoples.

November 17th-23rd	American Education Week	Celebrates public education and honors individuals who are making a difference in ensuring every child in the U. S. receives a quality education.
November 20th	Transgender Day of Remembrance	Memorializes those who were killed due to anti transgender hatred or prejudice.
November 29th	Native American Heritage Day	Native American gathering of nations where over 500 tribes gather for three days to honor their culture.
DECEMBER		
December 1st	World AIDS Day	International day of action on HIV and AIDS.
December 1st - December 24th	Advent	Advent is a season of spiritual preparation in observance of the birth of Jesus. In Western Christianity, it starts on the fourth Sunday before Christmas. In Eastern Christianity, the season is longer and begins in the middle of November.
December 3rd	International Day of Persons with Disabilities	Raises awareness about persons with disabilities in order to improve their lives and provide them with equal opportunity
December 7th	National Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	Commemorates the attack on Hawaii in 1941, leading to the United States' involvement in World War II.
December 8th	Bodhi Day	Celebration of the enlightenment of Buddha, c. 596 B.C.E.
December 9th	Immaculate Conception of Mary	This is a Catholic Feast honoring Mary, our Mother, which celebrates Her conception without sin.
December 10th	Human Rights Day	On this day in 1948 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
December 12th	Our Lady Of Guadalupe	A Christian holiday that celebrates the apparition of the Blessed Virgin Mary (by her title, Our Lady of Guadalupe, the Patroness of Mexico and the Americas) before Juan Diego, an indigenous convert to Roman Catholicism, on the Mexican hill of Tepeyac in 1531.
December 24th	Christmas Eve	A Christian celebration of the arrival of Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus.
December 25th	Christmas	A Christian holiday which commemorates the birth of Jesus.
December 25th – January 3rd	Hanukkah (Chanukah)	Eight-day "Festival of Lights", also known as Hanukkah, celebrating the rededication of the Temple to the service of God in 164 BCE. Commemorates the victory of the Maccabees over the Greek King Antiochus who sought to suppress freedom of worship.
December 26th - January 1st, 2025	Kwanzaa	A seven-day celebration honoring African American heritage and its continued vitality. "Kwanzaa" means "first fruits (of the harvest)" in Swahili.