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### Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter - March 2024

Office of Equity and Inclusion, East Tennessee State University

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# Office of Equity and Inclusion Newsletter

March 1, 2024



**A Message from Dr. Keith Johnson,  
Vice President for Equity and Inclusion**

## “Phenomenal Women”

Dear Friends,

***“Women should be celebrated every day, but a month dedicated to female empowerment is extremely special. It doesn’t just honor the iconic women who have changed history, but encourages new generations to dream big and know that anything is possible”***

**– Molly McCook –**

As we embrace the arrival of Women's History Month, it brings me great joy to extend my appreciation and admiration for the remarkable women who have made and continue to make a profound impact on lives, society, and the world at large.

~ continued on page 2 ~



***“There is no limit to what we,  
as women, can accomplish.”***

***~ Michelle Obama ~***

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## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

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This month serves as a dedicated time to celebrate the strength, resilience, and countless achievements of women from all walks of life. It is an opportunity to recognize the pivotal roles they play in shaping our communities, driving progress, and inspiring future generations.

Throughout history, women have faced and overcome significant challenges, breaking barriers and pushing boundaries ranging from discovering scientific breakthroughs, influencing major Supreme Court decisions, making history at the Oscars, becoming the world's youngest Nobel Peace Prize recipient to fighting for women's right to vote. Their contributions in various fields – be it science, engineering, arts, politics, business, or caregiving – are invaluable and deserve to be acknowledged.

Let us take this moment to reflect on the achievements of women who have paved the way for change, and to express gratitude to those who continue to lead, innovate, and uplift others. By recognizing and celebrating the diversity of talents and perspectives that women bring to the table, we strengthen our collective commitment to equality and inclusivity.

There are phenomenal women who have changed the trajectory of this world, including, but not limited to Rosa Parks, Amelia Earhart, Malala Yousafai, Serena Williams, Sally Ride and Katherine Johnson, to name a few. Though these individuals have made a huge impact in our society, there are so many other unsung heroes who are right under our noses who are making history in their own right.



Dr. Aruna Kilaru is a Distinguished Professor at East Tennessee State University (ETSU) and Faculty Fellow for Interdisciplinary Innovation in the Biosciences. She is noted for her remarkable contributions to the field of Plant Biology and Metabolic Engineering. Currently leading the establishment of a Synthetic Biology and Bioengineering Center at ETSU, her team recently [secured over \\$1.3 million](#) in funding from BioMADE.

With a specialized focus on lipid metabolism, Dr. Kilaru has fostered a vibrant research environment within her ETSU laboratory. There, students and postdoctoral researchers collaborate to unravel the intricate mechanisms of lipid-mediated signaling and oil biosynthesis in plants. Through her mentorship, she empowers aspiring scientists, nurturing their passion for inquiry and academic excellence.

## Continued ~ Message from Dr. Keith Johnson

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Beyond academia, Dr. Kilaru's impact resonates in science policy and national research initiatives. As an AAAS Science and Technology Policy Fellow, she influenced science policy at the highest levels. Her tenure as a Program Director at the National Science Foundation (NSF) further amplified her efforts to advance scientific research and education nationwide, reflecting her commitment to innovation and collaboration.

Recognized for her outstanding contributions, Dr. Kilaru has received prestigious awards, including the Tennessee Academy of Sciences Distinguished Scientist Award and ETSU's 2021 [Notable Women of the Year Award](#). Her interview with [Women in Plant Biology](#), a Plantae Blog, and featured cover story by [ETSU Today](#) underscores her influential presence in the scientific community.

Dr. Kilaru's journey embodies a steadfast commitment to exploration and collaboration, driving progress in scientific inquiry and innovation. As she continues to navigate interdisciplinary biosciences, her legacy inspires scholars and researchers worldwide, shaping the trajectory of scientific discovery for future generations.

May this Women's Month serve as a reminder of the need to continue supporting and empowering women in all aspects of life. Let us amplify their voices, champion their causes, and work together to create a world where every woman is afforded the opportunities and respect they deserve.

Here's to the extraordinary women who shape our past, present, and future. Happy Women's Month! As we take time to acknowledge and celebrate the many contributions Women have made throughout the history of America, let us not forget the university's values which include:

- PEOPLE come first, are treated with dignity and respect, and are encouraged to achieve their full potential.
- RELATIONSHIPS are built on honesty, integrity, and trust.
- DIVERSITY of people and thought is respected.
- EXCELLENCE is achieved through teamwork, leadership, creativity, and a strong work ethic.
- EFFICIENCY is achieved through wise use of human and financial resources.
- COMMITMENT to intellectual achievement is embraced.

Sincerely,

Dr. Keith Johnson

## Women's History Month



As recently as the 1970s, women's history was virtually an unknown topic in the K-12 curriculum or in general public consciousness. To address this situation, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County (California) Commission on the Status of Women initiated a "Women's History Week" celebration for 1978. [Read More.](#)

## International Women's Day



In 1977, when the women who would establish the National Women's History Alliance began planning a women's history week, March 8th, [International Women's Day](#), was chosen as the focal date. The selection was based on wanting to ensure that the celebration of women's history would include a multicultural perspective, an international connection between and among all women, and the recognition of women as significant in the paid workforce.

## March Highlights in U.S. Women's History

- **March 1, 1978** – Women's History Week is first observed in Sonoma County, California
- **March 1, 1987** – Congress passes a resolution designating March as Women's History Month
- **March 2, 1903** – the Martha Washington Hotel opens in New York City, becoming the first hotel exclusively for women
- **March 3, 1913** – Women's Suffrage Parade in Washington, DC, where over 8000 women gathered to demand a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the right to vote
- **March 4, 1917** – Jeannette Rankin (R-MT) took her seat as the first female member of Congress
- **March 4, 1933** – Frances Perkins becomes United States Secretary of Labor, the first female member of the United States Cabinet
- **March 8** – International Women's Day, whose origins trace back to protests in the U.S. and Europe to honor and fight for the political rights for working women
- **March 12, 1912** – Juliette Gordon Low assembled 18 girls together in Savannah, Georgia, for the first-ever Girl Scout meeting
- **March 12, 1993** – Janet Reno is sworn in as the first woman U.S. Attorney General
- **March 13, 1986** – Susan Butcher won the first of 3 straight and 4 total Iditarod Trail Sled Dog Races in Alaska
- **March 17, 1910** – Camp Fire Girls is established as the first interracial, non-sectarian American organization for girls
- **March 17, 1917** – Loretta Perfectus Walsh became the first woman to join the navy and the first woman to officially join the military in a role other than a nurse
- **March 20, 1852** – Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is published and becomes the best-selling book of the 19th century
- **March 21, 1986** – Debi Thomas becomes first African American woman to win the World Figure Skating Championship

[For more](#)

# Celebrating resilience, and honoring the trailblazers

**March is not just a month; it's a tribute to the extraordinary women who shaped history and continue to inspire change.**

by Onyedika Peter Okonkwo

## Happy Women's History Month!

Reflecting on my upbringing in southeastern Nigeria, tales of trailblazers who molded the future often filled our conversations. Among them, Mary Slessor stands out. While she may not be



American, her significant role during the era when twin infants faced peril in the region is worth celebrating this Women's History Month.

Mary Slessor ([1848–1915](#)) was a Scottish Presbyterian missionary who worked in Calabar, in what is now southeastern [Nigeria](#). She is particularly remembered for her work among the Efik people and her efforts to end the practice of killing twin infants, which was considered a taboo in their culture.

Born in Aberdeen, Scotland, Mary Slessor felt a calling to become a missionary from an early age. In 1876, she traveled to [Calabar](#) as a single woman to work with the Efik people. Throughout her missionary career, she became known for her strong personality, courage, and dedication to the people she served. One of the most significant aspects of Mary Slessor's work was her intervention in the cultural practice of killing twin infants. Among the Efik people, twins were often considered an evil omen, and it was a common belief that one of the twins was a supernatural being. As a result, both twins and their mothers were often killed.

Mary Slessor, through her personal courage and cultural sensitivity, was able to challenge and change this harmful practice. She adopted several sets of twins, cared for them, and demonstrated that they could grow up to be healthy and productive members of society. Her actions played a crucial role in altering the perception of twins in the region.

Mary Slessor's missionary work extended beyond her efforts to end the twin killing custom. She also contributed to the education and healthcare of the people in Calabar. She lived among the local community, learning their language and customs, and gained their trust.

Mary Slessor's legacy lives on, and she is remembered for her significant impact on the people of Calabar and her dedication to promoting social change and human rights in the face of cultural challenges.

## 2024 Staff Woman of the Year Call for Nominations

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Staff members play supportive roles that are critical to the success of our university. Since 2012, the ETSU Commission for Women Standing Committee has collaborated with the Women and Gender Resource Center and the Office of Equity and Inclusion to celebrate women staff members by awarding the Staff Woman of the Year Award. This award recognizes a female staff member who has made a notable impact in the workplace and improved the quality of life for others whether through inspiration, service to ETSU, community service, support of women's causes or organizations, or professional accomplishments above and/or outside normal job responsibilities. To date eight exceptional women have received this prestigious honor. Previous award recipients can be viewed at <http://www.etsu.edu/wrcetsu/award.php>.

I am pleased to announce that we are once again seeking nominations for the 2024 Staff Woman of the Year Award! Nominators are asked to submit a nomination form and a narrative about the nominee. Nominators are strongly encouraged to submit nominations for staff-classified women and to highlight the accomplishments of those women that have made a notable impact in the workplace and/or improved the quality of life for others. The award recipient will receive a \$1,500.00 cash award. The deadline for nominations is **March 17, 2024**.

The nomination form can be accessed at the following link <https://forms.office.com/r/XC6m380PCM>.

For more information on the nomination process, please contact the Women and Gender Resource Center at 423-439-5772 or Heidi Marsh at [marshh@etsu.edu](mailto:marshh@etsu.edu).

**Please note:** Re-submitting previous nominations is encouraged.

Sincerely,  
Bethany Novotny  
Chair, ETSU Commission for Women Standing  
Committee  
Associate Professor, Department of Counseling & Human Services





## Upcoming Events

March 2024				
Tuesday	Mar.5th	Lunch and Learn <b>Deaf or ASL issues</b> Discussion lead: <b>Dr. Leonard S. Granda, Ed.D.</b> Assistant Professor, Dept. of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology	12:00-1:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
Tuesday	Mar.5th	<b>International Women's Day Presentations</b> Come hear the students from the WGSS 2020 (A partnership with the Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Program)	3:00-4:15pm	The Multicultural Center
Wednesday	Mar.6th	<b>"Thank You" cards for Inspirational Women</b>	12:30-2:30pm	The Culp Main Street Booths (near Starbucks)
Wednesday	Mar.6th	Inclusion and Accessibility in Large Classes	2:30-4:00pm	C. Sherrod Library - Room 433
Thursday	Mar.7th	<b>Coffee and Conversation: Career Readiness for Women and Trans* Folks</b>	1:30-2:30pm	The Culp 217
Thursday	Mar.8th	<b>International Women's Day Painting Event</b> Stop by the Center in room 215 of the Culp to paint your very own portrait of powerful and inspirational women to celebrate International Women's Day!	11:00-1:00pm	The WGRC
Tuesday	Mar.19th	Lunch and Learn <b>Leading for Equity and Belonging Promoting Campus-Wide Engagement</b> Discussion lead: Keyana J Miller, Project Support Specialist, Resources for Learning, LLC	12:00-1:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>
Tuesday	Mar.19th	<b>STEM Women in Industry with Eastman</b>	12:00-1:00pm	The Culp 311
Tuesday	Mar.19th	<b>The Three Mothers Book Club</b>	6:00-8:00pm	The Multicultural Center
Wednesday	Mar.20th	<b>Stories of Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome with Dr. Stacey Williams</b>	3:00-4:00pm	The Cave
Thursday	Mar.21st	<b>Pelvic Floor Health</b>	6:00-7:30pm	The Culp 219
Sunday	Mar.31st	<b>Trans* Day of Visibility "You Belong Here" video launch</b>	3:00-4:00pm	Instagram @wgrcetsu
April 2024				
Tuesday	Apr.2nd	Lunch and Learn <b>More than my Disability</b> Discussion lead: Hannah N Smith, & Madison Huffine, Graduate Students, ETSU	12:00-1:00pm	<a href="#">Via Zoom</a>

# Upcoming Events

**THE AFRICAN AMERICAN STORYTELLERS**

**WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20 2024**

**9:00AM-2:00 PM**

**D.P. CULP CENTER CAVE ROOM 142**

**Black Affairs Association**

For more information, [ETSUMC@etsu.edu](mailto:ETSUMC@etsu.edu) / Call: (423) 439-4844

**EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY**  
Mary V. Jordan Multicultural Center

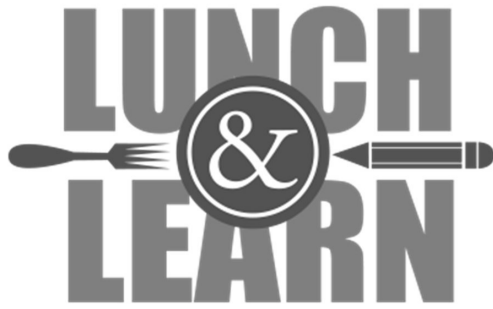
**WGSS**  
Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies

**Open House**

**March 20th, 2024**  
**10am-2pm, 106 Gilbreath Hall**

You are invited to drop in to see our new space! Find out about our offerings and enjoy some food and crafts. Everyone is welcome!

423-439-4125 [wgss@etsu.edu](mailto:wgss@etsu.edu)



## Eat. Connect. Discover.

Bring your lunch and join us for an hour of discussion and learning. All times are noon-1 p.m.

All sessions are open to members of the ETSU community, and held in the Multicultural Center, 2nd floor, D.P. Culp Center unless otherwise noted\*.

**Sponsored by:**

**The ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion**

## Spring 2024 Series

Dates subject to change. View our website for additional information.



### **Tuesday, February 20<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Ageism Awareness & Age-Friendly University**

Discussion lead: Dr. Jodi Southerland, Assistant Professor, Department of Community and Behavioral Health

[Via Zoom](#)

### **Tuesday, March 5<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Deaf and ASL issues**

Discussion lead: Dr. Leonard S Granda, Ed.D. Assistant Professor, Dept. of Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology

[Via Zoom](#)

### **Tuesday, March 19<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Leading for Equity and Belonging Promoting Campus-Wide Engagement**

Discussion lead: Keyana J Miller, Project Support Specialist, Resources for Learning, LLC

[Via Zoom](#)

### **Tuesday, April 2<sup>nd</sup>**

#### **More than my Disability**

Discussion lead: Hannah N Smith, & Madison Huffine, Graduate Students, ETSU

[Via Zoom](#)

To request an accommodation in order to fully participate in the Lunch & Learn program, please contact the ETSU Office of Equity and Inclusion at 423-439-4445

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## TBR SERS and OER Grant Opportunities

The Office of Equity and Inclusion is now accepting Student Engagement, Retention, and Success (**SERS**) grant proposals for FY2025. Proposals should be received by the Office of Equity and Inclusion/Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu) by April 8, 2024. The TBR submission deadline for SERS grant proposals is **April 30, 2024 1:00am**.

All information – details, dates, applications - can be found at <https://adgrants.tbr.edu/>

The Office of Equity and Inclusion is now accepting Open Educational Resources (**OER**) grant proposals for FY2025. Proposals should be received by the Office of Equity and Inclusion/Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu) by March 25, 2024. The TBR submission deadline for OER grant proposals is **April 16, 2024 1:00am**.

All information – details, dates, applications - can be found at <https://adgrants.tbr.edu/>.

*"Girls are capable of doing everything men are capable of doing. Sometimes they have more imagination than men."*  
 ~ Katherine Johnson ~

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**We would like to  
 hear from you.**

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To add a name to our mailing list, please email Kim Maturo at [maturo@etsu.edu](mailto:maturo@etsu.edu).