WHY DO WE LIST PEOPLE'S PRONOUNS?

You may have noticed that many people are sharing their pronouns in conversations, introductions, bios, and email signatures. The reason this is happening is to make spaces more inclusive to transgender (trans), gender noncomforming, and non-binary people. Please read this brief introduction to proper pronoun use for better awareness.

Sex VS. Gender Identity
Sex is assigned at birth by a medical professional, and it is based on physical anatomy. Gender identity is a person's experience of their own gender. Most people identify with the sex they were given at birth. We call these folks cisgender. Transgender or non-binary people do not identify with the sex they were given at birth. Some trans or non-binary folks may identify strongly with gendered pronouns, some may not identify to gendered pronouns at all, and others may fall somewhere in between.

Pronouns Can Be Different Than You Might Expect
Historically, there have been only two gendered pronouns to pick from: she, her, hers and he, him, his. However, some pronouns are gender-neutral like they, them, theirs. Some trans folks will use gender specific pronouns, and some trans and non-binary people will use gender neutral pronouns.

Why Are Pronouns Important?
Pronouns are important because they correspond with a person's gender. If someone is misgendered, it can cause distress because they may feel their gender identity isn't valid or respected. Using someone's correct name and pronouns is a way of showing respect and courtesy.

If You're Not Sure, Just Ask!
A great way to ask someone's pronouns is by stating your name and pronouns and then asking them their name and pronouns.

> "Hi, my name is Jonathan and my pronouns are he, him, and his. What is your name and pronouns?"

If someone isn't comfortable giving their pronouns or they don't share their pronouns with you, you can use their name in place of the pronoun.

> "Hey everyone, this is Jonathan. Jonathan is new to our group and Jonathan is excited to be here."

Most Importantly...Keep Educating Yourself!

There is an abundance of pronoun education on the web. If someone states a pronoun that you are unfamiliar with, be mindful of using the correct pronoun and research the new information at a later time. Pronoun options are constantly changing and evolving. You are strongly encouraged to do the research and educate yourself. Your efforts will be greatly appreciated.

Helpful Definitions

Cisgender - A person who identifies with the sex they were assigned at birth. For example, if you were told you were "male" at birth and still identify that way, you would be cisgender.

Gender - An idea created by society (A.K.A. a social construct) that tells us what certain genders are "supposed" to be like based on a group of emotional, behavioral, and cultural characteristics (like how we express our feelings or how we dress).

Gender-identity - Our internal, personal sense of what our gender is. Everyone has a gender identity.

Genderqueer - A term that describes someone whose gender identity is not just a man or a woman. This identity can mean different things to different people.

Non-binary - Anything that falls outside of the binary system (see definition above). Intersex, genderqueer, and bisexuality are all examples of non-binary identities.

Misgender - referring to a person as a gender with which they do not identify. This can include addressing someone by a pronoun or appellation they don't use. Examples include calling someone "he" when they use "she" or "they," or calling someone "ma'am" and "Ms." if they go by "sir" and "Mr."

Pronouns - The pronoun or set of pronouns that a person identifies with and would like to be called when their proper name is not being used. Examples include "she/her/hers," "he/him/his," ze/hir/hirs," and "they/them/theirs." Some people may prefer no pronouns at all.

Transgender (trans) - An umbrella term used to describe people whose true gender identity does not "match" the sex or gender they were assigned at birth. Many identities fall under the transgender umbrella, however, not all genderqueer or non-binary people identify as transgender. Some people who have transitioned to their true gender choose to identify as just a "man" or "woman," rather than transgender.