



# Diversity@Work

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< [HTTP://WWW.DIVERSITY.VA.GOV/PRODUCTS/DAW.ASPX](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/daw.aspx) >

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## Message from the DAS

Happy New Year!

This is a time of the year when we reflect on our accomplishments as well as plan our priorities for the new year. VA has accomplished many things to be proud of this past year. I encourage all of you to ensure that your organizations' accomplishments in the area of diversity and inclusion are captured in this year's VA Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) Annual Report (read more about how to make submissions on page 4).

ODI is proud to have led VA's diversity and inclusion program into the forefront of this area in the Federal sector. Our groundbreaking D&I Plan has now been emulated in the newly issued Government-wide D&I Strategic Plan, as introduced by President Obama's recent Executive Order on Establishing a Government-Wide D&I Initiative.

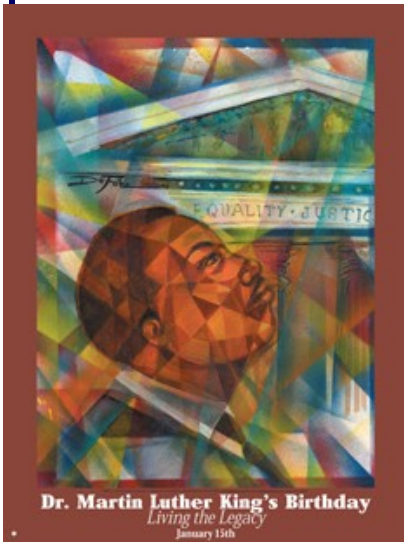
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## Commemorate!

VA proudly joins the Nation in commemorating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 83rd birthday anniversary on January 15 (observed as a Federal holiday on January 16) and National African American History Month, observed in February.

### DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.'S BIRTHDAY

VA proudly joins the Nation in observing the late Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 83rd birthday. On January 16, 2012, the Nation will commemorate the 26th anniversary of the National Federal holiday established in his honor. The national theme is:



"Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On, Not a Day Off!"

The late Dr. King was born on January 15, 1929, in Atlanta, Georgia, and became the world's foremost advocate of the 1960's civil rights movement. Each year, on the third Monday of January, we celebrate what has now become an American tradition – the observance of a national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

This observance honors the life and contributions of America's greatest champion of racial justice and equality; the leader who dreamed of a color-blind society and helped to motivate and steer a powerful, transforming social movement. On more than one occasion, Dr. King stressed that the struggle was not one between people of different colors. He believed that the fight was a fight "between justice and injustice, between the forces of light and the forces of darkness." His dream included all Americans and his memorial, located at the north east corner of the Tidal Basin on the National Mall, will forever remind us of his life, legacy and dream.

[Continued on page 4.]

## BOOKMARKS

VA LEARNING UNIVERSITY  
<[www.valu.va.gov](http://www.valu.va.gov)>

VANTAGE POINT  
(VA'S OFFICIAL BLOG)  
<[www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage](http://www.blogs.va.gov/Vantage)>

WORKLIFE4YOU  
<[www.worklife4you.com/va](http://www.worklife4you.com/va)>

TALENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM  
<[www.tms.va.gov](http://www.tms.va.gov)>

Diversity organizations can be found on the ODI Web site:  
<[www.diversity.va.gov/org](http://www.diversity.va.gov/org)>

# Message from the DAS (cont.)



*Georgia Coffey*

We are currently working with the VA Diversity Council (VADC) to update our Strategic Plan to fully align with the new Government-Wide Plan. ODI also implemented a new contracting vehicle to support VA-wide diversity internships efficiently and at no cost to the receiving organization. We also exceeded our goal for training managers and supervisors in the areas of EEO, diversity, inclusion, conflict management, and alternative dispute resolution, and continue to make strides in the hiring and retention of people with disabilities. This past year, we also continued to implement employee protections on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Most recently, we developed and implemented a new Diversity Index to gauge our progress in the area of overall workforce diversity and assess the impact of our initiatives on workforce diversity.

The VADC formed new committees this past year to focus on current and emerging issues in the area of D&I. The Council commissioned a study by the National Center for Organizational Development to explore “Disparate Perceptions of Fairness and Empowerment by Gender and Race/Ethnicity within the VA Workforce and SES.” It also established a new Committee on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) issues impacting VA and its workforce. We will begin a regular column in our Diversity@Work newsletter dedicated to these and all of the VADC’s activities. Look for that to begin with our next issue.

January also marks the anniversary of the birthday of one of our most notable champions of civil rights and diversity in history, Dr. Martin Luther King. I was proud to have been present at the moving commemoration of the MLK memorial just blocks from VACO. I encourage all of you who are able to visit the memorial for an inspirational experience. Please join us as we “Remember!” why we celebrate this important Federal holiday in honor of a man who left us with such a profound legacy. In February, we are also proud to commemorate National African American History Month. This year’s national theme, “Black Women in American History and Culture,” recognizes the critical roles Black women have had in shaping our Nation.

Finally, as we reflect on the past year, let’s take a moment to remember those we lost in 2011, including ODI’s own Maude A. Johnson (Liverpool). On behalf of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, I thank you, our partners and stakeholders, for your continuing commitment to diversity and inclusion in VA. We will continue to partner with you as we redouble our efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion in 2012. Happy New Year to all! ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion



*A'ngela Dunn*

## VACO Notes

### **WELCOME, NEW DETAILED EMPLOYEE!**

A'ngela D. Dunn is on detail to ODI as a Special Assistant to the Deputy Assistant Secretary of ODI through February of 2012. A'ngela joined VA in August of 2010 as the Director of Administration for the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization.

Prior to joining DVA, A'ngela worked as a National Civilian Recruiter and Program Manager for the U.S. Coast Guard where her overall mission was to increase the diversity of the civilian workforce through extensive outreach, internal and external partnerships, and robust diverse programs.

A'ngela’s knowledge and experience in the diversity and inclusion arena coupled with her extensive business management skills has enabled her to transition seamlessly while adding value to ODI.

“I am very excited to be working with an organization that values and respects the diversity of VA employees while consistently advocating and working towards inclusion for all. This is a GREAT organization!” **[Continued on the following page.]**

# Field Notes



## DIVERSITY NEWS: AN ONLINE TRAINING RESOURCE

Diversity News is a 15-minute video program produced monthly by ODI with the support of the VA Central Office (VACO) Broadcasting Center. The program is part of VA's continuing effort to foster equity, a diverse workforce, and an inclusive work environment.

Boasting a wealth of knowledge, ODI's library of broadcasts can serve to educate the VA community on workforce diversity and inclusion issues and to share best practices in effective diversity management. The January 2012 edition focuses on the government-wide diversity and inclusion strategic plan and on guidance to Federal agencies for creating their own plans.

Diversity News is available both on the internal VA Knowledge Network and on ODI's Web site. To view current and past episodes, visit <[www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx)>. [Continued on the following page.]

# VACO Notes (cont.)

## VA VETERAN CAREER FAIR AND EXPO

On January 18, 2012, VA will host a special outreach event targeting Veterans in Washington DC, Virginia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Delaware and West Virginia. The event will take place at the Washington, DC Convention Center and will include several VA organizations such as the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, and the National Cemetery Administration. Participation is expected from other Federal agencies including the Office of Personnel Management, Department of Defense and Department of Labor. These organizations will provide information, resources and assistance as needed for Veterans. This event will be sponsored by VA for Vets.

VA for Vets is the Department of Veterans Affairs' new high-tech, high-touch platform to recruit, retain and reintegrate Veterans into the VA workforce. VA "soft launched" VA for Vets this past Veterans Day and the results have been positive, with more than 45,000 Veterans visiting the VA for Vets online Career Center since the soft launch. The Department established the Veteran Employment Services Office (VESO) within the Office of Human Resources and Administration (HRA) to oversee the VA for Vets initiative. VESO is the first office of its kind in the Federal government with a full time staff dedicated to assisting Veterans and Servicemembers throughout the entire employment lifecycle. VESO achieved early success by piloting VA for Vets at targeted hiring events in New Orleans, Louisiana; San Antonio, Texas; and Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. VA for Vets provided Veterans with comprehensive career services to equip them to best market their experience to potential employers.

During this event at the Convention Center, participants can learn how to build competitive resumes, sharpen their interview skills, and work with professional career coaches. VA Hiring managers will be available to conduct on-site interviews for open positions within their respective organizations. Human Resources practitioners will extend tentative job offers to Veterans eligible for non-competitive special hiring authorities.

VESO will organize teams to qualify, interview and counsel Veterans on site for open VA jobs in the capitol region and for some that may be virtual. VESO will partner with other Federal agencies to offer Veterans the opportunity to develop valuable connections with a number of employers.

Activities will include: resume building and interview workshops, one-on-one career coaching, assistance to apply for competitive positions through USAJOBS, and interviews with hiring managers.

Please let the VESO HR POC (<[richard.flowers@va.gov](mailto:richard.flowers@va.gov)>) know immediately of your interest in participating to annotate your vacancies our books and send the POC your vacancy recruitment package which should include the following documents:

- Position Description
- Standard Form 52
- Vacancy Identified with Organization
- Job Analysis (helpful not required for the DC event)



## Field Notes (cont.)

### SIGN UP NOW FOR SECTION 508 TRAINING

VA's Section 508 Program Office is conducting "General Section 508 Training" 2 to 4 pm (EST) Thursday, January 5, and Thursday, February 8, at VA Central Office, conference room 730. The class will provide an overview of the law and its application to Electronic Information Technology (EIT) including the technical, functional, and documentation/support standards surrounding Section 508 compliance. VA employees attending the training session will learn more about VA's Section 508 Program Office and how it works to ensure that EIT products developed, procured, maintained, or used by the VA are Section 508 conformant. If you develop any of the following, supervise, procure, develop or administer policy relating to the following you should attend:

- Develop Web pages
- Develop Web-based applications
- Develop software
- Produce documents
- Develop or procure hardware
- Develop training materials
- Produce videos or other multimedia products
- Supervise activities above
- Develop or administer policy involving or relating to the above
- Have responsibility for the integration or maintenance of any of these items
- Are responsible for the procurement of any of these items
- Are involved in the contracting for the procurement of any of these items.

Seating is limited; however, the class will also be available via VANTS and Live Meeting. Live Meeting Training will be captioned. Contact Vicki Leon at <[Vicki.Leon@va.gov](mailto:Vicki.Leon@va.gov)> or (202) 461-5237 to register.

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT

The Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) is beginning the process of developing the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for fiscal year 2011. The purpose of the report is to chronicle the Department's progress toward realizing the goals of VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan, in alignment with VA's strategic plan for 2009–2013. A copy of the Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan is available online at <[www.diversity.va.gov/products/plan.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/plan.aspx)>.

The Annual Report will provide a comprehensive view of the state of the agency with respect to diversity and inclusion. As in the fiscal year 2010 Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report, relevant responsibilities, activities, and accomplishments will be identified for each administration, organization, and office within VA. Copies of the 2009 and 2010 report are available on the Internet at <[www.diversity.va.gov/products/diar.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/diar.aspx)>.

ODI is requesting that VA Diversity Council representatives collect information from their respective organizations for inclusion in the Annual Report and submit information by January 17, 2012. To receive guidance on preparing submissions or for questions, contact Thomas Middleton, ODI, at (202) 461-4036 or <[thomas.middleton@va.gov](mailto:thomas.middleton@va.gov)>.

## Commemorate! (cont.)

On a daily basis, VA is in a position to carry on Dr. King's legacy—his commitment to helping others. Our Veterans and their families are our priority, and the employees who serve them are our most valued resource. Therefore, we must ensure that equal opportunity is carried out in our Veterans programs and through hiring, promotion, and advancement of our diverse workforce.

All managers and supervisors are encouraged to support and attend appropriate activities that will be presented to celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and honor his life and legacy. A list of standard activities and events that facilities typically plan and present can be found on ODI's Web site at <[www.diversity.va.gov](http://www.diversity.va.gov)>. For more information on this observance, contact your local EEO Manager or Trina Faison, ODI, at (202) 461-4044 or <[trina.faison@va.gov](mailto:trina.faison@va.gov)>.

VA Central Office will hold an event in observance of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday on Thursday, January 12, 2012. For more information, contact Tiffany Lewis at 202-461-7911 or <[tiffany.lewis@va.gov](mailto:tiffany.lewis@va.gov)>. [Continued on page 8.]

# Policy Alert

## **CHANGE IN ALTERNATE WORK SCHEDULE; OVERTIME REQUIREMENTS; AND LIMITATIONS ON OVERTIME DUTY FOR NURSES; AND CHANGE IN LEAVE CHARGES FOR NURSES ON THE BAYLOR PLAN**

VA Handbook 5011 is being revised to make the following changes based on PL 111-163:

1. Replace the 36/40 alternate work schedule with the 72/80 work schedule. Nurses on this schedule work six 12-hour tours of duty wholly within a pay period and are considered for all purposes to have worked a full 80-hour pay period;
2. Clarify that nurses on 72/80 work schedule who are not scheduled to work on a holiday or day designated as a holiday are not entitled to an in-lieu holiday;
3. Revised VA Form 0870a – Request for Alternate Work Schedule, Work Schedule Options from 36/40 Work Schedule to 72/80 Work Schedule;
4. Add as a minimum charge for annual and sick leave for nurses on this schedule of one-quarter hour (15 minutes);
5. Eliminate outdated annual “Certification of Compliance with Provisions of Department of Veterans Affairs Health Care Personnel Enhancement Act of 2004” reporting requirement. However, facilities must still maintain a policy that prevents nurses from providing direct patient care (other than nurses providing emergency care) from working in excess of 12 consecutive hours or 60 hours in any 7-day period;
6. Require that a nurse performing officially ordered or approved hours of service in excess of 40 hours in an administrative workweek, or in excess of 8 consecutive hours, shall receive overtime pay for each hour of such additional service;
7. Provide limitations on overtime duty, weekend duty, and alternative work schedules for nurses; and
8. Change in the requirement to charge nurses on the Baylor Plan 1.667 hours of leave for each hour of annual or sick leave taken, instead, these nurses will be charged leave on an hourly basis;
9. Since 38 U.S.C. 7454(a) provides that physician assistants, expanded-function dental auxiliaries shall be entitled to additional pay on the same basis as provided for nurses in section 38 U.S.C. 7453, the overtime change for nurses also effects physician assistants and expanded-function dental auxiliaries.

Status: Policy Process Step 1

Estimated date of release/implementation: April 2012

For more information about this policy alert or the policy communication schedule/timeline, visit the OHRM intranet site.

# Leadership Training Opportunities

## **LEADERSHIP VA (LVA)**

VA is pleased to announce LVA 2012. This year marks the second year of the program redesign—a corporate leadership development program that cultivates high-performing leaders for a 21st century VA.

### *Program Objectives*

- Employ an enterprise-wide innovative approach to leadership
- Foster learning and leading across boundaries
- Develop critical thinking and problem solving skills
- Promote organizational stewardship to eliminate barriers and meet common goals [**Continued on the next page.**]

# Leadership Training Opportunities (cont.)

## *Program Outcomes*

LVA participants will leave the program with a shared leadership framework, skill set, and tool set to drive excellence in their organizations and accomplish VA strategic goals.

## *Program Updates*

LVA was redesigned to interweave the traditional program best practices with new elements to:

- Create a leadership framework, skill set and tool set to drive a new level of VA excellence
- Provide a measurable, results-driven leadership development experience
- Contain a strong change management component to lead the VA transformation

## *Program History*

- Established in 1978
- Diversity in demographics, geography, organizations, and professional experience
- Outstanding Alumni, which include 2,000+ senior VA employees

## *Program Application*

Any VA employee who is GS-13 to GS-15 (or title 38 equivalent) is eligible to apply beginning at the end of November, 2011. Selections will be announced the following spring.

For more information visit: <[www.valu.va.gov/Home/Leadership](http://www.valu.va.gov/Home/Leadership)>.

## **VA ASPIRING LEADERS PROGRAM & VA LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MENTORING PROGRAM**

VA Learning University (VALU) offers two leadership programs designed to develop high potential, high performing employees assigned to VA Central Office (VACO) and VACO Field Offices. The Aspiring Leaders Program (ALP) and The Leadership Development Mentoring Program (LDMP) aim to build and sustain a diverse, high quality workforce, thus ensuring a cadre of competent and committed individuals prepared to assume greater levels of responsibility and leadership roles for VA. These programs extend 10-12 months and are open to all administrations and staff offices.

ALP and LDMP facilitate the development of a Mentoring Action Plan (MAP) based on a combination of the VA High Performance Development Model (HPDM), Executive Core Qualifications (ECQ's), Office of Personnel Management (OPM), and VA's Transformational Leadership competencies. The MAP will be used to identify goals and learning modalities, monitor accomplishments, and evaluate program effectiveness. Each participant will be assigned a trained mentor to enhance learning and facilitate the leadership development experience, in addition to fostering mentoring as a key aspect of VA's continuous learning culture.

Target audience for ALP: GS 9-12, Wage Grade Equivalent, or T/38 Hybrid Equivalent

Target audience for LDMP: GS 12-14, Wage Grade Equivalent, or T/38 Hybrid Equivalent

Participants will attend a 3-hour orientation, in addition to 5 sessions that span 3-5 days each throughout the program year. These sessions are customized to the learning needs of the cohort, based on results of a 360-degree group profile. There will also be a one-day session designed to build rapport and to begin drafting the Mentoring Action Plan and Agreement for mentors and mentees. The program also includes participation in OPM's Leadership Assessment Program, in addition to individual and group projects, readings, and/or access to shadowing/detail experiences.

For more information, contact Sabrina C. Clark, VALU Learning Consultant, at (202) 461-4054 or <[sabrina.clark@va.gov](mailto:sabrina.clark@va.gov)>. [**Continued on the following page.**]

# Leadership Training Opportunities (cont.)

## VA LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS



VA Learning University (VALU), in conjunction with Corporate Senior Executive Management Office (CSEMO), is accepting applications for consideration to attend one of several leadership development programs for the upcoming 2012-2013 academic year. As a VA employee at the GS -13 through SES level (or Title 38/Title 38 Hybrid Equivalent), you may qualify to apply for at least one of the following full time, residential leadership development programs:

- Federal Executive Institute (FEI) Program: A 4 -week course called Leadership for a Democratic Society, focusing on organizational theory, the government policy framework, and the global trends and events that shape government agendas. Participants earn 12 graduate credits.
- Senior Service Colleges (SSC) Programs: Six different 10-month programs focusing on leadership and national security strategy, each culminating in a Master of Science degree or certificate.
- School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS) Program: A 10-month program focusing on military arts and sciences, strategy design and development as well as strategic planning for executing full-spectrum operations with other government and nongovernmental agencies. Graduates receive a Masters of Military Art and Science (MMAS) degree.
- Army Intermediate Level Education Program (ILE) Program: A 10-month program focusing on developing planning and operational expertise in employing joint, interagency and multinational forces and capabilities in offensive, defensive, civil support, and stability and reconstruction operations.

Applicants must meet the following minimum qualifications before their application can be accepted:

- Hold Career Status (completed probationary and conditional employment period as of the application deadline);
- Have been assigned at least 1 year within their current Administration or Staff Organization/Office (as of the application deadline);
- Have a “Fully Successful” or higher summary rating on most recent performance rating of record;
- Have no current disciplinary action in your personnel file.

You are strongly encouraged to consider this highly valuable development opportunity. Furthermore, you are asked to discuss this opportunity with your eligible staff members who may be particularly suitable. This is a great opportunity—and commitment—to improve your ability to drive important change at VA as it strives to address evolving organizational and policy level issues as well as the needs of Veterans and their families.

Deadlines for the application and selection process are quickly approaching (see below). Please be aware that all applications require up to 3 levels of leadership endorsement. You must plan ahead and allow enough time to complete the application package and obtain these endorsements before the deadline.

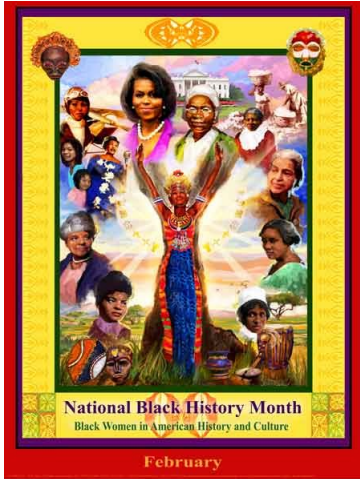
By January 17, 2012 – Applicants submit completed applications to their first-level supervisors to begin the endorsement process (cc VALU: <[VALLeadershipDevelopmentPrograms@va.gov](mailto:VALLeadershipDevelopmentPrograms@va.gov)>)

By January 27, 2012 – Human Resources Points of Contact for each Administration/Staff Office submit completed, endorsed applications to VALU (<[VALLeadershipDevelopmentPrograms@va.gov](mailto:VALLeadershipDevelopmentPrograms@va.gov)>). VALU confirms receipt of application to applicant and the organization HR POCs.

Applications are available online at <[www.valu.va.gov/Home/CEDB](http://www.valu.va.gov/Home/CEDB)>. All applicants will be asked to prepare and submit an application package, including an application form and supplementary materials. Upon receipt of the submitted applications, the newly established VA Corporate Employee Development Board (CEDB) will evaluate all applications and recommend the most qualified candidate for each available program spot. CEDB recommendations then go to the Secretary for review and approval. After the selection process is complete, applicants will be notified of the selection results.

For additional information, please contact Rhonda Carter at <[rhonda.carter@va.gov](mailto:rhonda.carter@va.gov)> or (202) 618-5048.

# Commemorate! (cont.)



## NATIONAL AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH

The month of February is designated as African American History Month. This year's national theme, "Black Women in American History and Culture," encourages Americans of all backgrounds to

reflect on and honor the countless critical roles Black women in America have played in shaping our Nation.

The Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH), established in 1915, by American historian Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, has recognized Black women in American History and Culture—from the unlikely American patriot during the Revolutionary War, Phillis Wheatley, to the leader of the Underground Railroad from slavery, Harriett Tubman, to the unyielding opponent of lynching, Ida B. Wells, to the mother of the modern Civil Rights Movement, Rosa Parks. These are just a few prominent Black American women who have labored, struggled, organized, and sacrificed for all Americans in slavery and freedom.



Ida B. Wells

VA is proud to join ASALH and the Nation in recognizing the contributions of these and all notable Black American women for enhancing both the Nation and Black communities.

In FY 2011, Black American women represented 14.46 percent of VA's permanent workforce. Black American women Veterans represented 2.97 percent and Black American women Disabled Veterans represented 0.98 percent. In senior-level positions (GS-13-15), Black

American women participation rates increased to 8.32 percent in FY 2011 from 8.18 percent in FY 2010.

All managers and supervisors are encouraged to support and encourage attendance at events and activities to recognize and honor the contributions of Black Americans. VA will continue to lead the effort in creating a diverse, results-oriented, high



Harriett Tubman



Rosa Parks

performing workforce that reflects the communities we serve and the diversity of our Nation by eliminating barriers to equal opportunity and by cultivating a flexible and inclusive work environment that enables all employees to realize their full potential in service to our Nation's heroes—our Veterans.

For additional information on VA's Black Special Emphasis Program, contact Trina Faison at (202) 461-4044 or <[trina.faison@va.gov](mailto:trina.faison@va.gov)>.

Reference:

<[www.asalh.org](http://www.asalh.org)>

VA Central Office will hold events in observance of African American History Month every Thursday during the month of February 2012. For more information, contact Tiffany Lewis at 202-461-7911 or <[tiffany.lewis@va.gov](mailto:tiffany.lewis@va.gov)>.



Phillis Wheatley



# 2012 FAPAC Civilian Awards



The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) is soliciting nominations for the 2012 FAPAC Outstanding Civilian Individual Awards from Federal agencies and the District of Columbia government. The base period of performance shall be the calendar year 2011 (January—December 2011) or the fiscal year of 2011 (October 01, 2010—September 30, 2011).

The awards will be given out at the 27th National Leadership Training Conference & Exhibits to be held from April 30—May 4, 2012 at Grand Hyatt Buckhead in Atlanta, Georgia. The purpose of this award is to recognize individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) and the promotion of equal opportunity in the Federal and District of Columbia Government work force and the AAPI communities.

The Award Categories are:

1. Outstanding Individual Leadership: Individual who has shown bold leadership and innovative ways in promoting Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Affirmative Action, and Diversity.
2. Excellence in Individual Achievement: Individual who has shown the greatest contribution toward the AAPI representation at all levels as compared to the total AAPI population as a whole.
3. Diversity Excellence: Individual who has shown a remarkable contribution towards diversity against all odds.

The nomination deadline is February 28, 2012.

For more information or to submit a nomination visit <[www.fapac.org/Default.aspx?pagelid=1185177](http://www.fapac.org/Default.aspx?pagelid=1185177)>. Questions in regards to the awards can be directed to <[fapac@fapac.org](mailto:fapac@fapac.org)> or (202) 307-7720.



## AAGEN SES Development Program

Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) are underrepresented in the Federal Government's Senior Executive Service (SES). To address this issue, President Obama signed Executive Order (EO) 13515 to reestablish the White House Initiative on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (WHIAAPI) in 2009. Section 3(d)(ii) of the EO mandates that Federal agencies create plans that "identify ways to foster the recruitment, career development, and advancement of AAPIs in the Federal government." In August, 2011, President Obama also signed Executive Order 13583 to establish a coordinated government-wide initiative to promote diversity and inclusion in the Federal workforce.

The Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) is sponsoring an SES Development Program with participation by WHIAAPI, the Office of Personnel Management, and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. AAGEN is a non-profit organization that promotes and supports AAPI leadership in the Federal government. This pilot program is offered at no cost to selected candidates and their respective agencies, although the selected candidates are expected to commit time to the program. Although the application deadline has already passed, only Federal employees currently at the GS-15 equivalent level or higher were able to apply. Candidates had to obtain permission from their managers to participate and an agreement from their agency to cover any travel-related costs. Up to 20 applicants will be selected for the program. Selected candidates must become AAGEN members and sign up to participate as an AAGEN Mentor to other lower GS level equivalent candidates before they can participate in the program.

Components of the program include:

- SES Application Preparation
- Leadership Training
- Mentorship
- Placement Assistance
- Networking Opportunities

Visit <[www.aagen.org](http://www.aagen.org)> for more information. For questions, e-mail <[Programs@AAGEN.org](mailto:Programs@AAGEN.org)>.

# Disability Issues

## REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION FOR EMPLOYEES WITH A PSYCHIATRIC DISABILITY

Reasonable accommodation is any change in the work environment or in the way things are usually done that helps an individual with a disability apply for a job, perform the duties of a job, or enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment. An accommodation establishes an even playing field for an employee with a disability by creating equal access or creating conditions that allow the work quality and/or productivity of the employee to meet or exceed the performance requirements.

VA is expecting an increase in employees who are Veterans returning from the Middle-East with psychiatric disabilities such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and major depression. Supervisors may be reluctant to hire individuals with psychiatric disabilities because of stereotypes portraying persons with psychiatric disabilities as violent and antisocial in their behavior. The truth is the majority of persons with PTSD and other psychiatric disabilities behave no differently than other employees, because their disability is managed through behavior modification, therapy, professional counseling or any combination of these interventions. VA has many employees with mental disabilities (Veterans and non-Veterans) in the workforce performing at the same high levels of efficiency as other employees without psychiatric disabilities. Psychiatric disabilities are one of the nine disabilities targeted for direct hire.

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a psychiatric disability is an emotional illness that limits one or more major life activities. Examples of emotional illness are major depression, bipolar disorder, and anxiety disorders (which include panic disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder). There is no exhaustive list of major life activities that are affected by psychiatric disabilities. In addition, the major life activities limited by mental illness are often different from one individual to another.

A psychiatric disability may affect an employee's ability to perform essential job functions for a number of reasons ranging from a need to sit with her back to the wall to a limited ability to focus in a conversation. In many cases, the employee will request an accommodation before the supervisor and co-workers are aware of any change in behavior or problem. Once the employee notifies the supervisor of a psychiatric (or any other) disability, the supervisor should consider this conversation a possible request for reasonable accommodation and ask if any changes are needed.

Medical Documentation to substantiate the disability can be requested, since it is not obvious like a missing limb. The Local Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator (LRAC) should complete the top of VA Form 0857e and give it to the employee, explaining that his/her physician needs to complete the form and that it should be returned to the LRAC. If the returned VA Form 0857e establishes that the employee has a psychiatric disability, the supervisor and LRAC's next task is to identify a reasonable accommodation that will enable the employee to perform their essential work functions. Often the employee can tell the supervisor what accommodation will best assist them in their effort to maintain or re-establish the required level of productivity while at work. For many requests, the cost of an accommodation for a person with a psychiatric disability will be zero. The employee may request a work station in a location with reduced noise levels and foot traffic from co-workers. In some instances the precise nature of an effective accommodation for an employee may not be apparent. The employee's mental health professional (including psychiatric rehabilitation counselors) may be able to make suggestions about particular accommodations. The Job Accommodation Network (JAN) website has a list of suggested reasonable accommodations at: <http://askjan.org/media/Psychiatric.html>. Some of these suggestions include but are not limited to reduced distractions in the work area; flexible breaks; telework; use of electronic organizers or mobile devices; a support animal; flextime; and providing partitions or closed doors for privacy.

Lastly, if employees ask questions about a co-worker who has a disability, the supervisor may not disclose any medical information or give any other indication that the individual has a disability or an accommodation. The recommended language is: "That is a situation between [the employee] and me, and it is private information. If you came to me with private information, I would respect your privacy as well." [Continued on the following page.]

# First LGBT Event Held at Tampa Veterans Hospital

The James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa, Florida, sponsored their first lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) program on October 26, 2011.



The event featured a renowned speaker in the field of LGBT Healthcare, Shane Snowdon. Ms. Snowdon is the founding director of the Center for LGBT Health & Equity at the University of California San Francisco, the country's only LGBT resource in a health care or health education setting, and a member of the Human Rights Campaign's (HRC's) Healthcare Equality Index National Advisory Council. For over a decade, she has been a leading voice for LGBT health equality, providing training to hospitals, clinics, schools, and professional groups nationwide. She has received numerous honors for her groundbreaking work, including the Health Achievement Award of the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association. [Continued on the following page.]

## Disability Issues (cont.)

The time from when a request is made to the actual implementation of the accommodation should be done as soon as possible, but in no more than 30 calendar days. If medical documentation is required the (30 day) clock stops until documentation is given to the employee's supervisor or local reasonable accommodation coordinator (LRAC). Instructions for the process are under "Reasonable Accommodation" at <[www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#library](http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#library)>.

References:

- <[www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#tools](http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#tools)>
- <<http://askjan.org>>
- <[www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/psych.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/psych.html)>
- <[www.eeoc.gov/laws/regulations/ada\\_qa\\_final\\_rule.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/regulations/ada_qa_final_rule.cfm)>
- <[www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation\\_procedures.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/accommodation_procedures.html)>

### MESSAGE FROM A DISABILITY ADVOCATE

On the last day of the 30th annual "Perspectives on Employment of People with Disabilities" Conference, Richard Pimentel was the plenary speaker. Mr. Pimentel is a Vietnam Veteran who lost his hearing when a stray bomb exploded in his bunker. After the war, he attended college and made friends with a man who had severe cerebral palsy. In 1971, when they went to a local restaurant for a pancake breakfast, they were arrested under the "Ugly Law," a statute that prohibited public appearances of people who were "unsightly." This event propelled Richard to enlist others to fight injustices, leading to the disability movement, which culminated in the passing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and later, the ADA Amendments Act.

He talked about other situations that he has observed and felt were blatant discrimination and also a denial of the humanity of persons with disabilities. He instructed the audience that no disability should be overwhelming for them; that they should be able to find appropriate jobs for qualified people with disabilities and provide them with the necessary accommodations so that they can be productive.

Mr. Pimentel asked the attendees to give Veterans with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and other psychiatric disabilities a "safe place" so that they can take their armor off and feel safe again. He explained that being in a work environment can be very stressful for these Veterans, especially in the beginning.

He also stressed the need to educate hiring managers and Human Resources staff that young people with disabilities will be assertive; they know the accommodation they need. He said "They are ready for us, but are we ready for them? The most important thing we can tell young people with disabilities is 'I believe in you.'"

In his ending statement, Mr. Pimentel said "There is nothing wrong with disabilities, there is just something wrong with the way we react to them. Let us not seek to fix them. Let us seek to fix ourselves."

# Tampa LGBT Event (cont.)



Ms. Snowdon looked at how medical centers and health professionals can provide equitable and inclusive care to their LGBT patients. Her discussion covered the disparities, inequities, and anxieties experienced by LGBT patients and their families and how health institutions around the country are addressing them. She also described reality-tested strategies, tools, and resources for providing LGBT patient-centered care, including the HRC's national Healthcare Equality Index.

*(L to R): Brandon Rewis, LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager; Sylvia Jordan, EEO Manager; Dr. Shane Snowdon; and Michael Benning, EEO Specialist/Chairman, Diversity & Inclusion Advisory Council*

## Compliance Corner

### THE ADA AND CONFIDENTIALITY OF EMPLOYEE MEDICAL INFORMATION

When an employee requests a reasonable accommodation, co-workers may naturally be curious about what accommodation was requested and why it was provided. For example, a disabled employee's co-workers may question why the employee's work schedule was modified or changes made to the organization's dress code to accommodate the employee. Co-workers may perceive that the disabled employee is held to a different and lower performance or conduct standard and want to know why.

However, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) confidentiality provisions do not allow supervisors to share with subordinates and others that a disabled employee is receiving a reasonable accommodation and why it is being provided, unless the co-workers are part of the reasonable accommodation process, e.g., a member of the facility's reasonable accommodation committee. In its ADA Guidance, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) states that employers already keep many types of information confidential despite inquiries from subordinates such as the reasons why an employee was terminated or transferred.

The EEOC advises that inquiries about a disabled employee's reasonable accommodation should be treated in the same way. "An employer could respond that she does not discuss one employee's situation with another in order to protect the privacy of all employees, but she could assure the co-worker that the employee is meeting the employer's work requirements."

In a recent decision involving a VA employee, an EEOC administrative judge found the department violated the ADA's confidentiality provision when a disabled employee's supervisor discussed the complainant's medical condition with her co-workers and the fact that he was making an accommodation for her medical condition. The supervisor also told the complainant's co-workers that his spouse suffered from the same medical condition as the complainant, but did not experience any problems with the condition.

Bottom Line: It is never permissible for a supervisor or manager to discuss an employee's medical condition and/or request for reasonable accommodation with the employee's co-workers. If such a discussion occurs, the VA will be held liable for violating the ADA. ~Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA's Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication





# ODI on the Internet

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<[www.diversity.va.gov](http://www.diversity.va.gov)>  
for additional staff  
e-mail addresses.

## OTHER USEFUL LINKS

VA's Office of Human Resources & Administration  
<[www.va.gov/ofcadmin](http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin)>

VA Learning University

<[www.valu.va.gov](http://www.valu.va.gov)>

VA's Office of Resolution Management

<[www.va.gov/orm](http://www.va.gov/orm)>

VA's Office of Human Resources Management

<[www.va.gov/ohrm](http://www.va.gov/ohrm)>

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Community of Practice  
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## GOT NEWS?

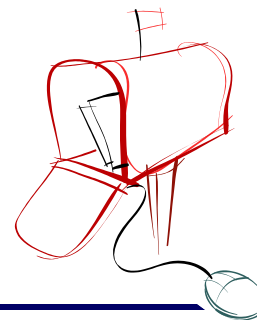
We want to hear from you! If you'd like to share your story ideas, comments, or suggestions, e-mail us at <[odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov)> with the words DIVERSITY@WORK in the subject line.

The mission of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) is to foster a diverse workforce and an inclusive work environment that ensures equal opportunity—through national policy development, workforce analysis, outreach, retention, and education—to best serve our Nation's Veterans. Here's a sampling of online tools available at <[www.diversity.va.gov](http://www.diversity.va.gov)> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ National African American History Month and other special observance resources.
- ▶ Training resources, guides, and reports.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.
- ▶ Best practices for diversity management.

## ODI in Your E-mail Inbox

Once a week, ODI sends out *NewsLink*, an e-mail message with annotated links to current news items and other information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusion. For a FREE subscription to this weekly electronic news service, e-mail <[odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov)> with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of *NewsLink* at <[www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx)>.



## ODI on Your TV or PC

*Diversity News* is a monthly video program produced by the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for ODI. *Diversity News* follows *VA News* on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network channel 2. Programs are also available at <[www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx)>.

## From the 2012 Diversity Calendar

<[www.diversity.va.gov/calendar](http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar)>

### JANUARY

**National Mentoring Month**

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday**

January 15 (observed January 17)

**World Religion Day**

January 15

**Religious Freedom Day**

January 16

**Lunar New Year**

January 23

**Assistive Technology Industry Association Leadership Forum on Accessibility**

January 25–28; Orlando, FL

<[www.atia.org](http://www.atia.org)>

### FEBRUARY

**Black History Month**

**Race Relations Day**

February 14

**League of United Latin American Citizens Legislative Conference and Gala**

February 15–16; Washington, DC

<[www.lulac.org](http://www.lulac.org)>

**National Association for Bilingual Education Annual Conference**

February 15–17; Dallas, TX

<[www.nabe.org](http://www.nabe.org)>

**Unites States Hispanic Leadership Institute National Conference**

February 16–19; Chicago, IL

<[www.ushli.org](http://www.ushli.org)>

**Brotherhood/Sisterhood Week**

February 19–25

**Washington's Birthday (Presidents Day)**

February 20