

# Diversity@Work

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< WWW.DIVERSITY.HR.VA.GOV/CA/DAW.HTM >

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**BOOKMARKS**

ADVANCE  
<<http://vawww.va.gov/ADVANCE>>

FEDERAL HISPANIC CAREER ADVANCEMENT SUMMIT  
<[www.federalhispanicsummit.org](http://www.federalhispanicsummit.org)>

HISPANIC ALLIANCE FOR CAREER ADVANCEMENT  
<[www.haceonline.org](http://www.haceonline.org)>

LABOR COUNCIL FOR LATIN AMERICAN ADVANCEMENT  
<[www.lclaa.org](http://www.lclaa.org)>

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT PROGRAM  
<[www.wrpjobs.com](http://www.wrpjobs.com)>

Other diversity organizations listed on the ODI Web site:  
<[www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org)>

## Diversity Awards

Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration John U. Sepúlveda hosted the First Annual Diversity and Inclusion and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Excellence Awards Ceremony on Friday, July 23, 2010, in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center at VA Central Office. The keynote speaker was the Honorable Will Gunn, General Counsel. This ceremony was a collaborative effort with the Offices of Diversity and Inclusion and Resolution Management presenting two closely related awards programs. The intent of the awards program is to 1) recognize individual contributions and achievements by VA employees in furthering VA's equal employment opportunity (EEO) program goals; 2) motivate employees and managers to support and participate in accomplishing Diversity and Inclusion goals; and 3) recognize and promote healthy conflict management practices throughout the VA through ADR. There were seven award recipients accompanied by their senior leadership and equal employment opportunity managers from their respective facilities. **[Continued on page 5.]**

## Coffey's Keynotes

September marks the beginning a new season of diversity observances, beginning with Hispanic Heritage Month, which officially begins September 15 and continue into October. We look forward to many informative VA events throughout the country celebrating this rich culture. For information on this and other observances, including Disability Awareness Month, please see our articles on the following pages.

We are excited to have completed our first round of EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management training and development for the Senior Executive Service, a new ADVANCE initiative administered by VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI). Read more about it on page 10. Our next round of training for SES members will be September 15 and 16 in Alexandria, Virginia. Training for all supervisors and managers in these areas will also be available online via the VA Learning Management System. We'll keep you posted.

**[Continued on page 8.]**

## Celebrate!

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month and German-American Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15; Disability Mentoring Day on October 21; and National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Polish-American Heritage Month, and Italian-American Heritage Month all in October!

### HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

The 2010 Hispanic Heritage Month theme is: "Heritage, Diversity, Integrity, and Honor: The Renewed Hope of America." The contributions of Hispanics to the development and success of this Nation are like the stitches in a patchwork quilt. To envision America untouched by Latinos is to imagine a country without much of its folklore and many of its achievements. Many Americans believe that the history of our Nation began at Plymouth Rock in 1620. Our history books fail to tell us that when the Pilgrims were struggling to maintain the original colony, Spanish towns were already growing and flourishing in Florida, Southwest, and Puerto Rico. **[Continued on page 6.]**



## VACO Notes

### WELCOME, NEW ODI EMPLOYEES!



*David Williams*

David Williams joined ODI in August 2010 as the Director of Workforce Analysis. Mr. Williams will be responsible for managing the agency-wide workforce analysis function and equal employment opportunity (EEO) planning and reporting function according to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive 715 (MD 715) for the analysis of barriers to equal opportunity for minorities, women, disabled individuals, and Veterans. He has over 25 years experience in the Federal government as an operations research analyst and project manager with the past seven years of his career focused on strategic workforce planning and diversity analysis in the Federal government. Prior to joining VA, Mr. Williams served as the project manager in the Office of Human Resources Integration at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management where he implemented analytical approaches to review historical trends of the workforce and to project future workforce requirements. He also assisted EEOC in the redesign of MD 715 analytical reports to incorporate the new ethnicity and race reporting requirements. From 2003 to the 2005, Mr. Williams served as an operations research analyst at the U.S. Army's Office of Civilian Personnel Policy. During his tenure there he developed the Army's first Competency Management System, and provided statistical analysis support for the Human Resources and EEO community.



*John Fuller*

ODI is also excited to announce the appointment of John Fuller, who enters VA as a Diversity Program Manager with ODI's Training & Communications team. Dr. Fuller is the former Director of Workforce Diversity for The Johns Hopkins Hospital and Johns Hopkins Health System Corporation. He holds a Doctorate of Education, a Master of Science in Leadership and Business Ethics and a Master of Arts in Education. His professional background spans over 20 years in Equal Employment Opportunity and Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance, diversity training awareness, and affirmative action through the military, corporate, Federal, and nonprofit arenas. Dr. Fuller is an EEOC-trained investigator, a Florida Supreme Court and Department of Defense Certified Mediator, U.S. Army Major, Retired, and was a U.S. Marine Corps Sergeant during the Vietnam-Era. Dr. Fuller received the prestigious Johns Hopkins Institutions' Martin Luther King Community Service Award on January 11, 2008, in recognition for his extensive community service contributions and involvement.

Welcome, Mr. Williams and Dr. Fuller!

*"...increase awareness and acceptance of diversity and to promote a flexible and inclusive work environment..."*

### VHA CHIEF BUSINESS OFFICE DIVERSITY DAY EVENT



On September 2, 2010, the VHA Chief Business Office (CBO) will be hosting a Diversity Day Event. The objective of this event is to provide employees the opportunity to learn more about Diversity and Inclusion. The featured speaker for this event is the current Chief Business Officer, Gary M. Baker. Opening remarks will be provided by Georgia Coffey, DAS for ODI. Following the speaking event, there will be a pot luck luncheon where staff will bring ethnic food items for tasting. In addition, there will be areas set up by continent to showcase cultural and lifestyle aspects of diversity. The event will run from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in room 700 of 1722 Eye Street, NW, in Washington, DC.

# Puerto Rico Hiring Event

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) is coordinating a hiring event in San Juan, Puerto Rico, October 6-7, 2010, to promote diversity and to aid an economically distressed area. VA, along with other Federal agencies, will be participating in this event. ODI is collaborating with Central Office Human Resources Service, Staffing and Recruitment Policy Service, and the Veterans Employment Coordination Service on this project. VA will receive resumes from interested applicants by September 13, 2010. Interested selecting officials must commit to interviewing selected candidates by September 24, 2010. VA must provide OPM with a list of candidates that VA officials would like to interview by October 1, 2010. VA is responsible for scheduling interviews between VA officials and prospective applicants. Applicants will be informed by VA by September 24, 2010, of their selection for interview. OPM will be tracking the number of interviews conducted by each agency and will compare that number to the number of applicants who are hired. As an agency committed to diversity, VA's strong participation in this event is critical. VA is on the forefront of establishing dynamic diversity programs and must therefore lead by example and participate in events such as this one to achieve Federal government strategic human capital goals. For more information about this event, contact Aurelia Lopez at <[Aurelia.Lopez.va.gov](mailto:Aurelia.Lopez.va.gov)>.



## Policy Alerts

### SECRETARY'S EEO, DIVERSITY AND NO FEAR POLICY STATEMENT

The Secretary's EEO, Diversity and No FEAR Policy statement was signed on July 30, 2010. To view the policy, visit <[www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/10EEO\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/10EEO_Policy.pdf)>.

### SPECIAL RATES AND LOCALITY PAY SYSTEM FOR NURSES, MISCELLANEOUS PAY ADMINISTRATION AND STUDENT LOAN REPAYMENT PROGRAM CHANGES

Policy changes have been made to VA Handbook 5007 based on the following:

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued final regulations on pay setting rules for General Schedule employees which provides additional clarification regarding highest previous rate provisions and calculating promotions.

OPM issued final regulations regarding

the Repayment of Student Loans which provides a new requirement regarding reimbursement when an employee is involuntarily separated as a result of a negative suitability determination.

In addition, changes resulting from the issuance of Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) 05-09-01, "Guidance and Flexibilities to be Used When Establishing or Adjusting Special Rate Schedules and Nurse Locality Pay System (LPS) Schedules" have been incorporated into VA Handbook 5007.

The policy revision will be updated on the OHRM Web site: <<http://vawww.va.gov/ohrm>>.

### INTERIM INSTRUCTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF VA USA STAFFING FOR MERIT PROMOTION

The purpose of this bulletin is to provide guidance for implementation of USA Staffing for merit promotion purposes in VA. Until recently VA has used USA Staffing for processing competitive examining and some title 5 merit promotion and title 38 recruitment actions. Effective

immediately, the USA Staffing system may now be used for all competitive examining and merit promotion recruit actions of title 5 and title 38 positions. Full implementation of the USA Staffing system will be completed by region or VISN. To implement the USA Staffing system for all positions, Human Resources Offices (HROs) in the VISN or region must complete the required basic training and submit the HRO Implementation Certification included in Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) No. 05-10-05. HROs must continue to use their current procedures until they implement and complete the formal USA Staffing systems training. Please refer to the HRML for information on the method and plan for implementation. The HRML also includes clarification on how to comply with the Memorandum of Understanding signed between VA and the American Federation of Government Employees.

HRML No. 05-10-05 will be placed on the OHRM web page at <<http://vawww.va.gov/ohrm/HRLibrary/hrmls.htm>>.

# VISN 16 Works to Foster a Diverse Workforce

The South Central VA Health Care Network (VISN 16) Diversity Advisory Committee recently signed a diversity proclamation aimed at creating and sustaining a high-performing workforce by leveraging diversity and empowering all employees to achieve superior results in service to veterans. The Committee also launched a Web site, [www.visn16.va.gov/diversity/diversity.htm](http://www.visn16.va.gov/diversity/diversity.htm), to share success stories, solicit employee feedback, and increase awareness, education and accountability for diversity and inclusion. The committee's primary goals are to create a diverse, results-oriented, high-performing workforce that reflects the communities the facilities in the network serve by identifying and eliminating barriers to equal opportunity; cultivating a flexible and inclusive work environment that enables full participation through strategic outreach and retention; and facilitating outstanding customer service and stakeholder relations by promoting cultural competency, accountability, education and communication.

"As administrators, it is our responsibility to hire employees who bring experience and expertise not only in their jobs, but in life," said Julie Catellier, VISN 16 DAC chairperson. "Having employees from all walks of life brings a deeper, truer human understanding to the care we deliver."

## Workforce Recruitment Program Awards

VA provided the venue for this year's Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) Summer Awards Ceremony and Reception held on July 21, 2010. John U. Sepúlveda, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, provided welcoming remarks. Kathy Martinez, Assistant Secretary, Office of Disability Employment Policy, U.S. Department of Labor, and Clarence A. Johnson, Principal Director and Director, Civilian Equal Employment Opportunity, U.S. Department of Defense, co-hosted the awards program.

The WRP provides agencies with the opportunity to hire pre-screened students from colleges and universities across the country. These students are at the undergraduate and the graduate level. Some already have work experience and some are ready for full time work. VA had seven WRP interns this summer and is converting one to a Schedule A position.

The event honored five WRP Interns who provided exceptional service or accomplishments during their internship. There were over 200 attendees.

The Judith C. Gilliom Award for Outstanding Employee was presented to five WRP students. These awards are given each year in honor of Ms. Judith C. Gilliom, who was the Department of Defense's Disability Program Manager for 25 years. Ms. Gilliom died in October, 2008. She was the co-founder and co-sponsor of the WRP. She is remembered for her untiring devotion to the WRP.

The 2010 winners of the Judith C. Gilliom outstanding WRP employee awards were:



Jordan B. Byrd (Department of the Army, San Antonio, Texas)

Tyler Kirk (Securities and Exchange Commission, Miami, Florida)

Christopher Ludwig (Defense Logistics Agency, Department of Defense, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

Michelle Ramirez (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Department of Commerce, Wallops, Virginia)

Chandrika Surajpal (Department of Defense Education Activity, Arlington, Virginia)

For more information, contact Aurelia Lopez, ODI's logistics coordinator for this event, at [Aurelia.Lopez@va.gov](mailto:Aurelia.Lopez@va.gov).



# Awards (cont. from page 1)

Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Diversity and Inclusion, was the mistress of ceremonies and introduced the Diversity and Inclusion Excellence Award recipients: **Adam Walmus, Jeanette Goff, and Ryl Giacchetta.**

Mr. Walmus is currently the new director of the Michael E. DeBakey VA Medical Center in Houston, Texas. He was recognized as the former director of the VA Medical Center in Muskogee, Oklahoma, for his focus on cultural diversity awareness that helped to ensure that a wide-range of perspectives was incorporated when addressing issues and concerns related to the delivery of high-quality care to America's Veterans. In addition, Mr. Walmus made participation in the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) a high priority, increasing the number of students involved in the facility's program from just five in fiscal year (FY) 2006 to 25 in FY 2009, the highest number of SCEP interns among all VA medical centers!

Ms. Goff, Medical Support Assistant at the VA Sierra Nevada Health Care System in Reno, Nevada, was recognized for her creative ideas on educating and training an employee with visual impairment to perform the work of a medical support assistant. In addition to working directly with the low-vision employee, Ms. Goff worked with call center team members to identify unspoken assumptions, differing values, and initial resistance related to working with persons with a visual disability. As a direct result of her efforts, the low-vision employee can now perform competently and professionally the functions of this job, and the call center team members know what people can do is much more important than what they can't do.

Ms. Giacchetta accepted the team award on behalf of the Office of Health Information Management, Medical Record Technicians unit at the Charles George VA Medical Center in Asheville, North Carolina. The unit was responsible for translating medical care services provided to Veterans into billable codes recognized by third-party health insurers. Over the past three years, members of the coding unit have overcome individual differences in order to become a unified team, working together efficiently and effectively to focus on their shared goals. In addition to deliberate efforts to build camaraderie, the coding unit has benefited from increased training and expanded communications, both internal and external. The performance of the coding unit has also improved as a result of increased flexibility in how, when, and where work gets done. Their accuracy rate has climbed from 75 percent to 90 percent, and other facilities are now asking them for assistance with their coding concerns.

Ralph Torres, DAS for Office of Resolution Management, was the master of ceremonies and introduced the ADR Excellence Award recipients: **Susan Black, Karen Hebda, Sylvia Jordan, and Kara Merendo.**

Ms. Black, an Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist at the VA Butler Healthcare in Butler, Pennsylvania, was recognized for her efforts in furthering the Department's mission and goals by promoting and utilizing ADR.

Ms. Hebda, ADR Program Manager at the Southern Arizona VA Healthcare System in Tucson, Arizona, was recognized for encouraging others to use ADR and developing creative and innovative ideas and solutions.

Ms. Jordan, ADR Program Manager at the James A. Haley Veterans Hospital in Tampa, Florida, was recognized for encouraging others to use ADR and developing creative and innovative ideas and solutions. Her team was recognized for the facility-wide training they provided on the EEO complaint process and the use of ADR early in the process to seek resolution, reduce cost, and increase morale in the workplace. Also, the team encouraged the use of ADR by developing an EEO/ADR web-based home page that allows employees to access a link to EEO policies, special emphasis programs, and other VA websites relating to EEO and ADR.

Ms. Merendo, ADR Program Manager, VISN 2, VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York in Albany, New York, was recognized for her contribution to the fair, efficient, and effective resolution of disputes. The VISN 2 ADR program reached settlement in 53 percent of its cases.

Congratulations, awards recipients!



*Georgia Coffey (far left) and Ralph Torres (far right) with the 2010 awards recipients.*

# Celebrate! (cont. from page 1)

Latinos have contributed to business, politics, and the military. In New York in 1959, Dr. Severo Ochoa won the Nobel Prize in Medicine and Physiology for his discovery of RNA (ribonucleic acid), one of the chemical building blocks of life. The first Latino to serve in Congress, Joseph Marion Hernández, was elected in 1822 as a Delegate to the U.S. Congress from Florida and Octaviano A. Larrazolo, who served in 1928, was the first Hispanic U.S. Senator.

Army Chaplain Captain Carlos C. Huerta of the 1st Battalion, 79th Field Artillery stated in 1996, "Hispanics have always met the challenge of serving the nation with great passion. In every war, in every battle, on every battlefield, Hispanics have put their lives on the line to protect freedom." It should be noted that up to and including the Vietnam War, Hispanics had earned the Congressional Medal of Honor 40 times, far greater in proportion to their representation in the civilian population in the United States. Hispanics are proud of their heritage and their service to our Nation.

Federal agencies, including VA, are striving to recruit qualified Hispanics to apply for our vacant positions. VA's employment of Hispanics decreased from 6.71 percent at the end of fiscal year (FY) 2007 to 6.50 percent at the end of FY 2009. Hispanic men have a low participation rate at the GS 12–14 pay levels and Hispanic women have a low participation rate at the GS 12–SES pay levels. Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month is not enough. Human resources and equal employment staff stand ready to work with VA's hiring officials to ensure that barriers to Hispanic employment and promotion are identified and addressed. For information on VA's Hispanic Employment Program, contact Aurelia Lopez at <[Aurelia.Lopez.va.gov](mailto:Aurelia.Lopez.va.gov)>.

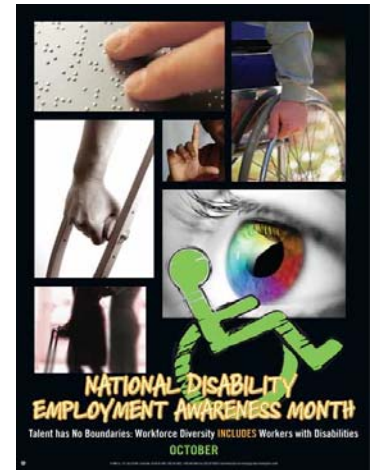
## **DISABILITY MENTORING DAY (DMD) & NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH (NDEAM)**

DMD, a nationwide effort to promote career development for students with disabilities through hands-on career exploration, will be observed on October 20 this year. For more information, visit <[www.dol.gov/odep/programs/dmd.htm](http://www.dol.gov/odep/programs/dmd.htm)>. Coinciding with this observance is NDEAM in October. NDEAM started as one week in 1945 and was expanded by Congress to a month in 1988. Individuals with disabilities, who include Veterans with disabilities, have the highest

unemployment rate of any group in the Nation. On July 26, 2010, which was the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act, President Obama issued an Executive Order instructing all agencies to improve their hiring of people with disabilities and to set goals for hiring

people with targeted disabilities. Targeted disabilities are: deafness, blindness, partial paralysis, total paralysis, missing limbs, distortion of limbs or spine, mental illness, mental retardation, and convulsive disorders. The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission met with various disability groups in the 1970s and determined that individuals with targeted disabilities have a harder time getting and retaining jobs. While the Federal government has expanded since then, the ratio of Federal employees with targeted disabilities peaked in the 1980s and has been dropping. At VA, employees with targeted disabilities were 1.80 percent of the permanent workforce at the end of Fiscal Year (FY) 2000 and were 1.47 percent of the workforce at the end of FY 2009.

Secretary Shinseki has stated that he wants VA to increase the number of employees who are Veterans. In the strategic plan, he also set a two percent hiring goal for individuals with targeted disabilities. Thus, for every 100 new employees, two or more should be individuals with targeted disabilities, preferably Veterans. These individuals can be hired competitively, via the non-competitive Schedule A hiring authority, or the various authorities for hiring Veterans. Most accommodations needed by these individuals can be provided by the Department of Defense's Computer/Electronic Accommodation Program. Other accommodations can be purchased by the employee's office and then reimbursed from VA's Centralized Accommodation Fund. For more information, please see the Disability Program webpage at <[www.diversity.hr.va.gov/disabilities.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/disabilities.htm)>. [Continued on the next page.]



# Celebrate! (cont. from previous page)

## GERMAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

September 15 to October 15, 2010, marks the 21st anniversary of German-American Heritage Month. It was begun in 1989 by the German-American Citizens League of Greater Cincinnati, which was founded in 1895. German-American Day, which is October 6th, is the anniversary of the day in 1683 when the first permanent German settlement in America was established at Germantown, Pennsylvania. German-American Day was officially declared as a day of commemoration by President Ronald Reagan in 1987 and has been celebrated ever since across the Nation.

We are pleased to celebrate the long history of German immigrants and the many contributions Americans of German ancestry have made to the life, culture, and economy of this country since October 6, 1683, when 13 families from Krefeld, near the Rhine River, arrived in Philadelphia. They later founded Germantown in Pennsylvania, the first German settlement in the 13 American colonies.

About one in four Americans claims to have German ancestors. German-Americans from Adolph Coors to Albert Einstein have made important contributions to both American and world culture. The legendary Brooklyn Bridge was designed by a German-born engineer. The American rockets to the moon were designed and supervised by another German-American. Many German Americans have shaped our way of life and added to our country's rich heritage.

## POLISH-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH



Since 1608, when the first Polish settlers arrived at Jamestown, VA, people of Polish descent have been an important part of America's history and culture. In 2009, Polish Americans will mark the 28th Anniversary of the founding of Polish American Heritage Month, an event which began in Philadelphia, PA. After five years, in 1986, the national leadership of the Polish American Congress joined with the Polish American Heritage Month Committee to expand this event to a

national celebration of Polish history, culture and pride. Over the years, Polish American organizations, churches, schools and individuals have united in proudly celebrating the history, culture and accomplishments of the Polish people. October has traditionally been celebrated by the Polish-American community as Polish Heritage Month. Matt Urban, a Polish-American, was the most decorated soldier in U.S. military history, receiving 29 medals and awards for bravery during his 20 months of service in WWII.

## ITALIAN-AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Over 5.4 million Italians immigrated to the United States between 1820 and 1992. Today there are over 26 million Americans of Italian descent in the United States, making them the fifth largest ethnic group. The country was even named after an Italian, the explorer and geographer Amerigo Vespucci. October is Italian-American Heritage Month, coinciding with the festivities surrounding Columbus Day. This observance gives us an opportunity to celebrate the cultural contribution of Italians in America. We view culture in its broadest sense to include an appreciation of the significance and value of the Italian and Latin languages, Italian and Italian-American history, art, architecture, agriculture, cuisine, fashion, film, government, industry, literature, music, religion, science, sport, and all those other aspects of life we view as part of culture.

Three Italian regiments, totaling some 1,500 men, fought for American independence: the Third Piemonte, the 13th Du Perche, and the Royal Italian. Francesco Vigo (1747-1836), is believed the first Italian to become an American citizen. A successful fur trader on the western frontier (today the mid-western states of Wisconsin, Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio), Vigo served as a colonel, spy, and financier during the American Revolution. He died a pauper, but in 1876 the U.S. government gave his heirs about \$50,000 to repay them for Vigo's financial support of the Revolutionary War. Along with George Rogers Clark, he helped settle the Northwest territory.





# VISN 22 Diversity Training

VA's Veterans Integrated Service Network 22 (VISN 22) recently developed a Diversity Workforce and Patient Centered Care training for supervisors, managers, and employees. This new training program was unveiled at the American GI Forum (AGIF) National Conference on July 22, 2010, in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The VISN 22 education staff was led by Harry Ray, Facility Education Officer, VA Southern Nevada Healthcare System. The EEO committee management staff was led by Felix DeJesus, EEO Manager, VISN 22. The day-long program included presentations and discussions on the current state of Hispanic employment, how VA can become the employer of choice through leveraging the benefits of diversity, a mind-mapping exercise that explored strategies for implementing a diverse patient-centered workforce, career management, and career pathway (the process of outlining individual career plans within an organization), a practice which offers managers and supervisors a way to identify key positions throughout their respective organizations.

The training program course is in keeping with the guiding principles of VA's new Strategic Plan 2010-2014: People-centric, Results-driven, and Forward-looking. For more information, contact José Marrero at <[Jose.Marrero@va.gov](mailto:Jose.Marrero@va.gov)>.



*Participants at the VISN 22 Training*

## Coffey's Keynotes (cont. from page 1)

Another ODI ADVANCE initiative is VA's centralized Diversity Internship program. ADVANCE funding allowed 46 interns to be sponsored and placed in VA this summer, helping us to reach a new record of 164 interns for the year! Record high participation rates were reached in the following programs: National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education, Washington Internships for Native Students, American Indian Science & Engineering Society, and the International Leadership Foundation. ODI developed five organizational training/volunteer opportunities for the interns including international diversity day, homeless Veterans stand down, a resume/interview workshop, a Washington DC VA Medical Center "be a Veteran for a day", and a Fourth of July "thank you" event for our senior interns. We are proud to report that 20 percent of job-ready interns have been converted so far this year! Through initiatives like this, we are building a diverse pipeline for VA recruitment.

Finally, this month, our Muslim friends and colleagues observe Ramadan, one the holiest of months in the Islamic calendar. Ramadan ends with Eid al-Fitr, a major religious

holiday for Muslims comparable in significance to Christmas. I encourage all of us to use these observances as opportunities to raise awareness and respect about different faiths and customs. It is also an opportune time to remind all of us of the tenets of religious freedom that are embedded in our Constitution. This freedom was one of America's founding principles and its protection in the First Amendment is no less relevant today than ever before. I urge all of us to honor these and other principles that are fundamental to our human diversity and essential to maintaining an inclusive work environment. Managers and supervisors are encouraged to consult with ODI for information on VA's religious accommodation policy referenced in the Secretary's 2010 EEO, Diversity, and No FEAR Policy Statement. If you have any questions about this policy, please do not hesitate to contact a member of our staff at (202) 461-4131. More information on religious accommodation is also available on the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission web site: <[www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/religion.cfm](http://www.eeoc.gov/laws/types/religion.cfm)>. ~Georgia Coffey



# VACO Celebrates Women's Equality Day

The Federal Women's Program (FWP) celebrated Women's Equality Day on August 16, 2010, with a program hosted by Alice Muellerweiss, Dean of VA Learning University, in the VA Central Office G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center. In observance of this year's national theme, "Honoring the Struggle of Visionary Women", the featured guest speaker was Ashley Carson, J.D., Executive Director of the Older Women's League (OWL)—the voice of Midlife and Older Women. OWL represents the issues that impact women 40 and older in America. As co-chair of the Income Security Committee and the Older Women's Economic Security Taskforce for the National Council of Women's Organizations, she works closely with the Leadership of Aging Organizations. For additional information about the event, contact Tiffany Lewis, Special Emphasis Coordinator, at (202) 461-7911 or at <[Tiffany.Lewis@va.gov](mailto:Tiffany.Lewis@va.gov)>.



*Alice Muellerweiss Hosted the Event*

## Compliance Corner

### REPRISAL PER SE HARMS PUBLIC INTEREST

Expressing hostility to the EEO complaint process by individuals in a supervisory or managerial position has been determined to be a per se violation of the letter and spirit of Title VII and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) regulations. These regulations require agencies to promote and support the full realization of equal employment opportunity in their policies and practices. The EEOC has determined that retaliation harms the public interest by deterring others from filing complaints.

The EEOC has held that statements or actions of a supervisor may be a per se violation of the EEOC's regulations when the supervisor intimidates an employee and interferes with her EEO activity in any manner. EEOC decisions have found a violation of Title VII where managers have exerted pressure on complainants to drop EEO complaints or not to file them, complained about, criticized or discredited EEO activity, disclosed EEO activity, encouraged a complainant to resign, instituted policies which discourage EEO activity, and threatened complainants with reassignment, termination, and civil, criminal and defamation suits because they engaged in protected activity.

In a recent case involving a Department of Agriculture

employee, reprisal was found based on comments made by the selecting official. Complainant applied and was not chosen for a position. After she filed an EEO complaint, the selecting official told a co-worker that he could not believe complainant filed a complaint, that she was a liability, and that she was on the "other side of the line" because she filed the complaint. The selecting official told the co-worker that if she was going to file a complaint, to tell him first. He further told the co-worker that he expected loyalty from his employees. Additionally, two weeks before the hearing in this matter, the selecting official told the co-worker that he knew she was named as a witness, that a court reporter would be at the hearing, and that the transcript was a public record and he would know everything the co-worker said. The EEOC found that the selecting official illegally interfered with the EEO process when he made the comments to the co-worker. The EEOC ordered the agency to provide the selecting official with 16 hours of EEO training, and to consider taking disciplinary action against the selecting official. Kathleen James v. Department of Agriculture, EEOC Appeal No. 0120073831 (September 22, 2009), request for reconsideration denied, EEOC Request No. 0520100086 (March 22, 2010). ~Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA's Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication

## SES Training and Development

ODI and the Office of Resolution Management (ORM) hosted the first EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management for SES Training and Development August 26 and 27, 2010, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Part of the new ADVANCE initiative, this course provided VA Senior Executive Service (SES) members and Title 38 equivalents with the knowledge and tools necessary to meet their legal obligations and supervisory responsibilities in the areas of equal employment opportunity (EEO), reasonable accommodation, diversity & inclusion, and alternative dispute resolution (ADR) and conflict management. Educating our senior leaders in these areas is essential to making VA a fair, diverse and inclusive organization for the 21st century. Look for photos and a recap of this event in the next issue of *Diversity@Work!*

The next round of training for SES members will be September 15 and 16, 2010, in Alexandria, Virginia. For more information, visit <[www.diversity.hr.va.gov/iLeadDiversity](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/iLeadDiversity)>.

## Reasonable Accommodations

If your office has paid for any disability accommodations since the end of April, 2010, you can send the invoice to ODI for reimbursement. Please submit your request by September 20, 2010. VA Administrations and Central Staff Offices are encouraged to utilize the new Centralized Fund for Reasonable Accommodations for VA employees with disabilities. This initiative will help VA meet its obligation to advance, retain, and provide reasonable accommodations to employees with disabilities, particularly those with targeted disabilities.

The fund is also being used for reimbursement of the cost of accommodations for employees with disabilities to attend suitable training opportunities, including career development training such as Leadership VA and the LEAD programs. Although the employee's office must pay for the cost of the training, this fund will provide reimbursement for any accommodations needed to attend the training. The fund will not be used to reimburse the cost of ramps and other physical facility modifications. Funds will be awarded on a first come, first serve basis. The memorandum on the Centralized Fund and the form for requesting reimbursement are available at <[www.diversity.hr.va.gov/disabilities.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/disabilities.htm)>.

## HRRO Representative Helps VA Shine

On any given morning at the Veterans Health Administration's (VHA's) Healthcare Retention & Recruitment Office (HRRO) you are as likely to find Susan Montelius wrangling oversized metal display stands into yawning mailing containers as you are to see her behind her meticulously crowded desk. Throughout the year, she single-handedly synchronizes this national office's participation and representation to hundreds of diverse groups hungry for information about the employment opportunities available today in VHA. From the initial receipt of an event prospectus, to coordinating VHA booth representatives and materials, to tracking the finances and statistics of the event calendar, Ms. Montelius tackles each with a revealing military efficiency.

A Navy Veteran herself, and with grandfather, father and brother also Veteran sailors, Susan professes a strong

commitment to those members of the Armed Services population that she now serves. Her care ensures that thousands of potential doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and other current and future healthcare workers learn about today's modernized VA medical system and the benefits of being part of it. Each event she registers HRRO for, every exhibitors package that she arranges and ships, the participants that she preps, the history files that she maintains— these are her part in ensuring that Veterans are served by the highest quality medical staff. To this end, she organizes representation for nearly 100 events, conferences and meetings per year.

ODI thanks Ms. Montelius for her tireless efforts. For assistance with VHA HRRO representation and exhibition at employment-related events, contact Ms. Montelius at (504) 565-4844 or <[Susan.Montelius@va.gov](mailto:Susan.Montelius@va.gov)>.



# ODI on the Internet

## DIVERSITY@WORK

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

for additional staff  
e-mail addresses.

## OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Under Secretary for Health  
Diversity Advisory Board  
<[vaww1.va.gov/vhadiversity](http://vaww1.va.gov/vhadiversity)>

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

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)>

VA Learning University  
<[vaww.va.gov/valu](http://vaww.va.gov/valu)>

## GOT NEWS?

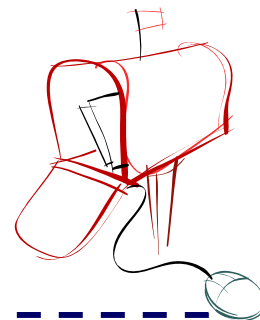
We want to hear from you!  
If you'd like to share your story  
ideas, comments, or suggestions,  
e-mail us at <[odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov)>  
with the words  
**DIVERSITY@WORK**  
in the subject line.

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.hr.va.gov](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov)> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ Hispanic Heritage Month, Disability Employment Awareness 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.hr.va.gov/ca/newslink.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/newslink.htm)>.



## ODI on Your TV or PC

*Diversity News* is a monthly video program produced by the VACO Broadcasting Center for ODI. The September 2010 edition focuses on revolutionizing talent management through customization. *Diversity News* follows VA News on the VA Knowledge Network (VAKN) channel 2 at <<http://vaww.vakncdn.lrn.va.gov>>. Programs are also available at <[www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm)>.

## From the 2010 Diversity Calendar

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

### SEPTEMBER

**Labor Day**  
September 6

**National Hispanic Heritage Month**  
September 15–October 15

**Constitution Day/Citizenship Day**  
September 17

**Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities 24th Annual Conference**  
September 18–20; San Diego, CA  
<[www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net)>

### OCTOBER

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

**Polish-American Heritage Month**  
**Italian-American Heritage Month**  
**German-American Heritage Month**

**Out and Equal Conference**  
October 5–8; Los Angeles, CA  
<<http://outandequal.org/summit-2010>>

**Disability Mentoring Day**  
October 20  
<[www.dmd-aapd.org](http://www.dmd-aapd.org)>

**Thurgood Marshall Leadership Institute Recruitment Conference and Career Fair**  
October 29–November 1; New York, NY  
<[www.thurgoodmarshallfund.net](http://www.thurgoodmarshallfund.net)>