

Diversity@Work

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< [WWW.DIVERSITY.HR.VA.GOV/CA/DAW.HTM](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/daw.htm) >**INSIDE:**

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BOOKMARKS**ADVANCE**

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

DIVERSITY NEWS

<www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm>

**FEDERAL HISPANIC
CAREER ADVANCEMENT
SUMMIT**

<www.federalhispanicsummit.org>

VA'S DISABILITY PROGRAM

<www.diversity.hr.va.gov/disabilities.htm>

**WORKFORCE
RECRUITMENT PROGRAM**

<www.wrpjobs.com>

Diversity organizations can be found on the ODI Web site:

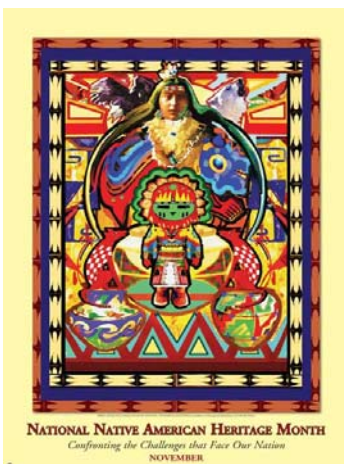
<www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org>

Training

To further develop the executive and leadership skills necessary to sustain an inclusive workplace that fosters equal opportunity, leverages diversity, and supports constructive resolution of conflicts, the Offices of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) and Resolution Management (ORM), and the VA Learning University designed, developed, and delivered EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for senior executives. The Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration mandated this training be conducted for VA senior executives before September 30, 2010, and on a biennial basis, thereafter.

Part of the new ADVANCE initiative, this executive training and development expanded the awareness of VA Senior Executive Service (SES) members and Title 38 equivalents and increased their knowledge necessary to foster an inclusive workplace where diversity and individual differences are valued and leveraged to achieve the vision and mission of the organization.

[Continued on page 5.]



which survive as intact political communities. When elementary and high school students are taught American history, it usually starts with Cristobal Colon and the Niña, Pinta, and Santa Maria discovering the New World, never mind that the Americas already were inhabited by highly advanced civilizations. It should come as no surprise that great Native American leaders are for the most part ignored in history classes rooted in the Columbus and Pilgrim stories. [Continued on page 6.]

Coffey's Keynotes

As we approach the holiday season in the spirit of Thanksgiving, I'd like to pause to express my personal thanks to all our friends, colleagues, and stakeholders throughout VA and beyond who have given ODI their support, commitment, and countless expressions of appreciation for the work we do. You have told us time and again how we are helping to shape a diverse workforce and inclusive organizational culture in VA, and my staff and I want to thank you for your immeasurable contributions to our common goals. We truly cannot do this alone and we are immensely grateful for your constant support and collaboration in advancing our collective aims.

To this end, we recently completed face-to-face training in EEO, diversity, and conflict management for Senior Executive Service members, and launched VA's first standardized online version of this training for all managers and supervisors. We hope this training will equip our managers with the tools and information necessary to maintain a fair, diverse, and inclusive workplace that values all of our employees and leverages all of our unique contributions to the mission. [Continued on page 5.]

Celebrate!

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating National Native American Heritage Month this November and Veterans Day on November 11.

NATIONAL NATIVE AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

Native Americans in the United States are the indigenous peoples in North America within the boundaries of the present-day continental U.S., including parts of Alaska and the island state of Hawaii. They are composed of numerous distinct tribes, states, and ethnic groups, many of

Field Notes

FEDERAL HISPANIC CAREER ADVANCEMENT SUMMIT

The Third Annual Federal Hispanic Career Advancement Summit will be held November 29-30, 2010, at the National Institutes of Health Natcher Conference Center, in Bethesda, Maryland. The theme for the Summit is “Change, Challenges, and Opportunities.”

This event is free and open to all Federal employees! The Summit aims to help attendees realize their professional aspirations and develop individual leadership competencies in order to prepare for senior positions in the Federal sector. To this end, the Summit provides an unparalleled variety of career, leadership, and networking activities. Senior-level keynote speakers and Executive Coaching Workshops provide attendees direct access to prominent Federal executives who can provide invaluable insights on successfully navigating the Federal workplace. Moreover, the carefully selected workshops closely track skills that are associated with the Office of Personnel Management’s Executive Core Qualifications, the qualifications that aspiring SES must satisfy in order to advance to that leadership level within the Federal Government.

Registration is on a first come, first served basis, and it will fill up fast! Employees interested in attending must obtain supervisory approval and register for this event. For more information please log onto <www.federalhispanicsummit.org>.



SAIGE MOU

Danny J. Garceau, Chairman of the Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) is working with ODI to develop and implement a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA/MOU), that will establish the framework for SAIGE and VA to develop an overall plan to support Native Americans, Native American Veterans of the United States Armed Forces, their dependents, and the youth and young adults in their communities. SAIGE would like to develop a plan for a seamless service delivery process that supports a high-profile, local-level network comprising Federal, state, and local government agencies; Veterans Service Organizations; community affinity associations; institutions of higher education; faith based organizations; and the private sector intent on accomplishing the following:

- Recruit Native Americans and Native American Veterans.
- Maintain and encourage upward-bound youth through tutoring, mentoring, and coaching—especially in skills-building community classrooms, job-readiness activities, Federal internships, proficiency development or other work experience programs, and job placement initiatives.
- Develop a range of employment opportunities for Veterans, including consultative services for employment, career development, and educational improvement.
- Sustain a highly-visible Veterans Business Enterprise structure supporting self-employment, assisting and supporting viable community enterprise undertaken in concert with the private-sector, and producing innovative self-help socio-economic joint ventures.
- Achieve greater community self-reliance at the local levels by building a seamless service delivery platform for customer- and employment-based ventures supported by an integrated network comprising Federal, state, and local governments, Veterans Service Organizations, community affinity associations, institutions of higher education, and the private sector.

For more information, contact José O. Marrero at <Jose.Marrero@va.gov>.

Policy Alerts

RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

The most significant changes to VA Directive and Handbook 5017, Employee Recognition and Awards, include:

- Expands eligibility for Superior Performance Awards to non-supervisory/non-managerial title 38 employees.
- Clarifies that Quality Step Increases may only be granted within the grade level that it was earned.
- Increases non-tangible award values in Part III, Appendix A.
- Updates and replaces the delegation authorities to approve incentive awards for each of the Administrations.

ENTRANCE AND EXIT SURVEYS

VA Directive 5004 is being reissued in its entirety to set forth the policies

and responsibilities for implementing the entrance and exit survey processes. The purpose of these surveys is to provide new employees the opportunity to communicate their reasons for choosing employment with VA and voluntarily separating employees the opportunity to communicate their reasons for leaving. The information will assist VA in identifying methods to improve recruitment and marketing efforts as well as employee retention.

SPECIAL RETIREMENT PROVISIONS FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS AND FIREFIGHTERS POLICY

VA has issued a policy regarding procedures for requesting an exemption for Law Enforcement Officers (LEO) and Firefighters (FF) from the mandatory separation age.

This policy outlines procedures for requesting an exemption for LEO and FF prior to the mandatory retirement separation age of 57. There are different procedures for making an exemption based on the two separate retirement systems, Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)/Federal

Employee Retirement System (FERS), under which LEO and FF can retire based on mandatory separation due to age.

Sample memorandums and letters were created to make processing mandatory retirement/separations for LEO and FF and for requesting an exemption of the mandatory separation an easier transition for Human Resources offices.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST QUALIFICATION STANDARD

The new VA qualification standard for Marriage and Family Therapist, GS-101 has been signed. Since this is a new occupation to VA, there will NOT be an initial one-time boarding. Additional implementation instructions and guidance will be forthcoming from VHA. The new Appendix G42 will be added to the electronic version of VA Handbook 5005, Pt II.

These policies will be updated on VA's Office of Human Resources Management intranet Web site.

NEW VA GUIDANCE ON DISABILITY ACCOMMODATIONS

The updated VA Handbook 5975.1, "Processing Requests for Reasonable Accommodation," was released on September 17, 2010. The handbook was revised to reflect guidance from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Americans with Disabilities Amendment Act Amendments Act. Three major changes are an expansion of the definition of disability, a requirement that decision officials consult with their regional Office of General Counsel or ODI before denying a request for accommodation, and clarification that only the Secretary can approve denials based on cost (undue hardship). The handbook also clarified that medical documentation may not be requested when an individual has an obvious disability or has submitted medical documentation to VA in the past for the same functional limitations. The directive, handbook, and new forms are all posted in the Library section of the Disability Program Web site at www.diversity.hr.va.gov/disabilities.htm. The Web site also provides information on the centralized fund which provides reimbursement of the cost of accommodations purchased by VA offices for employees and applicants.

The handbook update and the creation of the centralized fund are part of VA's efforts to improve our retention of employees with disabilities and ensure that they receive accommodation necessary to perform the duties of the job and/or enjoy the benefits and privileges of employment.

ODI issued a call for contact information on local reasonable accommodation coordinators (LRACs) and alternates, and Selective Placement Coordinators. The LRACs/alternates will be the main local source of guidance on the accommodation process for each VA facility. The Selective Placement Coordinators will be seeking to increase recruitment and employment of individuals with targeted disabilities, so that VA can meet the two percent hiring goal outlined in Secretary Shinseki's September 7, 2010, memorandum. Read more on [page 7](#).

VACO Notes

VA'S ANNUAL DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT

ODI is beginning the process of developing VA's Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for fiscal year 2010. The purpose of the report is to chronicle the Department's progress toward realizing the goals of VA's Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan (<www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/strat.pdf>), in alignment with VA's strategic plan for 2010-2014.

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 2009 Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report, relevant responsibilities, activities, and accomplishments will be identified for each administration, organization, and office within VA. A copy of the 2009 report is available on the internet at <www.diversity.hr.va.gov/docs/09DIRep.pdf>.

ODI is requesting that VA Diversity Council members collect information from their respective organizations for inclusion in the Annual Report. For guidance on preparing submissions (due by November 12, 2010), please contact Michael Morgan, ODI, by telephone at 202-461-4014 or by e-mail at <Michael.Morgan3@va.gov>.

WIN LAUNCHES

On Thursday, September 23, Deputy Secretary W. Scott Gould introduced the new Wellness Is Now (WIN) to all VA employees.

WIN is for everyone. Here are just some of the benefits of the program:

- A Health Risk Assessment that establishes a baseline for a participant's health risks and develops a custom Wellness Profile;
- An online Lifestyle Management Center, which serves as a platform for VA employees to assess their own health risks and get started on the path to improved health and wellness;
- Personalized tips on a variety of health topics;
- Webinars hosted by medical and fitness professionals;
- Access to a virtual coach who can provide support and guidance on achieving personal health goals; and
- An incentive program to encourage participants to stay on track.

WIN is one of the training and educational programs offered through ADVANCE, demonstrating VA's commitment to employees. VA knows that investing in employees' health is one of the best ways VA can strengthen its workforce, and that investment is a critical part of VA's mission to provide the best service possible to our Nation's Veterans.

DIVERSITY NEWS OFFERS 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. Some of the most recent episodes include leveraging the uniqueness of all employees to improve individual and organizational performance (September 2010); creating a culture of employee engagement, which is essential to building "a best place to work" (October 2010); and sustaining employee engagement, performance, and productivity (November 2010).

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.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm>.



Training (cont. from page 1)

Focusing on EEO compliance, reasonable accommodation, diversity and inclusion, and alternative dispute resolution and conflict management, the content delivered by ODI and ORM is essential to building knowledge and understanding to bringing about strategic change and meeting organizational goals and customer expectations for the 21st century.

By partnering with the Veterans Health Administration (VHA), ODI and ORM successfully presented the inaugural sessions following VHA's Senior Leader Conference on August 26 and 27 in Las Vegas. Additional sessions were conducted on September 15 and 16 in Alexandria, Virginia, for VA Central Office, the National Cemetery Administration, and the Veterans Benefits Administration. Over 90 percent of VA SES and Title 38 equivalents attended the training and development sessions. Those who were unable to attend face-to-face sessions were directed to take VA's new online EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training for managers and supervisors, now available on the VA Learning Management System (LMS). The new VA online training is mandatory for all managers and supervisors, and will be required biennially. Although managers and supervisors should have completed this training by October 31, it may still be accessed through LMS at: <<https://www.lms.va.gov>> (course number 1328672). For more information about VA's EEO, Diversity, and Conflict Management Training, contact James Blockwood at <James.Blockwood@va.gov>.



Attendees listen in at the Las Vegas session.

Attendees participate in a strategic planning session in Alexandria, Virginia

As a part of VA's ongoing commitment to people development, workforce engagement and talent management, ADVANCE is pleased to provide employees an opportunity to develop and expand their knowledge and skill sets. Sign up for an online course today on the VA Learning Management System at <<https://www.lms.va.gov/plateau/user/login.jsp>>.

Coffey's Keynotes (cont. from page 1)

I invite you to read more about this in the **Training** article. We also released new guidance on disability accommodations and continue to promote the use of our centralized fund for disability accommodations. Please learn more about these critical initiatives that support the employment and retention of people with disabilities by reading the articles on **page 3**.

Additionally, November marks National Native American Heritage Month—a time to celebrate American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. We look forward to many informative VA events throughout the country celebrating these rich cultures. For information on this observance, please see the article below. Finally, with Veterans Day coming up on November 11, we should each take the time to reflect on the sacrifices so many of our Nation's Veterans have made in service to our country and in defense of the freedom and liberties we all enjoy. I encourage all of us to show our gratefulness by contributing to the Combined Federal Campaign to support those who need our help. There are many wonderful organizations out there who could use our assistance this holiday season. I wish each and every one of you a safe, healthy, and happy holiday season!

~Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

Celebrate! (cont. from page 1)

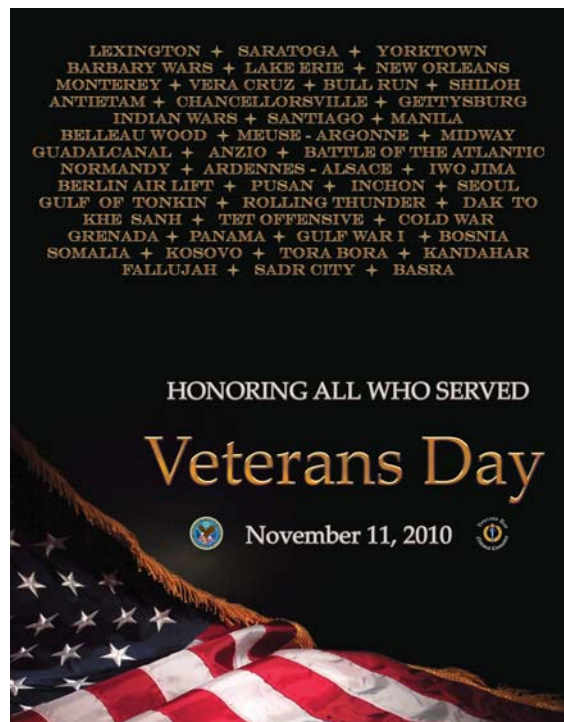
The few Native American exceptions to make the history books were friends of Whites—Pocahontas, Squanto, etc.—or their enemies—Pontiac and Crazy Horse. One of the first great Native American leaders is Tatanka Yotanka, whom the Euro-Americans called Sitting Bull. As overall leader of the Lakota in the Battle of the Greasy Grass ("Custer's Last Stand" to others), Tatanka Yotanka has come to symbolize the wise, valorous, venerated spiritual warrior of the plains. Tatanka Yotanka was the last important Lakota leader to surrender to the Americans. The other great highlighted warrior-statesman of the Shawnee, Tecumseh, fought against the intrusion of settlers into the Ohio Valley all of his adult life. First he fought under the great Miami leader, Michiquinik (Little Turtle). Then, when the great Miami chieftain considered war against the Whites hopeless, Tecumseh became the leader of the Wabash and Ohio Valley warriors. A noted orator as well as a warrior, Tecumseh faced off with William Henry Harrison in front of Grouseland, the future President's estate. Few Native American leaders are as widely respected as Tecumseh.

Many Native Americans served in the military during the Civil War, the vast majority of whom sided with the Union. Teddy Roosevelt's 1st U.S. Volunteer Cavalry the "Rough Riders" included sixty Native Americans who served as "Rough Riders." Some 44,000 Native Americans served in the United States military during World War II. Native American soldiers are among those to be distinguished by receiving the United States' highest military honor: 28 have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

Very little is known about the contributions of Native American women to the U.S. military. Army Pfc. Lori Ann

Piestewa, 23, of the Hopi Nation was a member of 507th Maintenance Company from Fort Bliss and was ambushed near Nasiriyah, Iraq, on March 23, 2003. Nine soldiers, including Piestewa, were killed in action. She was posthumously promoted to Specialist Piestewa. Some 1,509 Native American and Native Alaskan women have served in the military forces since 1994. Thousands more have served in the military over time. Our Nation has a proud military history with men and women of different racial and ethnic backgrounds who have made the ultimate sacrifice in defense of freedom. Let us express our deepest gratitude to the hundreds of thousands of Native American soldiers for answering the call to service and to their families who stand by them. We can express our gratitude with a straightforward "Thank You."

To honor the achievements of Native Americans, on August 3, 1990, a Joint Resolution designating the month of November 1990 as "National American Indian Heritage Month" was approved by President Bush, becoming Public Law 101-343 (104 Stat. 391). Please join the Department as we celebrate the heritage, culture, spirit, and contributions of Native Americans during National Native American Heritage Month. For information on VA's Native American Employment Program, contact José O. Marrero at [<Jose.Marrero@va.gov>](mailto:Jose.Marrero@va.gov).



VETERANS DAY

VA also joins the Nation in proudly saluting those who have served our Nation on Veterans Day, November 11.

About 30 percent of VA's employees are Veterans, and 8.5 percent are service-connected disabled Veterans.

For more information on Veteran employment at VA, visit the Veterans Employment Coordination Service Web site at [<www.va.gov/vecs>](http://www.va.gov/vecs).

Information, activities, and resources concerning VA's Veterans Day celebration can be found at [<www.va.gov/opa/vetsday>](http://www.va.gov/opa/vetsday).

VA KICKS OFF PROGRAM TO HIRE INDIVIDUALS WITH TARGETED DISABILITIES

On September 7, 2010, Secretary Shinseki issued a memorandum announcing a two percent hiring goal for individuals with targeted disabilities for FY 2011. This was followed by a September 15 memorandum from Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration John Sepúlveda providing guidance on recruitment, hiring, and reasonable accommodations for these individuals, as well as making VA a fully accessible work environment. If you missed these memorandums, they are posted in the Library on VA's Disability Program Web page at <www.diversity.hr.va.gov/disabilities.htm>.

Part of VA's mission is "To care for him who shall have borne the battle." VA works to heal wounded Veterans and assist with education costs so they can reintegrate into America's workforce when possible. Hiring Veterans with targeted disabilities emphasizes that we believe in our Veterans and know that they have much to offer. The Blinded Veterans Association and the Paralyzed Veterans of American are two sources of Veterans with targeted disabilities.

When recruiting from other sources, it can be difficult to know if an applicant has a targeted disability (blindness, deafness, partial paralysis, total paralysis, missing limbs, distortion of limbs or spine, mental illness, mental retardation, and convulsive disorders). Two sources of college graduates who are deaf are Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., and the National Technical Institute for the Deaf, which is part of Rochester Institute of Technology in Rochester, New York. All colleges and universities have an office that provides accommodation services for students with disabilities; sometimes they are willing to share job announcements with their clients. Other sources of individuals with disabilities, which can include individuals with targeted disabilities and disabled Veterans, are the State Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Veteran Service Organizations, the Workforce Recruitment Program, the Employer Assistance & Resource Network, and Veterans with disabilities who are VA clients.

Accommodation for the functional limitations posed by the disability can be obtained at no cost from the U.S. Department of Defense's Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program or reimbursed from VA's Centralized Fund, which is managed by ODI. Information on the Centralized Fund can also be found on the Disability Program Web site.

Disability Issues

NEW LIST OF WRP CANDIDATES TO BE RELEASED IN DECEMBER

The Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) provides pre-screened job candidates who are postsecondary students and recent graduates with disabilities, including individuals with targeted disabilities. Trained WRP recruiters from Federal agencies interview interested students at their college and university campuses, and submit the interview results for screening and entry to the WRP candidate list. Some students are available for a summer internship, while others are available for a permanent position via the Schedule A non-competitive hiring authority. The list will be released to all Federal government hiring officials the first week of December 2010. This is different from prior years, when the list was released in the spring. The best candidates are hired quickly; they usually go to the first agency to contact them. ODI suggests that each facility appoint someone to become familiar with the WRP, which is hosted at <<https://wrp.gov>>. Users will need to establish a free account. If a student appears to be a perfect candidate, but has accepted an internship at another agency, ODI suggests keeping in touch with the student to offer him or her a permanent position after graduation. If your office is interested in "first dibs" at these candidates, you may arrange for your staff to conduct the screening interviews for the 2012 batch of candidates.

OPM PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES SHARED REGISTER PROCESS

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has contracted for the general information on prescreened job candidates with disabilities to be available on a shared register. The register will include position and geographical interests, qualifications and skills, including academic background. The contractor, Bender Consulting, will update the list with a minimum of 50 individuals. Twice each month, Bender Consulting will share via e-mail a spreadsheet that includes general information about all active candidates, grouped by position interest and qualifications. If a candidate appears to be suitable for your vacancy, contact Sherry Homme at <shomme@benderconsult.com> for a detailed resume. The contractor has requested that you contact Ms. Homme when an individual is hired off this list. To get a copy of the list, please contact your Human Resources Office or <Christy.Compton@va.gov>. These candidates may be hired via the Schedule A non-competitive appointment process. However, VA human resource and hiring officials should keep in mind that not all of the individuals listed in the shared register have a targeted disability.

VA and BIG

ODI conducted the Veterans Affairs Agency Forum, as part of the 32nd Blacks in Government (BIG) Annual National Training Conference, which was held on August 17, 2010, at the Kansas City Convention Center. The theme was “The New BIG: Taking Chances, Making Changes, and Preparing Leaders.”

Organized in 1975, BIG was established as a national response to the need for African Americans in public service to address issues of mutual concern and use their collective strength to confront workplace and community issues. BIG is a non-profit organization and functions as an employee support and advocacy organization with the primary mission to promote and enhance educational and training opportunities for its membership. This conference qualifies as training in compliance with Title 5 United States Code Chapter 41.

The training conference offered the opportunity to participate in outstanding educational and leadership training sessions. The sessions included Executive Leadership, How to Apply for SES Positions, Project Management, Administrative Professionals, Science and Technology, Business Analysis and Human Resources, and Team Building. The training featured a diverse cadre of over 300 workshop presenters and speakers. Over 100 VA employees attended the Agency Forum.

VA’s Agency Forum featured Mr. Steve L. Muro, Acting Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, National Cemetery Administration, as the keynote speaker. He shared personal and professional career experiences with the



Dr. Arthur McMahan presents ADVANCE.



From L to R: Gregg Reeves; Ethel Sligh, BIG National Treasurer, Executive Assistant for VA, and Mistress of Ceremonies; Steve L. Muro; and Melvin Davis.

audience. He was presented with an award for his continued support, participation, and dedication to supporting this great and powerful conference. Guest speakers such as John Moon, Deputy Director, VISN 15; Melvin Davis, BIG National Board of Directors Chair and former VA Deputy Director; and Gregg Reeves, former BIG National President and VA employee from Austin, Texas, provided excellent remarks. In addition, Givon Lewis, HR Specialist, VA Eastern Kansas Health Care System, shared his heartfelt career path with VA employees. Arthur P. McMahan, Ph.D. Director, Programs and Evaluation, VA Learning University, provided a presentation on ADVANCE. ADVANCE is VA’s training tool that provides support to employees to help them provide better services to Veterans and their families.

BIG will hold its 33rd Annual Training Conference on August 22-26, 2011, in Boston, Massachusetts. A station memorandum signed by the Assistant Secretary will be forthcoming well in advance of the conference. All employees are encouraged to attend; however, employees must obtain their supervisors approval. For additional information, please contact Trina R. Faison, National Black Employment Program Manager, by telephone at 202-461-4044 or by e-mail at <Trina.Faison@va.gov>.

Women Veterans Forum

On July 28, 2010, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs hosted “A Forum on Women Veterans” at the Women’s Memorial at Arlington National Cemetery. The purpose of the Forum was to engage and educate Veterans service organizations and women Veteran advocates about enhancements in VA services for women Veterans. An information marketplace, staffed by internal and external subject matter experts, allowed participants to build toolkits customized for their respective constituents at the local and regional levels.

Dr. Irene Trowell-Harris, Director of the Center for Women Veterans, welcomed the participants, and Secretary Eric K. Shinseki provided opening remarks. Dr. Betty Moseley Brown, Associate Director for the Center for Women Veterans, provided an overview of the day’s activities as well as forum summary and closing remarks.

Attendees were provided presentations on key topics of interest to women Veterans, including women Veteran demographics, health needs and priorities, readjustment counseling, mental health treatment and recovery, Military Sexual Trauma (MST), Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Prosthetics, E-benefits, Compensation, Pension, Post-9/11 GI Bill, and homelessness.

Overviews were provided by the Center for Women Veterans, the Rehabilitation & Employment Service, the Veterans Benefits Administration, the Veterans Health Administration, and the VA Homeless Program. A screening of the “Lioness” documentary and “Women at War” film was also shown.

In addition to the presentations, the information marketplace provided additional resource material on VA health benefits and resources: VA Veteran benefits (education, VA home loans, etc.) and Veteran organizations such as the American Legion Post and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW).

For more information about the forum or to find out more about the VA’s Center for Women Veterans, please visit www.va.gov/womenvet.

Expansion of VetSuccess on Campus Pilots

Two community colleges and three other 4-year colleges and universities are being added to the VA VetSuccess on Campus pilot program. VA counselors are being assigned to assist Veterans attending school under the Post-9/11 GI Bill make the most of their educational opportunities at Salt Lake City Community College, the Community College of Rhode Island, Rhode Island College, Arizona State University, and Texas A&M University. The pilot program is designed to ensure Veterans’ health, educational, and benefits needs are met as they make the transition from active-duty military service to college life.

The announcement comes as the White House holds the first-ever community college summit, chaired by Dr. Jill Biden, wife of Vice President Joe Biden and adjunct English professor at Northern Virginia Community College. The meeting of top school and Federal education officials will focus on ways that community colleges can help meet education and workforce demands.

Under the pilot program already underway at the University of South Florida, Cleveland State University, and San Diego State University, experienced VA vocational rehabilitation counselors and outreach coordinators from VA’s Vet Centers are assigned to campuses to provide vocational testing, career and academic counseling, and readjustment counseling services to ensure Veterans receive the support and assistance needed to successfully pursue their educational and employment goals.

VA counselors work directly with school officials to establish effective communications channels with Veteran students and coordinate the delivery of VA benefits and services.

Peer-to-peer counseling and referral services are also available to help resolve any problems that could potentially interfere with a Veteran’s educational program, including referrals for more intensive health services through VA medical centers, community-based outpatient clinics, or Vet centers, as needed. For more information on VA benefit programs and VetSuccess, go to www.vba.va.gov or www.vetsuccess.gov or call 1-800-827-1000. This article taken from a VA Public and Intergovernmental Affairs news release available in its entirety at www.va.gov/opalpressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=1978.

LVA 2011

Leadership VA (LVA) is designed to identify leaders in VA who exhibit leadership talent and potential and to provide an enrichment of their career development through an intense leadership training experience. LVA looks to enhance:

- Critical thinking skills.
- Ability to work collaboratively and effectively to solve problems with colleagues from diverse disciplines and backgrounds.
- Understanding of the national issues that VA must solve now and in the future.
- Ability to break down organizational barriers between and among the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, National Cemetery Administration and supporting staff offices to reach common goals.
- Networking skills in order to ensure individual and organizational success.

LVA participants will leave the program with a well-developed understanding of VA, its component organizations, and tools which prepare them to lead in multidisciplinary settings to accomplish the strategic goals of the Department.

Any VA employee who is GS-13 (or equivalent) through SES is eligible to apply, and the program is usually announced in early July each year. Selection decisions are usually announced in January of the following year. Note: The only authorized application for LVA is VA Form 9987, dated June 2009. Visit the VA Learning University Web site for more information.

Compliance Corner

PERFORMANCE EVALUATIONS AND EEO ACTIVITY

Federal law prohibits retaliation against an individual for opposing any practice made unlawful by Federal anti-discrimination employment laws (“opposition clause”), or for participating in any stage of an administrative or judicial proceeding involving Federal anti-discrimination employment laws (“participation clause”). Examples of the “opposition clause” include: (1) threatening to file a complaint of discrimination; (2) complaining about alleged employment discrimination; or (3) requesting disability or religious accommodation. Examples of the “participation clause” include: (1) seeking EEO counseling or filing a complaint; (2) representing or counseling others who file EEO complaints; (3) participating in an EEO investigation; or (4) serving as a witness in an EEO proceeding. Participation in the grievance process can also constitute protected activity if the employee raises issues of unlawful employment discrimination in his grievance.

In a recent decision by an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) administrative judge, retaliation was found when a VA employee received lowered performance evaluations because of her participation in the EEO process. The complainant, a former union representative, had spent years representing and advising other employees about EEO and grievance matters.

In one of the complainant’s annual evaluations, her supervisor wrote that while the complainant was no longer a union representative, she continued to help employees with a “wide range” of issues. At the hearing, the same supervisor testified that the complainant spent a lot of time talking to other employees and perhaps advising and giving them information. The supervisor admitted that the complainant’s practice of assisting others in the EEO process was a factor in her evaluation of complainant’s work performance.

The judge determined that the supervisor’s statements and actions were retaliatory and ordered that the complainant’s performance ratings be upgraded to “outstanding” and that she receive cash awards commensurate with those received by other employees who received “outstanding” ratings. The complainant was also awarded compensatory damages.

PRACTICE POINTER: It is never permissible to mention an employee’s EEO activity in performance discussions or in evaluations. Even if you rate the employee very highly, the mere mention of her EEO activity would be found to be “reasonably like to deter protected activity” and therefore unlawful retaliation.

~Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA’s Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication



ODI on the Internet

DIVERSITY@WORK

is published by the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, a program office within VA's Office of Human Resources & Administration. To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail <odi@va.gov>

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Visit our **Web site**,

<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>

VA's Office of Human
Resources & Administration
<www.va.gov/ofcadmin>

VA's Office of Resolution
Management
<www.va.gov/orm>

VA's Office of Human
Resources Management
<www.va.gov/ohrm>

VA Learning University
<vaww.va.gov/valu>

GOT NEWS?

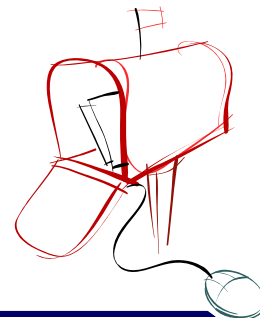
We want to hear from you!
If you'd like to share your story
ideas, comments, or suggestions,
e-mail us at <odi@va.gov>
with the words
DIVERSITY@WORK
in the subject line.

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> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ National Native American Heritage 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> with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of *NewsLink* at <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. *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>.

From the 2010 Diversity Calendar

<www.diversity.hr.va.gov/calendar>

NOVEMBER

National Native American Heritage Month

DeafNation Expo

November 6; Chicago, IL

<<http://deafnation.com/deafnationexpo>>

Veterans Day

November 11

CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine's Career Expo for People with Disabilities

November 19; Washington, DC

<www.eop.com/expos.php>

Third Annual Federal Hispanic Career Advancement Summit

November 29–30; Bethesda, MD

<www.federalhispanicsummit.org>

DECEMBER

Universal Human Rights Month

Rosa Parks Day

December 1

International Day of Persons with Disabilities

December 3

Perspectives on Employment of Persons with Disabilities Conference

VA Forum: December 7

December 8–10; Bethesda, MD

<<http://perspectivesconference.org>>

Human Rights Day

December 10

Bill of Rights Day

December 15