

Image of the VA Seal.

DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION,  
FORMERLY THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT AND EQUAL  
EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

VOLUME 8, ISSUE 2

<http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/daw.htm>

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Bookmarks:

African American Federal Executives Association

[www.aafea.org](http://www.aafea.org)

Black Biomedical Research Movement

[www.bbrm.org](http://www.bbrm.org)

Black Leadership Forum

[www.blackleadershipforum.org](http://www.blackleadershipforum.org)

Blacks in Government

[www.bignet.org](http://www.bignet.org)

First Freedom Center

[www.firstfreedom.org](http://www.firstfreedom.org)

Institute for African American Studies

[www.uga.edu/~iaas](http://www.uga.edu/~iaas)

Mentor

[www.mentoring.org](http://www.mentoring.org)

World Religion Day

[www.worldreligionday.org](http://www.worldreligionday.org)

Contact information for other diversity-related organizations can be found on the  
NEW ODI Web site at: [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/org).

COFFEY'S KEYNOTES: DIVERSITY HAS A NEW NAME!

VA's Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity is now the Office of Diversity and Inclusion! This name change reflects current terminology and leading concepts in the field of diversity management, and highlights the importance of cultivating a diverse workforce and inclusive work culture.

The field of equal employment opportunity (EEO) has gone through several evolutions since its statutory inception in the 1960s. In the 1970s, EEO evolved into affirmative action; in the 1980s, it expanded into "respecting differences;" and in the 1990s, it was transformed by the groundbreaking work of Dr. R. Roosevelt Thomas who introduced the concept of "diversity management." With each iteration, the concept of EEO moved from a reactive, exclusively legalistic model to a more proactive, business-driven paradigm.

The millennium has also ushered in a new framework. In recent years, the focus has shifted from diversity to inclusion, a rapidly emerging trend born in the private sector. The new terminology of "diversity and inclusion" has become ubiquitous in large multi-national corporations such as IBM, Marriott, Nike, Johnson & Johnson, Mobil, Shell, and many others. This sea change occurred quietly as companies found themselves vigorously competing for diverse workforce talent in a globalized economy.

They soon realized that it was not enough to simply recruit a diverse workforce, but they must also retain and leverage that diverse workforce to advance the mission. Companies began looking internally at the organizational culture and the institutional processes that impacted employees' ability to fully participate and contribute to the goals of the organization. This required examining systemic barriers to inclusion in all aspects of the organizations—cultural norms, business practices, communications, leadership development, training and education, performance management, management accountability, strategic recruitment, and work life. Organizational inclusion became the means to actualize the potential of workforce diversity.

In 1997, VA's Office of Equal Opportunity was bifurcated when Public Law 105-114 mandated the creation of an office for employment discrimination complaint resolution in this agency. The staff was split between the newly created Office of Resolution Management (ORM) and the Office of Diversity Management & EEO (DM&EEO). The office names reflected the terminology of the times.

In 2001, DM&EEO contracted the renowned National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to review VA's diversity and EEO policies, organizational structure, and staffing. The purpose of that review was to recommend improvements to VA's diversity program that would contribute to the attraction and retention of a high-quality workforce, support the Department's strategic mission and the delivery of outstanding and cost effective services to veterans

and their families. In their final report, NAPA recommended, among other things, that the name of DM&EEO be changed to better reflect its mission and eliminate confusion with the complaints processing function of ORM. The recommendation was to remove the term “EEO” from its title in order to correct the misleading nomenclature.

In 2008, the new Deputy Assistant Secretary for DM&EEO embarked on strategic planning initiative for the office—the first of its kind in VA. As a result of extensive benchmarking and research of “best practices” in diversity management, it was revealed that the term and concept of “diversity management” had been replaced by “diversity and inclusion.” The term reflected the emerging need to complement diversity practices which focused largely on recruitment outreach, with internal retention strategies to sustain, develop, and leverage the diversity in all human resources. The concept of inclusion galvanized the concept of diversity by stressing inclusion of all employees, not just legally protected classes. Through inclusion, organizations create the facilitating conditions in the work environment that enable the competitive advantages of diversity to flourish. This supports the business case for diversity, a concept also championed by DM&EEO that conveys the higher performance outcomes associated with diversity.

As a result of its benchmarking, ODI will soon issue VA’s first Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan with the following mission statement: “to foster a diverse and inclusive work environment that ensures equal opportunity through national policy development, workforce analysis, outreach, retention, and education in order to best serve our nation’s veterans.” This Plan is aligned with VA’s strategic objective to “recruit, develop, and retain a competent, committed, and diverse workforce that provides high-quality service to veterans and their families.” The Deputy Secretary of VA has endorsed the promotion of an inclusive organizational culture through the creation of the agency’s first Diversity Advisory Council which was launched on November 19, 2008. Changing the name to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion places VA in the vanguard of a rapidly emerging trend in human capital management, and establishes VA as a Federal leader in this area.

~Georgia Coffey

**CELEBRATE!**

**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Birthday and Black History Month**

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s 80th birthday anniversary on January 15 (observed January 19), 2009, and Black History Month, observed in February.

Each year on the third Monday of January, the Federal Government honors the birth of Dr. King. 2009 marks the 23rd anniversary of the national holiday in

Dr. King's honor and 41 years since his passing. The national theme for the observance is: "Remember! Celebrate! Act! A Day On...Not A Day Off."

Image of Dr. King poster.

Also, the month of February is designated Black History Month. In 1915, educator and historian Dr. Carter G. Woodson founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which was later renamed the Association for the Study of African American Life and History. It was through this organization that Negro History Week was first celebrated in 1926 and, subsequently, Black History Month was established in 1976. The 2009 Black History Month theme is "The Quest for Black Citizenship in the Americas." This theme recognizes the establishment of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) a century ago.

Image of Black History Month poster.

In September 2008, African American employment reached 24.51 percent of VA's permanent workforce, well above the 11.58 percent in the 2000 relevant civilian labor force. The number of African Americans in the leadership pipeline (GS 13-15) grew 0.21 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2008. Also in FY08, 9.92 percent of African American employees were veterans.

For more information on VA's African American Program, contact Wanda Jones, National Program Manager, at [Wanda.Jones@va.gov](mailto:Wanda.Jones@va.gov).

## FIELD NOTES

### News You Can Use

#### Nontraditional Student Internships

VA's 2009 National Internship Program Guide will be available for the under secretaries, assistant secretaries, other key officials, and field facility directors in early January 2009. Within the guide, you will find a description of specific recruitment and student career opportunity programs and the external organizations that administer them. Look for this guide shortly on the ODI Web site at [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/spi/internships.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/spi/internships.htm).

ODI advocates the use of nontraditional student internship programs and has agreements with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society; Historically Black Colleges and Universities through the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education; Washington Internships for Native Students; the Washington Center; and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, where VA ranks consistently among the top Federal partners. The Department also participates in the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students With Disabilities, and the National Cemetery Administration is now working with Minority Access, Inc.

These organizations are viewed as partners in VA's efforts to develop a high-performing, diverse workforce. The nontraditional internship program enables VA offices to address immediate staffing needs, as well as workforce planning and diversity goals.

For more information, contact Brenda Martin, National Internship Program Coordinator, at [Brenda.Martin@va.gov](mailto:Brenda.Martin@va.gov).

Image of two graduates holding diplomas.

#### Community Prosperity Partnership (CPP)

Recently, the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) staff in Roanoke, Virginia, connected veterans with the Defense Commissary Agency (DeCA), which sought VA's assistance in locating GWOT veterans and severely disabled veterans seeking employment.

Kudos to VR&E staff members Brian Radford and Karen DeSeguirant both worked to connect veterans with DeCA's job opportunities and, as result, DeCA headquarters hired a 30-percent disabled veteran and a Global War on Terrorism wounded warrior.

VR&E, also a resource for VA field facilities looking to hire disabled veterans, reports that their staff is committed to continuing to build this relationship on a national level to recruit veterans throughout the country for job opportunities available through DeCA.

ODI also introduced the San Antonio Coalition of Veterans (SACV) to DeCA. SACV is collaborating with MyVetnetwork, [www.MyVetnetwork.org](http://www.MyVetnetwork.org), to improve outreach to veterans and their families. For more information about CPP San Antonio, Texas, in May 2009 contact José O. Marrero at [Jose.Marrero@va.gov](mailto:Jose.Marrero@va.gov) or visit the CPP Web site at [www.va.gov/cpp](http://www.va.gov/cpp).

Image of Community Prosperity Partnership logo.

#### WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

DiversityInc, <http://www.diversityinc.com>

Content: DiversityInc's mission is to bring education and clarity to the business benefits of diversity. Founded in 1998 as a Web-based publication, their monthly print magazine was launched in 2002. DiversityInc.com has a dedicated career center for diverse professionals, and a core part of their business is benchmarking companies against the DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity data.

Must-See Feature: Federal government employees can receive a free subscription to DiversityInc at <<https://www.diversityinc.com/subscribe.cfm?id=free>>. Subscribers receive the monthly magazine, access to members-only web content, access to DiversityInc's reference department, and access to the DiversityInc Top 50 members-only content (best practices from the Top 50 Companies for Diversity).

Accessibility: No accessibility information offered.

Contact Info:

DiversityInc Media

570 Broad Street 15th Floor

Newark, NJ 07102

(973) 494-0500

<http://www.diversityinc.com/public/department13.cfm>

Image of DiversityInc 2008 top 50 companies for diversity magazine cover.

## VA BEST PRACTICES

### VA Central Iowa CHAMPIONS Program

When employees at the VA Central Iowa Health Care System wanted to respond to a need they identified for a professional development course for entry-level (GS-6 and WG-6 and below) employees, they asked VHA educators from other facilities what they were doing in this area. They located a course at the Portland VA Medical Center called "Career Help and Advancement through Motivated Personal Improvement and Opportunities to Nurture Success" (CHAMPIONS). The education specialists developed the VA Central Iowa CHAMPIONS course using this framework.

The course evolved over the last four years, based on student input and organizational changes, and is now a 60-hour (six hours one day a week for 10 weeks) professional development course. Topics covered in the VA Central Iowa Health Care System CHAMPIONS course include characteristics of success, principles of change, writing resumes, public speaking, performance-based interviewing, job application process (including completing a set of rating factors for a job of interest), dealing with difficult people, teamwork, stress management, career development (including completion of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator Strong Interest Inventory), and critical thinking.

Students also complete a personal development plan based on their professional goals.

To date, the VA Central Iowa CHAMPIONS course has graduated 48 of the 49 students that started the program. Of the 48 graduates, 16 of the 48 completed collegiate education and 26 were promoted within two years of completing the

course. Of the 26 staff who obtained a promotion, 92 percent attributed a significant part of their success to the CHAMPIONS course.

Mary Drake, education specialist at the VA Central Iowa Health Care Knoxville Campus, recalls that, “One employee contemplated dropping out of the course when she learned that she was required to participate in a public speaking exercise—in part due to fear of speaking and in part due to a language barrier. With group support and education, she was able to successfully complete the requirement. After completing this class, she was asked to present an essay she had written. She was able to do this in front of a large group of VA employees, and she attributed her ability to complete this presentation to the CHAMPIONS learning experience. She also obtained her target position within a year of completion of the course.”

According to Ms. Drake, another employee was two courses away from completing her associates degree. She had deferred completion of this for several years. After completing CHAMPIONS, she was motivated to complete this degree. The facility also reports that, as a result of the career development testing, several staff have moved to a new field of work and report that they have increased job satisfaction.

For more information on the VA Central Iowa Health Care System’s CHAMPIONS program, contact Ms. Drake at [Mary.Drake@va.gov](mailto:Mary.Drake@va.gov).

Image of VA Midwest Health Care Network logo.

#### VA DIVERSITY ADVISORY COUNCIL (VADAC) Council Holds First Meeting at VA Central Office

To be a high-performing organization in the 21st century, VA must tap into the rich talents and intellectual capital of our workforce diversity and leverage these differences to advance the mission of the organization. VA has made significant progress in becoming a champion of diversity and inclusion. However, VA is facing new challenges from the changing demographic profile of the Nation as well as the changing demographic profile of the VA workforce. Sixty percent of VA employees will be eligible for retirement by 2010, and a large percentage of VA’s leadership falls within that group.

The VA Diversity Advisory Council (VADAC) was recently established as a vehicle to raise diversity and inclusion issues at VA and proactively address them. The Council comprises more than a dozen members of VA’s senior leadership team, representing each of the Department’s three Administrations and staff offices—as recommended by organizational leadership and appointed by the Secretary.

The VADAC serves as an independent advisory body providing advice and recommendations to the Secretary and the Senior Management Council on issues, policies, and practices related to workforce diversity, inclusion, and equal employment opportunity. The purpose of the Council is to ensure commitment to and accountability for integrating diversity and inclusion throughout VA and to promote and communicate best practices in diversity management. Until the Council was established, a centralized VA-wide communication or governance structure to share best practices, leverage resources, and communicate and enforce policies on diversity management issues did not exist.

The first VADAC meeting was held on November 19, 2008, at VA Central Office, and was hosted by Willie L. Hensley, Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, and Georgia Coffey, Deputy Assistant Secretary for ODI, who were designated as VADAC co-chairs by Deputy Secretary Gordon H. Mansfield who also attended the meeting. At this initial meeting, Council members responded to presentations by Ms. Coffey who spoke about the business case for diversity, ODI's strategic plan, and a National Academy for Public Administration report on recruiting and retaining a diverse, high-performing workforce; Joy W. Hunter, who defined the Under Secretary for Health's Diversity Advisory Board's best practices; and Mr. Hensley, who introduced the VADAC draft charter.

Council members are currently reviewing the VADAC draft charter and will convene on the topic at the Council's next bimonthly meeting, scheduled for January. For more information about the VADAC, contact the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (which provides basic financial and administrative support for the Council) at [odi@va.gov](mailto:odi@va.gov).

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR  
An Ordinary Life with an Extraordinary Legacy

By Georgia Coffey

Eighty years ago this month, an ordinary child was born who would have an extraordinary legacy. Armed only with his words and his passion, Dr. Martin Luther King would alter the social conscience of a nation and inspire generations to seek a higher moral purpose. His eyes would see segregation and injustice, and his ears would hear the deafening response of silence. His voice would respond with resounding indignation.

Martin Luther King, Jr. was born neither to poverty nor greatness, as poets would have it. He had an ordinary, comfortable childhood with the support of a loving family and the advantages of a good education. He easily could've reacted to the inequities he witnessed with benign resignation and retreated to the comforts of his home. Instead, he marched—to Selma, Montgomery, and Washington—the very bastions of the injustices he witnessed. Dr. King chose the path less

traveled: peaceful civil protest. He fought fire, not with fire, but with his voice; he sought to extinguish the flames of hatred with words instead of swords. And he did so at risk to his life and liberty.

Eighty years ago this month, an ordinary child was born. He would do extraordinary things in his abbreviated life. He would inspire children of all races to look deeper than the color of their skin to find the content of their character.

Eighty years later, his prophesy is beginning to be realized. My hope for 2009 is that we honor Dr. King's dream of peace, unity, and equity by valuing the dignity that resides in every individual. We in the Office of Diversity and Inclusion work to promote the principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion in VA. We invite you to join us in this noble mission.

Image of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

### ADA TESTING PROGRAM NEEDS VOLUNTEERS

Department of Justice Looking for Federal Employees in the Washington, DC Area

For more information about the following article, please contact the U.S. Department of Justice directly. Contact information can be found at the end of the article.

The Disability Rights Section of the Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice, is recruiting Federal employees in the Washington, DC area to participate in civil rights investigations that involve testing in order to gather information concerning compliance by private entities with Federal laws that prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities in the provision of goods and services.

Generally, "testing" in this context refers to the use of individuals who pose as consumers and attempt, for example, to make reservations for travel or short-term lodging or to secure other services for the purpose of gathering information that may indicate whether or not the service provider is complying with Federal civil rights laws that prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities. Individuals, including persons who have significant limitations in walking, seeing, and hearing, are needed to participate in the testing program on a voluntary basis, subject to supervisory approval, in order to act as "testers" in the investigations of public accommodations pursuant to the Americans with Disabilities Act, as well as in other civil rights investigations. There is a particular need for volunteers who use wheelchairs as mobility devices.

To find out more information about the testing program involving persons with disabilities and how you can participate as a test, please contact Robin Deykes by phone at (202) 307-1085 (voice), (800) 514-0383 (TTY), or by email at [Robin.Deykes@usdoj.gov](mailto:Robin.Deykes@usdoj.gov).

Image of a person with a disability provided by the U.S. Department of Justice.

ODI ON THE INTERNET, [www.diversity.hr.va.gov](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov)

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 that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday, Black History Month, and other special observance resources.

Events, conferences, conventions, and programs.

Links to professional and community organizations.

Best practices for diversity management.

Image of an individual holding a globe.

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 us at [<odi@va.gov>](mailto:odi@va.gov) with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. You can find a current copy of NewsLink on the ODI Web site at this address: [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/newslink.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/newslink.htm).

ODI ON YOUR TV SCREEN (OR PC MONITOR)

Diversity News is a monthly video program produced by the VACO Broadcasting Center for ODI. Each program runs for a month, immediately following VA News. A copy of each program will be placed on the ODI Web site (as the files become available) at this address: [www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm](http://www.diversity.hr.va.gov/ca/diversitynews.htm).

FROM THE 2009 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

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

JANUARY

National Mentoring Month

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday

January 15 (observed January 19)

Religious Freedom Day

January 16

World Religion Day  
January 18

Assistive Technology Industry Association Annual Conference and Leadership  
Forum on Accessibility  
January 18–31; Orlando, FL  
[www.atia.org](http://www.atia.org)

Lunar New Year  
January 26  
“Year of the Ox”

## FEBRUARY

Black History Month  
CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine’s Career Expo For People With  
Disabilities  
February 12; Los Angeles, CA  
[www.eop.com](http://www.eop.com)

National Association for the Advancement of Colored People  
40th NAACP Image Awards  
February 12  
[www.naacpimageawards.net](http://www.naacpimageawards.net)

National Association for Bilingual Education Conference  
February 18–21; Austin, TX  
[www.nabe.org](http://www.nabe.org)

U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Congress  
Latina Leadership Summit  
February 19-20; Las Vegas, NV  
[www.hacr.org](http://www.hacr.org)

2009 DeafNation Expo  
February 21; Greensboro, NC  
[www.deafnation.com](http://www.deafnation.com)

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Visit our Web site, [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 [www.va.gov/diversity](http://www.va.gov/diversity)

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)

#### GOT NEWS?

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