



DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY, A PROGRAM OFFICE WITHIN VA'S OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES & ADMINISTRATION

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

MAY/JUNE 2007

Q&A: The Secretary's Labor-Management Relations Award Program

In this issue we talk with Meghan Serwin Flanz, who was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary for Labor-Management Relations in December 2006, about the Secretary's Labor-Management Relations Award program and establishing a positive work environment.

Q: Can you tell us about the Labor-Management Relations Award program?

Ms. Flanz: The purpose of the Secretary's Labor-Management Relations Award program is to recognize outstanding and innovative labor-management relationships throughout VA. This award was established in 2002 to recognize local labor-management successes in such areas as saving money, increasing productivity, im-

proving service to veterans and their families, and improving working conditions for VA's valued employees. The award is endorsed and supported by the National Partnership Council, which is made up of representatives of VA's five national labor unions as well as senior leaders from each of the Administrations.

Awards are given in five separate categories. The categories consist of an overall departmental award in addition to awards for achievement in health care, benefits, memorial affairs, and other programs.

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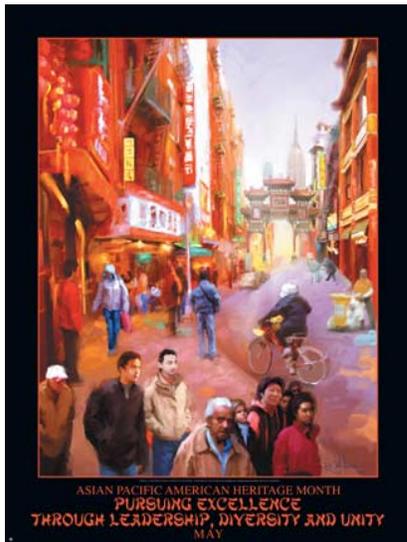
CELEBRATE!

National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating National Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month in May. This year's theme is "Pursuing Excellence Through Leadership, Diversity, and Unity."

In 1979, a joint congressional resolution established Asian Pacific American Heritage Week. The first 10 days of May were chosen to coincide with two important milestones in Asian Pacific American history: the arrival in the United States of the first Japanese immigrants (May 7, 1843) and contributions of Chinese workers to the building of the transcontinental railroad, completed on May 10, 1869. In 1992, Congress expanded the 10-day observance to a month-long celebration.

Managers and supervisors are encouraged



to plan observance activities this month and throughout the year. VA Central Office will be holding two events in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center. The May 9 event will feature guest speaker Stuart J. Ishimaru of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The May 23 event will feature APA programs depicting cultural, musical, performance, and artistic work. Both programs will be held at noon.

For more observance resources, visit <www.va.gov/dmeeo>. To learn more about VA's Asian American and Pacific Islander Program, contact David Walton, VA's National Asian American and Pacific Islander Program Manager, at (202) 461-4002 or <David.Walton@va.gov>.■

BOOKMARKS

- ▶ **Asian American Government Executives Network**
www.aagen.org
- ▶ **Center for Minority Veterans**
www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans
- ▶ **Center for Women Veterans**
www.va.gov/womenvet
- ▶ **DiversityInc Free Government Subscription**
www.diversityinc.com/subscribe.cfm?id=freegov
- ▶ **Merit System Principles**
www.mspb.gov/fedemployeeights.htm
- ▶ **VA Learning Online**
www.vcampus.com/valo
- ▶ **VA Office of Resolution Management**
www.va.gov/orm
- ▶ **VA Section 508**
www.va.gov/accessible
- ▶ **VHA Diversity Advisory Board**
www.va.gov/diversity

Contact information for other diversity-related organizations can be found on the **DM&EEO Web site** at: www.va.gov/dmeeo/org

FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use

Summer Intern Welcome

As part of DM&EEO's outreach efforts, a welcome program has been scheduled for this year's VA summer interns sponsored through the 2007 National Internship Program.

The welcome is scheduled for Monday, June 4, 2006, from 10:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. in the G.V. "Sonny" Montgomery Veterans Conference Center in VA Central Office.

The purpose of the event is to provide an orientation for all of VA's summer interns. The keynote speaker will be Paul J. Hutter, Executive in Charge in the Office of Human Resources and Administration.

The summer internship program is a 10-week work experience that provides college students valuable on-the-job training and helps them make educated career choices. The goal of the program is to provide interns with a greater understanding of Government operations, policy making, and the rich reward of public service.

This year's interns were recruited by the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities, The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars, the American Indian Science and Engineering Society, the American University's Washington Internships for Native Students, the National Association for Equal Opportunity in

Higher Education, and the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities.

All VA executives, EEO managers, supervisors, hiring officials, and human resource managers are encouraged to attend the welcome program. For more information on the welcome program or on any of VA's nontraditional internship programs, contact Brenda A. Martin, National Internship Program Manager, at (202) 461-4040 or <Brenda.Martin@va.gov>.

Did You Know?

DM&EEO aims to provide consistent, reliable, and accurate information through products that promote workplace diversity and enhance VA's recruitment, development, and retention of women, minorities, veterans, and people with disabilities.

DM&EEO produces a monthly video program on diversity and EEO news, studies, surveys, special emphasis issues, events, and activities. The program, *Diversity News*, is part of VA's continuing effort to increase awareness and acceptance of diversity and to promote a flexible and inclusive work environment.

The program airs on channel 2 of the VA Knowledge Network, immediately following VA News. Previous episodes are available on the DM&EEO Web site at <www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/diversitynews.htm>.■

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

The Best Places to Work in the Federal Government 2007 <http://bestplacestowork.org>

Content: Geared toward a broad audience of job seekers, researchers, Federal employees and government leaders, *Best Places to Work* draws on responses from more than 221,000 civil servants to produce detailed rankings of employee engagement across 283 Federal agencies and subcomponents.

The Partnership for Public Service and American University's Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation use data from the Office of Personnel Management's Federal Human Capital Survey to rank agencies and subcomponents. Agencies and subcomponents are ranked on a *Best Places to Work* index score, which measures overall employee engagement. The *Best Places to Work* score is calculated both for the organization as a whole and also for specific demographic groups. **Must-See Features:** "The Big Picture"

section under the "Analysis" link offers an in-depth analysis of the findings and illustrates that high-performing organizations don't just occur by chance. Creating a high-performing organization requires a relentless focus on strong leadership and ensuring a great work environment. When employees are enthusiastic about where they work and engaged in what they do, obstacles seem smaller, difficult problems give way more easily to innovative solutions, and outcomes tend to regularly exceed expectations.

Accessibility: No accessibility information provided.

Contact Info: The Partnership for Public Service at <research@ourpublicservice.org> or the Institute for the Study of Public Policy Implementation at <isppi@american.edu>■

Resolving Conflict

Strategies that Promote Productivity

People are different, not just in terms of age, race, ethnicity, gender, disability, religion, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. There is a multitude of diversity dimensions that affect who we are and how we see the world. Because we don't all see the world in the same way, disagreements are inevitable. These disagreements, these conflicts, can affect our relationships, as well as our ability to get our work done.

Diversity management is a process intended to create and maintain a positive work environment—an environment in which the similarities and differences of individuals are valued and in which employees can reach their potential and maximize their contributions to their organization's strategic goals and objectives. One aspect of the diversity management process has to do with the manner in which conflict is resolved.

VA is committed to providing a workplace environment that enables VA employees to deliver quality care and service to our Nation's veterans and their beneficiaries. To do this, employees must have access to effective and efficient mechanisms for managing conflict and resolving workplace disputes. VA's Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) program, led by the Office of Resolution Management, is one valuable resource in managing conflict and resolving disputes. ADR processes, such as mediation, further VA's core values, including open communication and respect in the workplace. But how can employees manage common workplace disputes that do not necessarily call for ADR or other more formal mediation processes? According to Kenneth Cloke and Joan

Goldsmith in their book *Resolving Conflicts at Work*, there are several strategies for resolving conflict in ways that can promote personal and organizational productivity and workplace disputes actually provide opportunities for increasing creativity, productivity, employee morale, and personal growth.

To take advantage of these opportunities, Cloke and Goldsmith describe a series of eight strategies:

- Change the culture and context of conflict.
- Listen actively, empathetically, and responsively.
- Acknowledge and integrate emotions to solve problems.
- Search beneath the surface for hidden meaning.
- Separate what matters from what gets in the way.
- Learn from, and don't reward, difficult behaviors.
- Solve problems creatively, plan strategically, and negotiate collaboratively.
- And... explore resistance, mediate disputes, and design systems for prevention and resolution.

The May 2007 episode of *Diversity News* focuses on this topic and provides more information about how employees can use each of these strategies to turn workplace disputes into opportunities that promote productivity. For further information on VA's ADR process, visit www.va.gov/adr. ■

Q&A: The Secretary's Labor-Management Relations Award Program

(Continued from Page 1)

Awards are based on a number of criteria including the significance of the contribution to the mission of the Department, its Administrations, Staff Offices, or facilities. For example, a local labor-management team might be recognized for an initiative or project that has improved service to veterans and/or veterans' families, increased productivity, enhanced employee morale or the quality of workplace life, or helped employees balance work and family responsibilities. The common factor is that the awards go to labor-management teams in which both supervisors or managers and union officials have worked together to bring about a positive result. **Q: How can someone make a nomination for a Labor-**



Management Relations Award and when is the nomination deadline?

Ms. Flanz: The Office of Labor-Management Relations will accept nominations for the FY 2007 Secretary's Labor-Management Relations Award until April 1, 2008. All types and levels of labor-management relationships are eligible for nomination, including agency, regional, local, and task forces, including formal partnership councils and ad hoc working groups. For more information on the Secretary's Labor-Management Relations Award program, including further guidance and eligibility and the nomination form, visit the Labor-Management Relations Web site at www.va.gov/lmr.

Diversity@Work

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Visit our **Web site**,
<www.va.gov/dmeeo>,
for additional staff
e-mail addresses.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Under Secretary for Health
Diversity Advisory Board
<www.va.gov/diversity>

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

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

VA's Office of Human
Resources Management
<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
<dmeeo@va.gov>
with the words
DIVERSITY@WORK in the
subject line.

DM&EEO ON THE INTERNET <www.va.gov/dmeeo>



The DM&EEO mission is to increase awareness and acceptance of diversity and to promote a flexible and inclusive work environment throughout the Department of Veterans Affairs. Our vision is of a work environment that fosters respect, fairness, and opportunity for all employees. Here's a sampling of online tools available that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month and other special observance resources.
- ▶ Events, conferences, conventions, and programs.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.

DM&EEO IN YOUR E-MAIL INBOX

Once a week, DM&EEO 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 <dmeeo@va.gov> with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. You can find a current copy of *NewsLink* on the DM&EEO Web site at this address: <www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/newslink.htm>.

DM&EEO ON YOUR TV SCREEN (OR PC MONITOR)

Diversity News is a monthly video program produced by the VACO Broadcasting Center for DM&EEO. Each program runs for a month, immediately following *VA News*. A copy of each program will be placed on the DM&EEO Web site (when the files become available) at this address: <www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/diversitynews.htm>.

FROM THE 2007 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

<www.va.gov/dmeeo/calenda>

MAY

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

Older Americans Month

CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine
Career Expo For People With Disabilities

May 7; Boston, MA

www.eop.com/exporegistration.html

Annual Diversity Conference

May 23–24; Chicago, IL

www.conference-board.org

MANA Annual Conference

May 24–26; Santa Fe, NM

www.hermana.org

National Asian Entrepreneur of the Year
Awards

May 25; Los Angeles, CA

<http://asianenterprise.com> Federal Asian

Pacific American Council Annual
Conference

May 29–June 1; Arlington, VA

www.fapac.org

JUNE

Black Music Month

Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

Society for Human Resource
Management Annual Conference &
Exposition

June 24–27; Las Vegas, NV

www.shrm.org/conferences

Society of American Indian
Government Employees National
Training Conference

June 25–29; Tucson, AZ

www.saige.org