



# 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>>

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008

## A MESSAGE FROM DAS GEORGIA COFFEY

Deputy Assistant Secretary for DM&EEO Discusses a Diverse and Inclusive VA Workforce



Georgia Coffey  
DAS for DM&EEO

It is with great pride that I greet you as your new Deputy Assistant Secretary (DAS) for Diversity Management and EEO (DM&EEO) in the Department of Veterans Affairs. I am honored to join VA and I look forward to communicating with you frequently on the very

important diversity issues that face our Department today. This is a unique time in public service. We are on the verge of a major transition that presents us with great

challenges and even greater opportunities in the area of diversity management. I am confident that working collaboratively with you, the highly dedicated employees, managers and stakeholders of VA, we will seize these challenges and opportunities to create a diverse and inclusive workforce that will best serve our country's most precious assets—our veterans.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Ms. Meghan Serwin Flanz, who so graciously served double duty as Acting DAS of DM&EEO and DAS for Labor Management Relations for the past several months. I would also like to thank the committed staff of DM&EEO who ably maintained the important functions of this office.

[Continued on page 3.]

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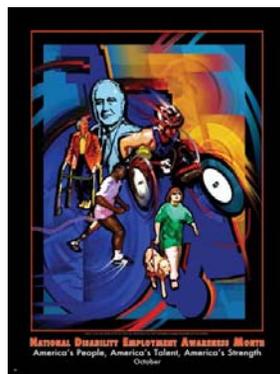
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## CELEBRATE!

Hispanic Heritage Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month and Disability Mentoring Day

VA proudly joins the Nation in celebrating a number of observances this time of year. National Hispanic Heritage Month will be observed from September 15 through October 15. This year's theme is "Getting Involved: Our Families, Our Community, Our Nation."

Overall, VA employment of Hispanics decreased from 6.82 percent in fiscal year (FY) 2006 to 6.71 percent in FY 2007. Hispanics in the leadership pipeline were 5.24 percent in FY 2007. Hispanics increased from 7.54 percent of the VA veteran population in FY 2006 to 7.63 percent in FY 2007. For information on VA's Hispanic Program, contact **José O. Marrero** at <[Jose.Marrero@va.gov](mailto:Jose.Marrero@va.gov)>.



theme is "America's People, America's Talent...America's Strength!" Coinciding with this observance is Disability Mentoring Day, which will be observed on October 15 this year.

As of July 2008, VA employees with a targeted disability (deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial paralysis, complete paralysis, convulsive disorders, mental retardation, mental illness, and distortion of limbs or spine) totaled 3,508 or 1.5 percent of VA's workforce. VA employed 21,068 disabled veterans who represent 8.49 percent of VA's workforce. For information on VA's People with Disabilities Program, contact **David Walton**, National Program Manager for People with Disabilities, at <[David.Walton@va.gov](mailto:David.Walton@va.gov)>. ■

### BOOKMARKS

- ▶ **American GI Forum**  
[www.agif.org/national](http://www.agif.org/national)
- ▶ **Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities**  
[www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net)
- ▶ **League of United Latin American Citizens**  
[www.lulac.org](http://www.lulac.org)
- ▶ **Mexican American Women's National Association**  
[www.hermana.org](http://www.hermana.org)
- ▶ **National Association for Female Executives**  
[www.nafe.com](http://www.nafe.com)
- ▶ **National Image, Inc.**  
[www.nationalimageinc.org](http://www.nationalimageinc.org)
- ▶ **National Organization for Women**  
[www.now.org](http://www.now.org)
- ▶ **Women in Military Service for America Memorial, Inc**  
<http://womensmemorial.org>

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

## FIELD NOTES

### News You Can Use

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#### One-VA Veterans Career Fair

VA has a long-standing commitment to attracting and recruiting veterans for employment with the Department. VA will showcase its job opportunities for veterans with a free recruiting event on Tuesday, September 30, 2008, from 9 am to 3 pm at the ASAE Conference Center at 1575 I Street NW, Washington DC. VA's operating divisions and major staff offices will have selecting officials at the fair to discuss employment prospects. This event will be hosted by VA's Office of Human Resources Management in cooperation with the Employer Assistance & Recruiting Network. To register as a job seeker, visit <<http://earnworks.com/vacareerfair08>>. For directions to the event, visit <<http://www.asaecenter.org/AboutUs/content.cfm?ItemNumber=16132>>. For more information, contact **Billy Wright** at 1-866-327-6669.

#### NewsLink Receives EEOC Recognition

At the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's (EEOC's) 11th annual EXCEL (Examining Conflicts in Employment Law) Conference, EEOC Chair Naomi Earp recognized DM&EEO's *NewsLink*. At the conference, held on August 18–21 at the Hilton Chicago Hotel, VA received an award for this weekly electronic news service that provides subscribers with summaries and links to recent diversity-related articles, publications, and information related to leveraging diversity and building inclusive workforces. Recent stories appearing in *NewsLink* include:

- Motivated Employees Key to Productive Environment
- Preparing for Retiring Boomers with Strategic

## WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

### Addressing Sexual Orientation Discrimination In Federal Civilian Employment:

A Guide to Employee's Rights, <<http://www.opm.gov/er/address2/Guide01.asp>>

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**Content:** The purpose of this booklet is to make Federal employees aware of how to obtain help if they believe they have been discriminated against based upon sexual orientation. Executive Order 13087 states the Executive Branch's policy but does not create any additional enforcement rights, such as the ability to proceed before the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. The Executive Order does not authorize affirmative action programs. There are, however, existing administrative and legal remedies available to Federal employees who believe they have been victims of discrimination based upon sexual orientation. This booklet is designed to make employees and applicants aware of existing bases for assistance and to aid them in finding the agencies that can help them. It is not designed as a comprehensive guide, but as a general overview.

#### Succession Planning

- From Womb to Work: Educating the Millennials
- The Myth of the Opt-Out Revolution Among Professional Women.

To subscribe to *Newslink*, send an e-mail to <[dmeeo@va.gov](mailto:dmeeo@va.gov)> with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line.

#### FEW Partnership Agreement

On June 23, 2008, VA signed a Partnership Agreement with Federally Employed Women (FEW). FEW is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1968 shortly after Executive Order (E.O.) 11375 was issued, which added sex discrimination to the list of prohibited discrimination within the Federal Government. Although E.O. 11375 was an important milestone, several women were concerned that the Civil Service Commission and individual agencies may not put forth the vigorous effort necessary to ensure compliance with E.O. 11375. Although the Federal Women's Program (FWP) had been established, the early organizers of FEW realized that the Government could dismantle FWP, and they wanted to ensure that there would always be an organization dedicated to promoting equality for women and addressing concerns of women in the Federal workforce. The VA and FEW Partnership Program will foster a mutually supportive relationship and develop initiatives to enhance VA's ability to recruit and retain highly skilled women and prepare them to become future VA leaders. For more information, contact **Wanda Jones**, National Program Manager, at (202) 461-4039 or <[Wanda.Jones@va.gov](mailto:Wanda.Jones@va.gov)>.■

**Must-See Features:** Although employees and applicants may not seek relief from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission or file a discrimination complaint under title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended, because that law does not prohibit discrimination based upon sexual orientation, the link to Legal Protections offers information on where to seek assistance when applicants or employees believe that a prohibited personnel practice has been committed against them that constitutes discrimination based upon sexual orientation.

**Accessibility:** The Web site is Section 508 compliant.

**Contact Info:** U.S. Office of Personnel Management  
1900 E Street NW  
Washington, DC 20415  
(202) 606-1800■

## INTERNSHIPS

### VA's Nontraditional Internship Program

Not only do nontraditional internships offer students of various educational and personal experiences an opportunity to earn college credit while gaining work experience, but these programs enable organizations such as VA to address immediate staffing needs as well as workforce planning and diversity goals. Most of these types of internships provide college students an experiential employment opportunity for a 10-week summer session and a 15-week spring or fall session. In 2007, VA sponsored about 100 temporary interns through the nonprofit organizations involved in the National Internship Program. These organizations include:

- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) through the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
- Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS)
- The Washington Center (TWC)
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)

The Department also participates in the Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) for college students with disabilities.

For more information, visit <[www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo)> and click on Internships. For additional questions, contact **Brenda Martin**, National Internship Program Coordinator, at <[Brenda.Martin@va.gov](mailto:Brenda.Martin@va.gov)> or (202) 461-4040.■

## A MESSAGE FROM DAS GEORGIA COFFEY

### On a Diverse and Inclusive VA Workforce

I come to VA with over 25 years of diversity, EEO, human resources, and program management experience in the public and private sectors. Most recently, I served as the Director of EEO & Diversity Management with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and have been honored to have served on several human rights commissions in federal and local government. I have a Bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of Maryland, a Master's degree and extensive doctoral work in educational administration from the American University, and a certificate in EEO studies from the Cornell University School of Industrial and Labor Relations.

My vision for diversity management in the public sector is rooted in two fundamental beliefs: there is no higher calling than public service, and no more critical function in public service than the promotion of equity and diversity in the workplace. Diversity and inclusion must be the cornerstones of the human capital management strategy in Federal service. In order to leverage the broad spectrum of talent in our labor force, we must define diversity in its broadest possible context, including physical, cultural,

## Community Prosperity Partnership CPP Recognized by Local Communities

VA's Community Prosperity Partnership (CPP) achieved exceptional success during fiscal year 2008 with the support of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), Church of God, National Image Inc., and American GI Forum (AGIF). The Commonwealth of Puerto Rico collaborated with LULAC, AGIF, and VA with the implementation of the first ever local community service delivery prototype between affinity Hispanic associations, institutions of higher education, federal agencies, and private sector in 2006. Since 2006, CPP was launched in Florida, Texas, Nevada, and Colorado.

The CPP impact in the above communities was measured by attendance at the job fair, programs, and health expo. The CPP initiative generated a huge benefit in outreach and awareness of VA benefits and healthcare programs service delivery to veterans. Over 12,000 people, including over 3,500 veterans, attended the LULAC-sponsored Veterans Summits. LULAC's support amounted to more than \$400,000.

Additionally, the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the Department of Labor, Small Business Administration, and the Department of Health and Human Services, provided assistance to first-time homebuyers and distressed homeowners, employment services, business development support, and social security benefits. For more information on CPP, visit <[www.va.gov/CPP](http://www.va.gov/CPP)>.■

social and intellectual differences. To create and sustain a high performing organization, we must cultivate diversity of thought and market the business case for diversity in addition to the moral and legal imperatives of EEO.

I believe the mission of VA is the moral compass of our nation. How we treat our veterans is a window into our national soul. As we approach the 7th anniversary of 9/11 in the wake of the Gulf Coast natural disaster, we are reminded of one essential truth: that we are all linked by a common humanity. Our fate on this planet is dependent on the realization that our lives are inextricably intertwined and our human connections are inexorably stronger than any divisions we may manufacture. In the global community of the 21st century, our organizational success is predicated on the simple truth that we need each other, and that we cannot afford barriers to equal opportunity and full participation. Diversity and inclusion strengthen the fabric of our workforce and our society. I invite you to join us in our journey and thank you for your commitment.■

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Visit our **Web site**, <[www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo)>, 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/portal](http://www.va.gov/ofcadmin/portal)>

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 <[dmeeo@va.gov](mailto:dmeeo@va.gov)> with the words DIVERSITY@WORK in the subject line.

## DM&EEO ON THE INTERNET <[www.va.gov/dmeeo](http://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:

- ▶ Hispanic Heritage Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Disability Mentoring Day, 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](mailto: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](http://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](http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/ca/diversitynews.htm)>.

## FROM THE 2008 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

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

### SEPTEMBER

**National Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week**  
September 7–13

**Out and Equal Workplace Summit**  
September 10–13; Austin, TX  
<[www.outandequal.org](http://www.outandequal.org)>

**Patriot Day**  
September 11

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

**2008 DeafNation Expos**  
September 20; Denver, CO  
September 27; Worcester, MA  
<[www.deafnation.com](http://www.deafnation.com)>

**One-VA Veterans Career Fair**  
September 30; Washington, DC  
<<http://earnworks.com/vacareerfair08>>

### OCTOBER

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month**  
**Polish-American Heritage Month**  
**Italian-American Heritage Month**  
**German-American Heritage Month**

**First Annual Federal Hispanic Career Advancement Summit**  
October 1; Crystal City, VA  
<[www.federalhispanicsummit.org](http://www.federalhispanicsummit.org)>

**2008 DeafNation Expos**  
October 4; Palatine, IL  
October 18; Seattle, WA  
October 25; Pleasanton, CA  
<[www.deafnation.com](http://www.deafnation.com)>

**Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Annual Conference**  
October 11–13; Denver, CO  
<[www.hacu.net](http://www.hacu.net)>

**Disability Mentoring Day**  
October 15