



DIVERSITY@WORK

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Q&A: NCA'S DIVERSE, MOTIVATED WORKFORCE

Brigadier General John W. "Jack" Nicholson (Ret.), Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, shares his thoughts on diversity in the National Cemetery Administration (NCA).

Q: How can a more diverse VA workforce — one that reflects the diverse face of America and the American veteran — help VA and NCA better perform their missions?

Gen. Nicholson: NCA isn't any different from the rest of VA: diversity allows us to better identify with the veterans we serve. Veterans come from all walks of life, as do NCA employees. You can see diversity throughout NCA because of the opportunities that we provide. We have accomplished much and our motivated, diverse workforce is responsible.

Q: What methods have you found to be effective means of achieving workforce diversity?

Gen. Nicholson: A diverse, motivated workforce doesn't just walk in the door: you have to work at it. We seek minority candidates for positions in NCA by sending representatives to job fairs and employment conferences. We show prospective minority employees that we offer opportunity, and we encourage them

CELEBRATE!

National American Indian Heritage Month

Coinciding with the recent opening of the National Museum of the American Indian, VA proudly joins the nation in observing National American Indian Heritage Month during November.

According to the U.S. Census, there are an estimated 4.4 million American Indians and Alaska Natives (or American Indian and Alaska Native in combination with one or more other races) in America. At VA, it is especially important to honor those American Indians and Alaska Natives who have defended our freedom



to consider employment with us. In addition, at NCA Central Office, all of our interns over the past year were minorities, representing relationships we have developed with programs that seek and assist minority

students nearing completion of their college degrees.

Q: Can you explain the benefits of NCA's Compensated Work Therapy (CWT) program and how it aids veterans with disabilities in their quest for competitive employment?

Gen. Nicholson: More than 185 CWT veterans are working right now in 26 of our national cemeteries. They help us with the continuous work that needs to be done to maintain our cemeteries as places of honor — everything from administrative to field work. Their job skills are transferable, the work helps them get back on their feet, and the CWT workers feel a sense of pride and accomplishment in taking care of fellow veterans and their families in times of need. ■

through their service in the United States Armed Forces — 383,000 military veterans identified themselves as American Indian or Alaska Native. Of these, 147,000 served during the Vietnam War era alone. More than 44,000 served in European and Pacific war theaters between 1941 and 1945.

Over 2,100 American Indians and Alaska Natives currently work in VA. For information, contact Angela Burris, Manager, VA's National Native American Employment Program, at angela.burris@va.gov. ■

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BOOKMARKS

- ▶ **Congressional Black Caucus Foundation, Inc.**
<http://www.cbconline.org>
- ▶ **National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc.**
<http://www.bateylink.org>
- ▶ **National Technical Association**
<http://www.ntaonline.org>
- ▶ **Network of Indian Professionals of North America**
<http://www.netip.org>
- ▶ **World Institute on Disability**
<http://www.wid.org>
- ▶ **Society of American Indian Government Employees**
<http://www.saige.org>
- ▶ **Office of Advocacy Sponsored Economic Research on Veterans**
<http://www.sba.gov/advocaresearch/#veterans>



FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use

To join *NewsLink*, our free, weekly electronic news service, send an e-mail to dmeeo@mail.va.gov with SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. Thanks to our *NewsLink* content partners:

- Asian Diversity Magazine
- Black MBA Magazine
- Business & Legal Reports
- DiversityCareers.com
- Federal Employees News
- FedNews Online
- FindLaw
- Government Executive
- Government Procurement
- HireDiversity.com
- Hispanic Business
- HR Executive Magazine
- Indian Country Today
- Journal of Issues in Nursing
- Linkage, Inc.
- National Org. on Disability
- Newsweek
- National Public Radio
- Pew Hispanic Center
- SHRM
- The Access Board
- Training Media Review
- USAToday.com
- Washingtonpost.com
- Workforce Magazine
- Workindex.com

VA's HBCU Alumni Directory

VA's new Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Alumni Registry was recently launched on the VA intranet. This registry will allow VA to maintain a database of HBCU graduates in preparation for the second edition of VA's HBCU Alumni Directory. This will also serve as a resource for mentors and help employees to network while sharing their experiences. VA HBCU graduates should register at <http://vaww.fp.webdev.va.gov/dmeeo/hbcu> by November 26, 2004. For information, contact Wanda J. Jones, National Program Manager, at (202) 501-2089.

Spring 2005 NAFEO and HACU National Internship Programs

The National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO) and the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) National Internship Programs will begin in Spring 2005. To submit an Intern Request Form for the NAFEO program, visit <http://www.nafeoip.org/agency>. To submit an Intern Request Form for the HACU program, visit <https://www.hnip.net/applications/agency>. Both deadlines are December 3, 2004. For information, contact Brenda A. Martin, the Department's National Internship Coordinator, at brenda.martin@va.gov.

Government Customer of the Year

During National Disability Awareness Month in October, the Fayetteville, North Carolina, VA Medical Center was named Government Customer of the Year by ServiceSource Employment Services for the center's leadership in employment of individuals with disabilities. Congratulations on a job well done!

MD-715 Update

The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Management Directive 715 (MD-715) is the policy guidance for Federal EEO programs under Title VII and the Rehabilitation Act. VA has been the Federal leader in automating workforce data tables and program plans required by MD-715. For more information on MD-715, visit <http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/regulationslaws/regulations.htm>. VA's automated system of diversity reports is on the VISN Support Service Center (VSSC) Web site at <http://vssc.med.va.gov>. Eleven of the fourteen workforce data tables required by MD-715 are now posted. For further assistance in conducting workforce analysis compliant with MD-715 or for a demonstration of VSSC, contact Mike Dole, Director, Workforce Analysis and Evaluation, at (202) 501-1975. ■



For special observance theme information, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

<http://www1.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans>

Content: The Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) assists eligible veterans in their efforts to receive benefits and services from VA. CMV's goal is to provide and promote VA programs, benefits, and services used by minority veterans, to make benefits and services more accessible to these veterans, and to evaluate current programs and make recommendations on how VA can better serve minority veterans.

Must-see features: "Headliners" provides links to recently published health articles. "Calendar Watch" highlights upcoming events that may be of interest to minority veterans.

Contact info: VA, CMV (00M), 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420, (202) 273-6708

Accessibility: This Web site is compliant with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. ■

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

EEO Awards Recipients Set the Example

Sherry Zahirniak is not a supervisor or manager. She is not an EEO Program Representative or Specialist. Yet Sherry Zahirniak fulfills one of the most important roles in her office. As Human Resources Management Liaison for the VA Regional Office in Waco, Texas, she helps to implement her office's EEO program. For her contributions, she was recognized at the Secretary's 15th Annual EEO Awards Ceremony.

The Secretary recognizes those employees who contribute to EEO and diversity initiatives. Each year, the Department coordinates nominations for the Secretary's Annual EEO Awards, the highest recognition given to Department employees who excel in promoting — or make significant contributions to — the EEO Program in VA. Individuals who ranked the highest in each of the award categories were presented this year's awards, which consisted of a plaque and a cash award.

Sherry Zahirniak was just one individual recognized. **William "Birt" Fraser**, Chief, Health Administration Services, VA Medical Center, Fayetteville, North Carolina, received an award for his effort to create a diverse workforce and culturally-sensitive work environment in which all employees feel a part of a team. The major accomplishment of recipient **Richard A. Silver**, Medical Center Director (retired), James A. Haley Veterans' Hospital,

Tampa, Florida, is the Positive Result in Diversity Enhancement (PRIDE) Program which identifies individuals with diverse backgrounds who display leadership potential and an interest in advancement within the Medical Center. **Francine Fraser**, Network Minority Affairs/EEO Specialist, VISN 3, New York, New York, was awarded for her invaluable knowledge in the EEO area and for successfully ensuring employment opportunities for women, minorities, and persons with disabilities. **Rowland A. Christian**, Director, VA Regional Office, New Orleans, Louisiana, was recognized for making numerous contributions that positively impacted the operation and image of programs servicing disabled veterans, including those with targeted disabilities. Through his leadership and dedication to service, the only VA One-Stop Center was established to provide comprehensive job and training assistance to veterans. He was also involved with the Early Intervention Transition Assistance Service (EITAS), which provides vocational counseling and training to service members returning from the war on terrorism.

VA congratulates all of the award recipients for establishing work environments that embrace and celebrate diversity. To view the details of their contributions to EEO Programs in VA, visit <http://www.va.gov/dmeeo/eoawards.htm>. ■

INSIDE STORY

Adaptive Canoeing Rehabilitation Network

Like many sports, double-hull (outrigger) canoeing can serve as a form of therapy for people with disabilities. DM&EEO recently arranged an informational presentation on the benefits of outrigger canoeing as a form of mental and physical rehabilitation therapy and as a demonstration sport for disabled veterans.

As a result of this presentation, the U.S. Canoe Association (USCA) agreed to aid VA in identifying canoe and community service organizations across the country that would be willing to form a network with VA. This network would facilitate the integration of adaptive canoeing activities into the rehabilitation process of disabled veterans, similar to how therapists at VA medical facilities incorporate creative arts into their recreation therapy pro-

grams. The National Veterans Creative Arts Festival, which plays such a therapeutic role, is just one example of the success that can result from unconventional rehabilitation methods.

USCA also agreed to aid VA in planning an adaptive double-hull canoeing demonstration. Among the venues being considered are the 2005 Wheelchair Games in Minneapolis, Minnesota, June 27-July 1, as well as other 2005 events in Buffalo, New York, and Orlando, Florida.

For more information, contact Carolyn Wong, Staff Director, DM&EEO, at carolyn.wong@va.gov; Jan Whitaker, Adaptive Paddling Chairman, USCA, at (585) 292-6107; or visit <http://www.uscanoe.com>. ■

Diversity@Work

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www.va.gov/dmeeo

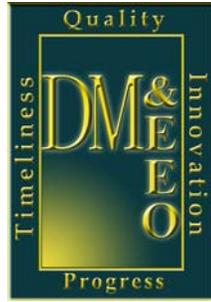
OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Department of Veterans Affairs
www.va.gov

VA Office of Resolution Management
www.va.gov/orm

VA Office of Human Resources Management and Labor Relations
www.va.gov/ohrm

DM&EEO ONLINE



The mission of the Office of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workplace free of discrimination at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of online tools that can help you promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:

- ▶ National American Indian Heritage Month Resources
- ▶ Veterans Day Resources
- ▶ Professional and Community Organization Links

Bookmark our site; we're here to serve you!

2004 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

National American Indian Heritage Month
November

Veterans Day
November 11

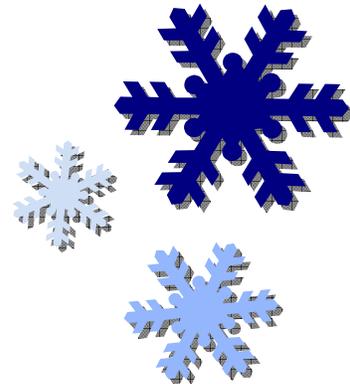
American Indian Science & Engineering Society 26th Annual National Conference
Anchorage, Alaska
November 11-13
www.aises.org/events/2004

National MultiCultural Institute's 2004 Fall Conference
Bethesda, Maryland
November 11-14
www.nmci.org/conferences

CAREERS & the disABLED Magazine's Career Expo for People with Disabilities
Washington, DC
November 12
www.eop.com/cdexponydc.html

DECEMBER

Perspectives of Employment of Persons with Disabilities Conference
Bethesda, MD
December 8-12
www.grad.usda.gov/perspectives



Looking Ahead:

JANUARY

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday
January 15 (observed January 17)

Religious Freedom Day
January 16

FEBRUARY

Lunar New Year
February 9

Black History Month
February

For more events, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo and select the Calendar link.