



DIVERSITY@WORK

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EEO, WWW.VA.GOV/DMEE0

VOLUME 3, ISSUE 4

MAY/JUNE 2004

Q&A

Diversity Benefits All Veterans

Vice Admiral Daniel L. Cooper (USN Ret.), VA Under Secretary for Benefits, shares his thoughts on diversity in VBA.

Q: How do VBA's diversity efforts support VA's mission?

VADM Cooper: Everyone to whom I have spoken about the work that we do in VA has heard me say that I believe we have the very best mission in all of government—to care for veterans and their families. In delivering the myriad benefits that are available to those who have served this Nation in the armed forces, we recognize the importance of having a workforce that reflects the diversity of those we serve. The cultural understanding that a diverse workforce brings to VBA is a significant factor in our being able to meet the needs and concerns of a diverse veteran population.

We have specific goals for improving the delivery of benefits and services in all program areas and have made real progress, particularly in providing more timely and accurate disability claims decisions. The diversity of VBA's workforce significantly contributes to our achievement of our goals. According to



our latest figures, 65 percent of our employees are minorities and women. I believe that diversity of all types—ideas, culture, race, and gender—provides the synergy that propels organizations to greatness.

Q: What are effective ways to achieve workforce diversity?

VADM Cooper: I obviously come from the Navy and a military background, where the focus is on recruiting, developing, and training people to have the skills and knowledge to respond to any situation. You want to find good people. They can come from any background or culture. Military organizations have dynamic recruitment programs, and they provide the tools and training to build the skills that are needed to defend our country.

It's the same in the civilian world—and certainly in VBA. We're developing a diverse workforce by expanding our recruitment efforts and finding talented, hard-working individuals from varied cultures and backgrounds. VA also has a great record of hiring veterans, especially disabled veterans. As we're able to hire within current budget limitations, we're, of course, looking to recruit veterans.■

CELEBRATE!

Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

VA celebrates National Asian Pacific American (APA) Heritage Month in May. This year's theme is "Freedom for All, A Nation We Call Our Own."

May was chosen for the observance to commemorate the arrival of the first Japanese immigrants to the United States in May 1843. APA Heritage Month celebrates the accomplishments of a

community representing *many* diverse backgrounds, histories, languages, and cultures, however.

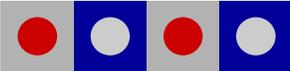
For observance resources, visit www.va.gov/dmee0. To learn more about VA's National Asian American and Pacific Islander Program, contact Carolyn Wong at (202) 501-2002 or via e-mail at carolyn.wong@mail.va.gov.■

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Bookmarks

- ▶ **National Technical Assistance Center for Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders With Disabilities**
www.ntac.hawaii.edu
- ▶ **Hispanic Trends**
www.hispaniconline.com/trends
- ▶ **Mobility International USA**
www.miusa.org
- ▶ **National Museum of the American Indian**
www.nmai.si.edu
- ▶ **Black Leadership Forum**
www.blackleadershipforum.org
- ▶ **Women's Bureau**
www.dol.gov/wb
- ▶ **National Amputation Foundation**
www.nationalamputation.org



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

Secretary's EEO Awards

Each year, the Office of DM&EEO coordinates nominations for the Secretary's EEO Awards Program, the highest recognition for VA employees who excel in contributing to equal employment opportunity in VA. The winners will be announced soon, and a ceremony will take place this summer in Washington, DC.

► More info: www.va.gov/dmeeo/eeoawards.htm

Hispanic Heritage Month Theme

Congratulations to Victoria Reynolds, of the Veterans Service Center in the Albuquerque VA Regional Office, for submitting the winning entry for the 2004 Hispanic Heritage Month theme. The National Council of Hispanic Employment Program Managers selected "Hispanic Americans: Making a Difference in Our Community and our Nation."

World War II Memorial

The National World War II Memorial will be dedicated in Washington, DC on Saturday, May 29. It will honor all who supported the War, including servicemembers and citizens. ► More

info: www.wwiimemorial.com

Native American SEPM Conference

The 11th Annual Native American Special Emphasis Program Managers Training Conference is scheduled for August 17-20 in Ellicott City, Maryland. The theme is "Pathways to a Culture of Care."



► More info: Call (520) 629-4960.

Wheelchair Games in St. Louis

VA and the Paralyzed Veterans of America will host the annual event in St. Louis this year. It takes place June 15-19 and includes such competitive events as swimming, archery, bowling, and basketball.

► More info: www.va.gov/vetevent/nvwg/2004

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

Federal Asian Pacific American Council

www.fapac.org

Content: The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) is a nonprofit, interagency organization representing more than 100 Federal agencies and the District of Columbia government.

The FAPAC Web site supports military and civilian Federal workers representing more than 30 distinct groups originating from Asian and Pacific regions recognized by the U.S. Census Bureau.

Must-see features: Don't miss the National Leadership Training Conference pages and the organization's quarterly newsletter.

Contact info: An e-mail link is provided at Contact Us. Phone numbers are found in an electronic brochure on the About FAPAC page.

Accessibility: The site has no information regarding accessibility by people with disabilities.



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

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program

Federal agencies are required to submit an annual Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program (DVAAP) Plan Certification and Accomplishments Report to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Here's an overview of the program and its reporting requirements.

The Disabled Veterans Affirmative Action Program's purpose is to promote Federal employment and advancement opportunities for qualified disabled veterans, prescribed pursuant to responsibilities assigned to OPM under section 403 of the Vietnam Era Veterans Readjustment Assistance Act of 1974, as amended (38 U.S.C. 2014) and section 307 of the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 (5 U.S.C. 3112).

The term "disabled veteran" applies to: (a) a veteran who is entitled to compensation (or who but for the receipt of military retired pay would be entitled to compensation) under laws administered by the Secretary, or (b) a person who was discharged or released from active duty because of a service-connected disability.

The DVAAP is a two-part report that requires

certification that the agency has an up-to-date plan for the employment and advancement of disabled veterans, and an accomplishment report addressing the following four areas:

- ▶ methods used to recruit and employ disabled veterans, especially those who are 30 percent or more disabled
- ▶ methods used to provide or improve internal advancement opportunities for disabled veterans
- ▶ a description of how the activities of major operating components and field installations were monitored, reviewed, and evaluated
- ▶ an explanation of the agency's progress in implementing its affirmative action plan during the fiscal year. Where progress has not been shown, the report will cite reasons for the lack of progress, along with specific plans for overcoming cited obstacles to progress.

The DVAAP report is submitted annually to OPM, who then submits it to Congress for review. For additional program and deadline information, please contact Lead EEO Manager Noemi Pizarro-Hyman at 202-501-2031 or via e-mail at noemi.hyman@mail.va.gov. ■

INSIDE STORY

Update: Secretary's Task Force on the Employment and Advancement of Women in VA

Secretary Anthony J. Principi directed the establishment of the Secretary's Task Force on the Employment and Advancement of Women in October 2002.

In April 2003, the Task Force identified the following key initiatives in a Report to the Secretary:

- ▶ Establish a Secretary's Advisory Council on Diversity—comprised of industry experts and VA officials—to advise and monitor the progress of programs and strategies necessary to attract, retain, and advance women in the workforce.
- ▶ Brief the Department's most senior managers on the Task Force report, including feedback from focus groups.
- ▶ Incorporate strategies for success into the Department's Strategic Plan and hold organizations accountable for results.

The group also developed three strategic goals related to VA's enabling goal:

- ▶ Increase internal and external recruitment and retention programs designed to attract and promote women.
- ▶ Develop and enhance education and training programs designed to advance women.
- ▶ Foster a corporate culture that proactively integrates women into GS-13, GS-14, GS-15, and Senior Executive Service positions.

In January 2004, Susan C. McHugh, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity, was designated to oversee the implementation of the key initiatives. Work on the initiatives continues, with full implementation due by December 2004. For additional information on this initiative, please contact National Program Manager Wanda Jones at wanda.jones@mail.va.gov. Or visit www.va.gov/dmeeo/taskforce.htm. ■

Diversity@Work

Newsletter published bimonthly by the National Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity. To subscribe or unsubscribe, send an e-mail request to dmeeo@mail.va.gov.

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www.va.gov/dmeeo

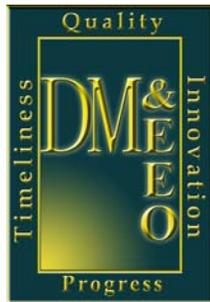
OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Department of Veterans Affairs home
www.va.gov

Center for Women Veterans
www.va.gov/womenvet

Office of Resolution Management
www.va.gov/orm

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 APA Heritage Month resources
- ▶ 2004 National Internship Guide
- ▶ Diversity/EEO Listserv

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

2004 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

MAY

National Asian Pacific American Heritage Month

www.va.gov/dmeeo/napahm.htm

Cinco de Mayo

May 5

www.mexonline.com/cinco.htm

FAPAC National Leadership Training Conference

May 17-21

San Francisco, CA

www.fapac.org

Memorial Day

May 31

www.usmemorialday.org

JUNE

Black Music Month

<http://new.blackvoices.com/features/bmm/>

Flag Day

June 14



Coming soon:

JULY

Federally Employed Women (FEW) National Training Program

July 19-23

Nashville, TN

www.few.org

AUGUST

Blacks in Government (BIG) National Training Program

August 16-20

Washington, DC

www.bignet.org

For theme information, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo and select the Calendar link.