



DIVERSITY@WORK

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

VOLUME 3/ISSUE 1

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2003

Q&A

In Service to Minority Veterans

Part one of our interview with Mr. Charles Nesby, Director of VA's Center for Minority Veterans.

Q: What's the mission of your Office?

Mr. Nesby: Our mission is to support and advise the Secretary on policies affecting minority veterans. Our primary concern is their access to VA services and benefits. We review policies for fairness and effectiveness and make recommendations based on what works and what doesn't work. For instance, the Native American Home Loan program, a VBA program, was established to encourage home-buying for approximately 550 Indian tribes. The program couldn't be administered effectively, though. There were treaty issues with the separation of loan mortgager and guarantor and with determining whether a native-born American qualified as "Native American." We helped evaluate the program, and VA went back to Congress to get permission to become the loan mortgager and guarantor and to change the program



name to American Indian Home Loan Act.

Q: What other programs does your office support?

Mr. Nesby: Two recent examples are the Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program and the CARES Program. Faith-based groups found they didn't have equal access to the Homeless Grant and Per Diem Program, so we reviewed it and made recommendations. The Center will also be reviewing CARES Program issues. That program, which addresses a realignment of VA services, has generated concerns from minority veterans about service cuts. My office will evaluate those concerns and forward them to the CARES Commission. We also refer vets to Volunteer Service Organizations, encourage them to attend field CARES Commission hearings to learn more about the realignment, and remind vets to use the political process to voice concerns. ■

In this issue:

FIELD NOTES News You Can Use	2
WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT American Indian Science & Engineering Society	2
SPECIAL EMPHASIS Internship Programs Offer Promising Futures	3
INSIDE STORY Get the Facts on Sexual Harassment	3
DM&EEO ONLINE	4
CALENDAR	4

CELEBRATE!

National American Indian Heritage Month

The Department of Veterans Affairs proudly joins the Nation in observing American Indian Heritage Month during November. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are nearly 2.5 million American Indians in our country.

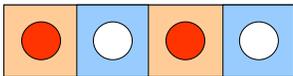
At VA, it's especially important to honor American Indians who have served in our armed forces. Approximately 12,000 served in the U.S. military during World War I. More than 44,000—of a

population of less than 350,000 Native Americans—served in European and Pacific war theaters between 1941 and 1945. And approximately 42,000 American Indians, 90 percent of them volunteers, fought in Vietnam.

For information about VA's National Native American Program, contact Noemi Pizarro-Hyman at (202) 501-2031 or noemi.hyman@mail.va.gov. ■

Bookmarks

- **American Indian College Fund**
www.collegefund.org/d86/basic.html
- **Veterans of the Vietnam War** www.vvnw.org
- **HBCU Graduates at VA**
www.va.gov/dmeee/hbcuw.htm
- **Women's Army Corps Veterans Association**
www.armywomen.org
- **Korean American Museum**
www.kamuseum.org/
- **National Council of La Raza** www.nclr.org
- **Blinded Veterans Association** www.bva.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
- *Newsweek*
- National Organization on Disability
- Journal of Issues in Nursing
- Pew Hispanic Center
- SHRM
- The Access Board
- USAToday.com
- Washingtonpost.com
- *Workforce* magazine
- Workindex.com

New Leadership at DM&EEO

Susan McHugh was named Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for DM&EEO in October 2003. She replaced Armando Rodriguez, who departed VA for the Defense Intelligence Agency. Ms. McHugh joined DM&EEO from the Office of Administration, where she served as Deputy Director. Her career biography can be found on the DM&EEO Web site.

Annual EEO Award Nominations Due December 15

Each year, the national Office of DM&EEO coordinates nominations for the Secretary's Annual Equal Employment Opportunity Awards Program, which is the highest recognition given to Department employees who have excelled in promoting or have made significant contributions to the EEO Program in VA.

Last year's winners, who were feted at a special event in Washington, DC, include Gary Devansky, Cecelia Franklin, Beverly Kimball, Sam Maze, Judy McKee, Pamela McKinney, and

Michelle U'Ren.

The Secretary's 15th Annual EEO Awards Ceremony is scheduled for this spring. For categories and nomination criteria, visit www.va.gov/dmeeo/eoawards.htm.

Mansfield Nominated for #2 Post

President George W. Bush announced his nomination of Gordon H. Mansfield for Deputy Secretary of VA. This position oversees the day-to-day operations of the Department, which has 224,000 employees and a budget of nearly \$60 billion.

According to Secretary Anthony J. Principi, "Mr. Mansfield will bring to this position a wealth of experience as a leader, both in and outside VA, and a proven track record as a tireless veterans advocate. He will use his knowledge and skills to work tirelessly for veterans."

Mr. Mansfield served as executive director of the Paralyzed Veterans Association before his arrival at VA in 2001. For more information, read the Public Affairs press release at www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressarchiinternet.cfm.

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

American Indian Science & Engineering Society

www.aises.org



For More Info

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

Content: AISES provides opportunities for American Indian and Alaskan Native students to prepare for and further their education in science and technology areas through special programs, scholarships, career services, and summer internships with Federal agencies. The goal of AISES, founded in 1977, is to enable advancement of Native Americans as they become "self-reliant and self-determined members of society."

Must-see feature: The AISES Internships Web page details student eligibility requirements, Federal agency affiliations, application deadlines, and internship terms. The internship targets students in health, engineering, computer science, accounting, HR, and psychology fields of study.

Contact info: Phone, fax, mail, e-mail, and specific staff contact information is provided on the About/Contact page.

Accessibility: No information offered.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

Internship Programs Offer Promising Futures

DM&EEO advocates the use of nontraditional student internship programs at VA and has agreements with the following organizations:

- American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES)
- Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) through the National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education (NAFEO)
- The Washington Center for Internships and Academic Seminars (TWC)
- Washington Internships for Native Students (WINS)
- Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP).

These organizations are committed to educating students on the importance of academic studies and career choices. They are partners in our efforts to develop a high-performing, diverse workforce. Following is a quick look at each program.

The **AISES** Program provides opportunities for

American Indian and Alaskan Native students to intern at a variety of Federal agencies.

The **HACU** Program enables Hispanic college students to gain work experience that will enable them to make more educated career choices.

NAFEO provides HBCU students the opportunity to work at Federal agencies, while exposing agencies to a culturally diverse group of students.

TWC is an independent nonprofit organization that provides experiential learning opportunities for college students from across the country.

The **WINS** Program, administered by American University, provides a unique opportunity for Native American college students to live, study, and work in Washington, DC.

The **WRP** recruits college students with disabilities and provides student profiles to leading employers who are seeking interns or permanent hires.

Program costs vary, as do program schedules and durations. For further information, visit www.va.gov/dmeeeo/internship.htm. ■



INSIDE STORY

Get the Facts on Sexual Harassment

The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission offers information on various discrimination-related topics. Here's an excerpt from their "Facts About Sexual Harassment."

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination that violates Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when submission to or rejection of this conduct explicitly or implicitly affects an individual's employment, unreasonably interferes with work performance, or creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Sexual harassment can occur in a variety of circumstances. It is helpful for the victim to

directly inform the harasser that the conduct is unwelcome and must stop. The victim should use any employer complaint mechanism or grievance system available.

Prevention is the best tool to eliminate sexual harassment in the workplace. Employers are encouraged to take steps necessary to prevent sexual harassment from occurring. They should clearly communicate to employees that sexual harassment will not be tolerated. They can do so by establishing an effective complaint or grievance process and taking immediate and appropriate action when an employee complains.

► **More info:** www.eeoc.gov/facts/fs-sex.html ■

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.

CONTACT US

Mail:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of DM&EEO (06)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Phone:

(202) 501-1970

Fax:

(202) 501-2145

E-mail the Editor:

dmeeo@mail.va.gov

Visit our Web site
For additional staff
e-mail addresses.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Department of Veterans
Affairs Web site
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 new online tools that can help *you* promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:



- ▶ Diversity training media reviews
- ▶ Black History Month resources
- ▶ Online Speakers Bureau

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



2003 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

**National American Indian
Heritage Month**
November

**National Society of Hispanic MBAs
Annual Conference**
November 6-8
Ft. Lauderdale, FL
www.nshmba.org

Veterans Day
November 11
www.va.gov/vetsday

**Annual Session of the National
Congress of American Indians**
November 16-21
Albuquerque, NM
www.ncai.org

AISES National Conference
November 20-23
Albuquerque, NM

**Perspectives on Employment of
Persons With Disabilities**
December 10-12
Bethesda, MD



Coming soon:

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday
January 15 (observed: January 19)
www.thekingcenter.org

Religious Freedom Day
January 16
www.firstfreedom.org/nrfd2002.html

Chinese New Year
January 22

Black History Month
February

*For more events, visit our Web site and
select the Calendar link.*