



Message from the DAS

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Have a dispute?
VA's Alternative Dispute
Resolution program can help:
<http://www.va.gov/adr>.

Have an EEO complaint?
Contact the Office of Resolution
Management at (888) 737-3361
within 45 calendar days of the
alleged incident:
[http://www.va.gov/ORM/
EEOcomplaint.asp](http://www.va.gov/ORM/EEOcomplaint.asp).

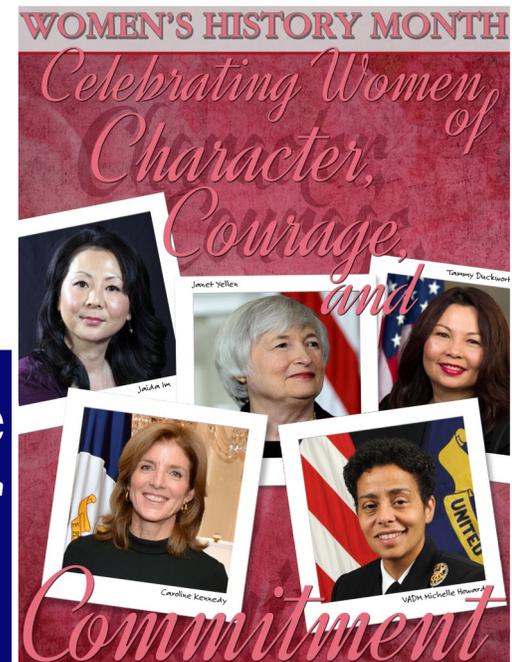
In alignment with the theme for this year's Women's History Month observance, "Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment," I am proud to join VA and the Nation in recognizing the achievements of women both in the workplace and in society this March. Women remain at nearly 60 percent of VA's workforce and are essential to both public service as well as health care and other STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) fields. For more information on this commemoration and on the VACO observance, be sure to read the article below. During the month of March, we also commemorate Irish-American Heritage Month and recognize the vast contributions of Irish Americans to our Nation. Irish-Americans serve in the ranks of our military and here at VA, and I would like to take this time to thank them for their service. Be sure to read more about this observance on [page 5](#).

I am excited to announce that we kicked off VA's 2014 National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP) and anticipate another successful program this year. The NDIP provides internship opportunities to diverse undergraduate and graduate students who are currently enrolled, full-time or part-time, in a degree-seeking program at an accredited post-secondary institution. The NDIP also affords VA officials and intern sponsors an opportunity to meet promising individuals who can ultimately become a part of our future applicant pipeline.

We continue to accept applications from VA facilities or offices interested in a Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) intern for either spring or summer 2014. The program connects Federal employers with pre-screened, qualified, post-secondary students with disabilities.
Continued on the next page.

Commemorate Women's History Month

VA joins the Nation in observing March as Women's History Month. As we participate in this observance, we pause to recognize women's place in history, the present, and the future. This year's theme, "Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment," encourages all to reflect on women of superb character who have greatly contributed to the advancement of women and remained steadfast in their dedication to ensuring women's equality and recognition. The National Women's History Project (NWHHP) determines the theme for this annual observance; this year's theme "honors the extraordinary and often unrecognized determination and tenacity of women." **Continued on the next page.**



Defense Equal Opportunity Management
Institute Special Observance Poster

DAS Message

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The Office of Human Resources and Administration will continue to provide a centralized fund to reimburse payroll costs for WRP interns. Instructions are available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx#WRP>.



Georgia Coffey

VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) has been busy working on various VA policies and guidance and I look forward to sharing these with you in the upcoming months. These include a language use policy; a religious expression policy; and the Secretary's Annual Equal Employment Opportunity, Diversity and Inclusion, and No FEAR Policy. Be sure to check our ODI Web site often for the posting of these new policies: <http://www.diversity.va.gov>.

Finally, this is your last opportunity to submit accomplishments for VA's Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013. This report will be published online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/diar.aspx> and will provide a comprehensive view of the state of the agency with respect to workforce diversity and workplace inclusion with relevant accomplishments and initiatives identified for each administration and staff office within VA. For guidance on preparing submissions, contact Thomas Middleton, ODI, at (202) 461-4036 or Thomas.Middleton@va.gov. ~Georgia Coffey, VA Deputy Assistant Secretary for Diversity and Inclusion

VACO/Field Note

MSI Annual Report and Plan

The Department of Education serves as the lead Federal agency for Executive Orders setting forth support for Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). The Executive Orders established five White House Initiatives: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (13532), American Indian and Alaska Native Education (13592), Educational Excellence for Hispanics (13555), Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (13515), and Educational Excellence for African Americans (13621). VA's Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) received the formal request from Department of Education requesting the FY 2013 Annual Report and FY 2015 Plan on Executive Agency Actions to Assist MSIs. ODI drafted the MSI call memorandum to the Administrations requesting their report and plans. The Department of Education has requested all submissions by March 14, 2014. For questions, please contact Trina Faison, ODI, at Trina.Faison@va.gov.

Commemorate

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"Against social convention and often legal restraints, women have created a legacy that expands the frontiers of possibility for generations to come. They have demonstrated their character, courage and commitment as mothers, educators, institution builders, business, labor, political and community leaders, relief workers, and CEOs. Their lives and their work inspire all females to achieve their full potential and encourage males to respect the diversity and depth of women's experience."

During March, the NWHP will honor twelve women from the past and present who exemplified this year's theme. Their list includes women such as Tammy Duckworth, a Veteran of the Iraq War who was wounded in battle and later became the first disabled woman elected to serve in the House of Representatives in 2014; Roxcy O'Neal Bolton who founded Florida's first battered women's shelter and the Nation's first hospital-based Rape Treatment Center and also convinced National Airlines to offer maternity leave to pregnant flight attendants rather than firing them; Jaida Im who founded the Freedom House, the first residential shelter for adult females who are survivors of human trafficking; and many more. To see a complete list, please visit the NWHP Web site at <http://www.nwhp.org>. *Continued on the next page.*

Commemorate

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As the leader in recognizing and providing healthcare and benefits to women Veterans, VA—most notably VA’s Center for Women Veterans (CWV)—understands the accomplishments and specific health and benefit needs of women Veterans. CWV was established by Public Law 103-446 in November 1994 as a VA Staff Organization to assist and serve the now nearly 2.3 million women Veterans, representing 10.34 percent of all Veterans—a figure that is steadily increasing. CWV constantly strives to improve healthcare and benefits for women Veterans, such as installing women’s clinics in VA medical facilities and assisting women Veterans in contacting the right VA offices to meet their needs, whether they need assistance with benefits claims, employment, or another area. Additionally, CWV recognizes and publicizes the stories of women Veterans through their HER STORY initiative available on their Web site at http://www.va.gov/womenvet/her_story.asp.

This month, as we celebrate Women’s History, please take time to reflect on the many contributions of women to our Nation and society and honor those women of character, courage, and commitment. To learn more about VA’s National Federal Women’s Program, contact Nanese Loza, National Federal Women’s Program Manager, ODI, at Nanese.Loza@va.gov.

References

National Women’s History Project (NWHP). Retrieved January 27, 2014 from <http://www.nwhp.org/whml/honorees2012.php>.

Women Veterans Population Fact Sheet. VA Center for Women Veterans. Retrieved January 27, 2014 from <http://www.va.gov/WOMENVET/docs/WomenVeteransPopulationFactSheet.pdf>.

VACO Observance

Please join the Women’s History Month committee for the Women’s History Month Observance Program at the Department of Veteran Affairs Central Office, on March 6, 2014, from noon to 1:00 p.m. in the G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Veterans Conference Center, Room 230. Ms. Catherine Mitrano, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary, Office of Resolution Management, will serve as the Senior Host. The featured guest and keynote speaker will be Ms. Rosye B. Cloud, Senior Employment Advisor, Veterans Benefits Administration, who will speak on this year’s theme “Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment.” This event is sponsored by the Office of Diversity and Inclusion. For more information, contact Tynnetta Lee, Special Emphasis Observance Coordinator, ODI, at (202) 461-7968 or Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov.

Federal Women’s Program Update

White and Hispanic Women Remain Below Expected Participation Rates

As of September 30, 2013, women account for 59.38 percent of the total VA workforce. Although VA employs a high proportion of women, two specific groups of women, White and Hispanic, remain historically below their expected participation rate, which is determined by the Census 2010 Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF). White women are at 90 percent of the RCLF and Hispanic women are at 62 percent of the RCLF. This means that in order to meet the benchmark of the RCLF, VA would need to increase the onboard percentage of White women by 10 percent and Hispanic women by 38 percent to reach comparable RCLF levels. Additionally, although women of other races and ethnicities are employed in VA at rates that meet or exceed their rates in the RCLF, many of these groups, most notably African American/Black women, continue to have low participation rates starting at the GS 11/Title 38 equivalent pay level and higher.

In order to best serve our Veterans and their families who reflect the populations VA serves, the Department must be diverse and inclusive of all race, ethnicity, and gender (REG) groups. **Continued on page 5.**

Training

Management Directive 110

EEO Management Directive (MD) 110 is guidance issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to provide detailed procedures for the processing of complaints of discrimination filed by Federal employees and applicants for Federal employment under the 1614 regulations. EEOC recently held a brown bag session on MD-110. A recording of that session is now available online at http://www.eeoc.gov/federal/training/brown_bag_md110.cfm.

New Barrier Analysis Training

Barrier elimination is an important step in VA becoming a model employer. To achieve this status, VA has to create a barrier-free environment where all applicants and employees have the opportunity to compete and work to their fullest potential. This training course covers all aspects of the barrier analysis process under EEOC Management Directive 715 (MD-715) to include: analysis and interpretation of workforce statistics, trigger identification, barrier analysis investigation, action plan preparation, and action plan follow up. Each VA facility has to identify barriers and create action plans on eliminating those identified barriers. This training is intended for employees who work with the MD-715 report and for all managers. Virtual classes will be offered on the following dates from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. (EST):

- Thursday, March 6, 2014
- Thursday, March 27, 2014

Each session will be conducted via Microsoft Lync. Register at [https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1368106800000)

[linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1368106800000](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3844925&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1368106800000).

Sign into TMS, click on “register now”, and register for the class you want. Spaces are available on first-come, first-served basis. If you have any questions, concerns, or require specific training for your facility, contact Ryan Pugh at (202) 461-4155 or Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov or Nanese Loza at (202) 461-4049 or Nanese.Loza@va.gov.

Unconscious Bias

Stay tuned for the release of Unconscious Bias training on VA’s Talent Management System in April. Among other objectives, participants will develop a deeper understanding of the filters they use to view, interpret, and judge themselves and others. For more information, contact Carolyn Williams, Diversity Training Specialist, ODI, at Carolyn.Williams12@va.gov.

Section 508 Training

The Section 508 Program Office currently offers training classes to help you understand Section 508 including “Creating Accessible Word Documents and Converting to Accessible PDF” and “Converting Scanned Documents to Accessible PDF.” Everyone has a responsibility to create information that meets the Federal Section 508 standards. Section 508 is a Federal law that applies to you. All courses are held live online via Lync. For more information and to enroll, e-mail the Office of Information and Technology at Section508@va.gov.

VSSC HR Reporting & Workforce Analysis Tools Training

VA uses the VHA Support Service Center (VSSC) to store human resources (HR) data for all of VA in an easy to use reporting format. This interactive training on the VSSC HR Reporting Tools is designed to alert a wide range of managers and HR, equal employment opportunity (EEO) and diversity specialists to VSSC’s HR query applications. All managers have a duty to ensure there is equal opportunity in the workplace with regard to hiring, promotions, and other terms and conditions of employment. This training provides guidance on how to properly use the applications to conduct various workforce analyses, identify triggers, and define and distinguish between Relevant Civilian Labor Force vs. Civilian Labor Force. Virtual training classes will be offered on the following dates from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (EST):

- Wednesday, March 12, 2014
- Tuesday, May 13, 2014
- Wednesday, July 16, 2014
- Thursday, September 25, 2014

Each session will be conducted via Microsoft Lync. Register at [https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3823179&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1352313600000)

[linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3823179&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1352313600000](https://www.tms.va.gov/learning/user/deeplink_redirect.jsp?linkId=ITEM_DETAILS&componentID=3823179&componentTypeID=VA&revisionDate=1352313600000).

Sign into TMS, click on “register now”, and register for the class you want. Spaces are available on first-come, first-served basis. Contact Ryan Pugh at (202) 461-4155 or Ryan.Pugh2@va.gov for more information.

Diversity News: Online Training

The March/April 2014 edition of *Diversity News* focuses on VA’s individuals with disabilities employment program. To view current and past episodes, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.



Federal Women's Program Update

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VA continues to develop and implement methods to help increase recruitment of Hispanic and White women, improve career progression opportunities for African American/Black women in grades where they have less than expected participation rates, and ensure equality for all REG groups in participation in career development opportunities and mentoring. This is why VA submits plans to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Office of Personnel Management. ODI also developed the first Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan in the Federal Government and reports progress on this plan annually. ODI also developed a Hispanic Employment Strategic Plan and is currently working to create a Strategic Plan for the Federal Women's Program (FWP).

VA recognizes employee retention is vital to attaining and maintaining an effective workforce. High employee commitment is known to organizational psychologists to lead to higher morale, job contentment, and dedication to the organization's mission. Additionally, happier employees lead to better care of customers and better care outcomes. The anonymous All Employee Survey (AES) conducted by VA annually is a method to measure employee commitment as well to obtain information about the VA work environment. The survey is anonymous to protect employees' identities, but the information is used to identify any challenges so candid employee feedback on the AES is instrumental to improving the VA workforce and workplaces.

Methods such as employee recognition (monetary, time-off, and non-monetary), flexible work schedules, and telework help employees achieve a better work-life balance. In 2013, ODI received numerous inquiries from the field about pregnancy, childbirth, and accommodations for new or expectant mothers. An article in the January 2014 issue of *Diversity@Work* (online at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/files/DAW/v13i04.pdf>) provides information and resources on areas such as rights as an employee regarding freedom from discrimination, leave, reasonable accommodations, and flexibilities in the workplace. For more information on the VA FWP, visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/women.aspx>.

Commemorate

Irish-American Heritage Month

VA joins the Nation this March in commemorating Irish-American Heritage Month. From the 2013 Presidential Proclamation (<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2013/02/28/presidential-proclamation-irish-american-heritage-month-2013>): For more than two centuries, America has been made and remade by striving, hopeful immigrants looking for a chance to pursue their dreams. Millions among them were born in Ireland, separated from our shores but united by their belief in a better day. This month, we celebrate the Irish-American journey, and we reflect on the ways a nation so small has inspired so much in another.

Generations of Irish left the land of their forebears to cast their fortunes with a young Republic. Escaping the blight of famine or the burden of circumstance, many found hardship even here. They endured prejudice and stinging ridicule. But through it all, these new citizens never gave up on one of our oldest ideas: that anyone from anywhere can write the next great chapter in the American story. So they raised families and built communities, earned a living and sent their kids to school. In time, what it meant to be Irish helped define what it means to be American. And as they did their part to make this country stronger, Irish Americans shared in its success, retaining the best of their heritage and passing it down to their children.

That familiar story has been lived and cherished by Americans from all backgrounds, and it reaffirms our identity as a Nation of immigrants from all around the world. So as we celebrate Irish-American Heritage Month, let us retell those stories of sweat and striving. And as two nations united by people and principle, may America and Ireland always continue to move forward together in common purpose.



*President Barack Obama and Taoiseach Enda Kenny
in Dublin, Ireland
(Official White House Photo by Pete Souza, 2011)*

Workforce Planning & Analysis

Expand Your Connections: Workforce Planning & Analysis Team Launches Network Map

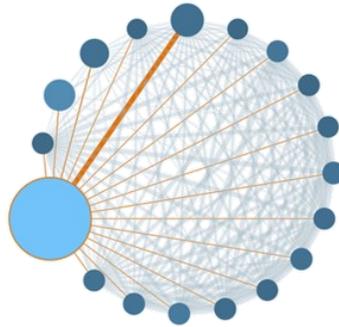
Do you conduct workforce planning (WFP) at VA? Interested in seeing where you fit in the greater VA WFP network? The Workforce Planning & Analysis (WPA) team has created a Network Map to enable Human Resources professionals, workforce planners, and related employees to find others who do specific workforce planning activities, such as those that:

- run workforce-related data analyses,
- use structured workforce planning models to evaluate workforce health, or
- forecast staffing needs to prevent shortages/surpluses.

It will also help employees find other workforce planners or similar employees who might be useful long-term contacts.

The WPA team is requesting input from VA employees in providing their own Network Map data! By inputting brief information about your role, what type of work you do, and who you work with, you will help to populate the Network Map. Once completed, you'll be able to see a visual snapshot of how you are connected to workforce planning across VA.

Workforce Planner Network Map example:



The WPA team will use the information gathered via the Workforce Planning Network Map to understand how workforce planning decisions are being made and what resources and information are used in the process, and you will be able to use the information to get answers more easily to some of your questions.

Please take 20 minutes to complete your own Workforce Planner Network Map. The more information you provide, the more helpful it will be for other people and yourself. The Network Map can be accessed via the VA WFP Community of Practice Intranet site via the Network Map tab. You'll need to select the "Next" button to start inputting your data. For more information, review the Network Map User Guide, also available on the tab.

Once you are done inputting your data and the data of others you may work with, you'll be able to see a visual map of your connections. As more people are added to the Network Map, it will include more connections. Feel free to share with your team and network!

To access the Network Map or if you have any questions, contact the WPA team, Office of Human Resources Management, at vaworkforceplanning@va.gov.

VA Diversity Council

Next Meeting April 16

The next VA Diversity Council (VADC) quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 16, 2014, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm in VA Central Office room 830 and via teleconference. Visit <http://www.diversity.va.gov/council> for more information.

Compliance Corner

Supervisors and Reprisal Per Se

Expressing hostility to the EEO complaint process by individuals in a supervisory or managerial position is classified as a per se reprisal violation. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) has consistently ruled that any action by an agency manager or supervisor that interferes with an employee's rights or has a chilling or intimidating effect on the exercise of those rights will be deemed a per se violation of Title VII.

In a recent case, a VA employee was chastised by her supervisor for speaking to other employees about her EEO lawsuit; was told that it was improper for her attorney to send a fax to the office which contained information concerning her request for accommodation; and admonished that she should not have communicated with upper management about being penalized for having breast cancer.

An EEOC administrative judge ruled that these actions constituted per se reprisal. Collectively these actions, whether intentional or not, intimidated the complainant and interfered with the EEO process. Employees have the right to discuss their EEO activity free of negative comments, fear, hostility, and harassment by management officials. Actions by management, regardless of how minor they may seem, that in any way deter or prevent a complainant from engaging in the EEO process, are prohibited by law.

In another case, a Supervisory Medical Technologist was disciplined for making various performance errors ranging from failing to reconcile incomplete status reports, leaving a defective medical device in the emergency department, failing to properly calculate measurements, to putting reagents that were required to be at room temperature in the refrigerator. All of these errors did indeed warrant the seven day suspension and PIP (Performance Improvement Plan) that the employee was given.

It was management's response to the employee however, that turned a simple disciplinary action into a per se reprisal violation. When the employee inquired about why he was being suspended and placed on a PIP, his supervisor's response was that the discipline was taken because of his "prior EEO activity." When later questioned, the supervisor testified that while she didn't recall making the statement, it didn't seem unreasonable. Although the supervisor claimed that she was under stress at the time that she gave this response, the administrative judge determined that the supervisor's statement was credible finding that statements made regarding an employee's EEO activity will be taken at face value and in this case, the supervisor openly admitted that the employee's EEO activity served as a motivating factor in the Agency's decision to discipline him.

Also, an employee's EEO activity must never be discussed with a potential employer. In a case involving a complainant who was a Human Resources Specialist, an administrative judge reiterated the EEOC's commitment to sanctioning behaviors that deter employees from filing EEO complaints. The complainant applied for a job at a VA facility and listed the Medical Center Director as a reference. The complainant received a conditional job offer pending contact with her references. After contacting the Medical Center Director, the hiring official was told that whenever complainant ran into difficulties, she filed EEO complaints. The hiring facility informed the complainant of the remarks and, after giving the complainant a chance to respond to the comments, reaffirmed the job offer. The complainant declined the job offer because she thought that the comments regarding her EEO activity would negatively affect her reputation at the new VA facility.

Both the Office of Employment Discrimination and Complaint Adjudication (OEDCA) and the EEOC administrative judge found that the complainant's reason for declining the job offer demonstrate the effect that an inappropriate comment can have on an employee's rights and how such comments are likely to deter complainants from engaging in the EEO process.

~Maxanne R. Witkin, Director, VA's Office of Employment Discrimination Complaint Adjudication

For more information about OEDCA, visit
<http://www.oedca.va.gov>.



Diversity@Work is published by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA's) Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), a program office within the Office of Human Resources and Administration (HR&A). To subscribe or unsubscribe, e-mail odi@va.gov.

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Visit our Web site
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for staff e-mail addresses.

GOT NEWS?

We want to hear from you! If you'd like to share your story ideas, comments, or suggestions, e-mail us at odi@va.gov.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

HR&A
<http://www.va.gov/employee>

Office of Human Resources Management
<http://www.va.gov/ohrm>

Office of Resolution Management
<http://www.va.gov/orm>

Resolution Support Center
<http://www.va.gov/ORM/RSC.asp>

Veterans Health Administration's Diversity and Inclusion Community of Practice
David.Rabb@va.gov

VA on Facebook
<http://www.facebook.com/veteransaffairs>

VA on YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/user/DeptVetAffairs>

D&I Online

The mission of the Department of Veterans Affairs' diversity and inclusion program is to develop and implement a comprehensive, integrated, and strategic focus on diversity and inclusion as key components of the Department's human resources strategies. Here's a sampling of online tools available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov> that can help leverage diversity and build inclusion:

- ▶ Women's History Month and other observance resources.
- ▶ Training resources, guides, and reports.
- ▶ Links to professional and community organizations.
- ▶ Best practices for diversity management.



D&I In Your E-mail Inbox

ODI 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 electronic news service, e-mail odi@va.gov with the words SUBSCRIBE NEWSLINK in the subject line. Find a sample of *NewsLink* at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/newslink.aspx>.

D&I on Your TV or PC

Diversity News is a video co-produced by ODI and the VA Central Office Broadcast Center for you. *Diversity News* follows VA News on the VA Knowledge Network, Content Distribution Network, channel 2. Programs are also available at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx>.

March 2014 Calendar

<http://www.diversity.va.gov/calendar>

Irish-American Heritage Month
National Multiple Sclerosis Education and Awareness Month
National Professional Social Work Month
Women's History Month

Telework Week
March 3-7

Casimir Pulaski Day
March 4

2014 NCLR Capital Awards
March 4; Washington, DC
<http://www.nclr.org>

FAPAC One Day Leadership Training Workshop: "Are You Tomorrow's Leader?"
March 7; Washington, DC
<http://www.fapac.org/fapac.org/Event?eventId=829545&EventViewMode=EventDetails>

International Women's Day
March 8

Deaf History Month
March 13-April 15

St. Patrick's Day
March 17

Greek Independence Day
March 25

LULAC National Women's Conference
March 28-29; Milwaukee, Wisconsin
<http://lulac.org>

Cesar Chavez Day
March 31