Upcoming Events
October 2015

National Disability Employment Awareness Month
National Domestic Violence Awareness Month
National Work and Family Month
Mental Illness Awareness Week
October 4–10

German-American Day
October 6

Out & Equal Workplace Summit
October 6–8; Dallas, TX

Leif Erikson Day
October 9

General Pulaski Memorial Day
October 11

Columbus Day
National Indigenous People’s Day
October 12

Al-Hijra (Islamic New Year)
October 14

Commemorate
National Disability Employment Awareness Month

This October, join VA and the Nation in commemorating National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). The theme for this year—which marks 70 years since the first observance—is "My Disability is One Part of Who I Am."

VA managers and supervisors are encouraged to support events and activities that recognize the many contributions of individuals with disabilities to America’s workforce. VA Central Office will observe NDEAM on Thursday, October 8, 2015, in the G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Veterans Conference Center, room 230, at noon. Mr. Jack Kammerer, Director of the Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Service, Veterans Benefits Administration, will serve as this year’s senior host. For more information about this event, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, Special Emphasis Observance Coordinator. (Continued on the next page.)

Message from the DAS
Georgia Coffey

In our continuing efforts to partner with our affinity organizations to promote diverse leadership in government, I recently moderated a panel at the African American Federal Executives Association (AAFEA) Annual Training Workshop held September 14–15, 2015, at the Bethesda North Marriott Hotel and Conference Center in Maryland. AAFEA promotes the professional development and advancement of African Americans into and within the senior ranks of the United States government. VA and AAFEA signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) earlier this year to establish a partnership to collaborate, perform outreach, and share resources to promote diversity and inclusiveness in VA and Federal sector leadership. (Continued on page 3.)
Training

**USA Learning** is the official learning and development site for the United States Federal Government. Visit the **USA Learning Web site** to learn more.

**Section 508** training for VA employees is available. Contact the Office of Information and Technology **Section 508 Program Office**.

**Employee Competencies Training Opportunities** are offered by the VA Learning University (VALU). The employee competencies define what every VA employee needs to know and be able to do to contribute to the overall mission of VA while upholding the “I CARE” values. For more information, contact **VALU Communications**.

---

**Explore Rotational Assignments**

**How to Get Started with ROTA**

Do you have a temporary staffing need that could provide a developmental opportunity to an employee at VA? Offering a rotational assignment is an excellent way to both meet your office’s needs and actively support career development for VA employees. Now, through MyCareer@VA’s Rotational Assignment Tool (ROTA), you can post and fill a rotational assignment seamlessly. ROTA is a central location for you to post open rotational assignments for VA employees to explore. You can use the ROTA dashboard to review and bookmark candidates who have submitted a resume to your open rotational assignments, compare their qualifications, and email top candidates. ROTA’s streamlined online process makes advertising and applying for open rotations hassle-free. To start posting open rotational assignments, contact the MyCareer@VA team. Also, stay up-to-date with the latest in career advice from MyCareer@VA. Sign up for the MyCareer@VA monthly update to get the information you need delivered straight to your inbox each month. By subscribing, you’ll receive exclusive expert career advice for VA, career tips from VA employees, and more.

---

**Healthcare Equality Index**

**VA Medical Centers Encouraged to Participate Again This Year**

VA Medical Centers are reminded that submissions for the 2016 Healthcare Equality Index (HEI) will be accepted until October 31, 2015. The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) Foundation skillfully designed the HEI to evaluate healthcare facilities while giving resources needed to provide Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) patient-centered care and recognizing those who explicitly commit to LGBT equity and inclusion. Last year, 102 VHA facilities participated in the HEI with 91 receiving the designation of Leader in LGBT Healthcare Equality. This resulted in positive publicity for those facilities in their communities and VHA nationally. It also conveyed to all Veterans that VHA is committed to ensuring an inclusive environment for all who served. For questions regarding the HEI or how to participate, contact the HEI staff or visit the HEI Web site.

---

**Commemorate**

**National Disability Employment Awareness Month**

NDEAM is a national campaign that raises awareness about disability employment issues and celebrates the many and varied contributions of America’s workers with disabilities. NDEAM represents early efforts to affirm the intrinsic value of work for those with disabilities. Its roots go back to 1945 when Congress enacted a law declaring the first week in October each year "National Employ the Physically Handicapped Week." In 1962, the word "physically" was removed to acknowledge the employment needs and contributions of individuals with all types of disabilities. In 1988, Congress expanded the week to a month and changed the name to "National Disability Employment Awareness Month."

VA is proud of our progress in employing people with targeted disabilities (blindness, deafness, partial paralysis, complete paralysis, missing extremities, epilepsy, dwarfism, psychological disabilities, and severe intellectual disabilities). At the end of Fiscal Year 2009, the onboarding ratio for employees with targeted disabilities was 1.47 percent. By August 30, 2015, the onboarding ratio for this group had increased to 2.17 percent which is an increase from Fiscal Year 2014 which was 2.09 percent.

All VA employees are invited to update their disability status at [https://secure.vssc.med.va.gov/SF256](https://secure.vssc.med.va.gov/SF256). This information will be kept private; it will not be shared with supervisors or other officials at your office or facility. The aggregate data is used to determine budget needs for reasonable accommodations, whether VA is in compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and hiring and retaining people with disabilities, including those with targeted disabilities.

Increasing the employment numbers for this group is a goal we all can embrace. Individuals with disabilities are from every race, national origin, and gender. In addition, it helps the morale of the Veterans we serve who have incurred injuries to see individuals with disabilities as productive, welcomed members of VA’s workforce. The best way for every VA office and facility to commemorate NDEAM is to recruit and hire a qualified individual with a targeted disability to a position with promotion potential. These applicants can be hired non-competitively for Title 5 and Title 38 positions that are not identified as a merit promotion. The law requiring us to hire people with disabilities is the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Offices and facilities that do not have vacancies can ensure that current qualified employees with targeted disabilities receive promotion opportunities. This is required by law. The statutory language of Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, mandates that Federal agencies submit to EEOC for approval an annually updated “affirmative action program plan for the hiring, placement, and advancement of individuals with disabilities.”

More information can be found on VA’s Individuals with Disabilities Employment Program Web page at [http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx](http://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/pwd.aspx). We all have an important part in fostering a more inclusive VA, one where every person is recognized for his or her abilities every day of every month. Commemorate Disability Employment Awareness Month—hire a qualified person with a targeted disability!
This event was a perfect complement to our participation in the Blacks in Government (BIG) National Training Institute in August where we advanced our new MOU with BIG to enhance employee development opportunities for BIG members.

Also in August, I was excited to launch VA’s Student Outreach and Recruitment (SOAR) initiative with Valencia College, a major Hispanic Serving Institution in Orlando, Florida. We inaugurated our new partnership with a signing ceremony hosted by Valencia College President, Dr. Sanford C. Shugart. SOAR is a key initiative of our VA Hispanic Employment, Recruitment, and Outreach (HERO) Plan aimed at promoting strategic outreach to the Hispanic and Veteran communities for employment and other purposes. The ceremony was attended by Valencia College and ODI staff members, students, and Veterans. We look forward to a mutually beneficial partnership with Valencia College as we work toward our common aims of promoting diversity and inclusion in education and the workplace. To learn more about SOAR or the VA/Valencia College MOU, visit VA’s Hispanic Employment Program Web page.

Finally, please join VA and the Nation in commemorating National Disability Employment Awareness Month this October. This year marks the 70th anniversary of this observance and the 25th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Here at VA, where we serve our Nation’s greatest heroes—Disabled Veterans—this commemoration is particularly meaningful, and we have much to be proud of: VA’s on-board representation of individuals with targeted disabilities (IWTD) is 2.17 percent and our hiring rate of IWTD VA-wide is 3.17 percent as of the end of August 2015. Both of these percentages exceed VA’s goals and are among the highest in Cabinet level Departments. Read more beginning on page 1.

National Diversity Internship Program
Providing College Students with VA Work Experiences

Ms. Vanessa Sandoval was a summer National Diversity Internship Program (NDIP) intern in the Equal Employment Opportunity Office at the Michael E. DeBakey Veterans Affairs Medical Center in Houston, Texas. One of 236 interns selected out of 1,271 applicants with the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), Ms. Sandoval was among the 102 interns placed in VA facilities throughout the country, and the only one assigned to a post in Houston.

“I flew straight from D.C. to Houston, and started my internship with Veterans Affairs the next day,” she said. “My supervisor has been so welcoming – everyone has been – making sure I’m comfortable at work...I immediately felt at home here.”

Administered by VA’s Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI), the Department proudly offers NDIP as a way to provide 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.

This was Ms. Sandoval’s very first work experience. “I started off as a shy person, but by my final semester I was on stage with a microphone being the master of ceremonies for university events; plus, I was overseeing all the student organizations on campus. That job took me out of my bubble and made me want to do that for other college students. I wouldn’t trade my first job for anything!”

Ms. Sandoval said her double major of government and psychology prepared her well for the on-the-job training she received. “This is such a fabulous opportunity for me...I am experiencing true diversity for the first time in my life. Here at the VA Med[ical] Center we have people of all ethnicities – from other states as well as countries all over the world.”

ODI will soon begin accepting applications for the Summer 2016 session from VA organizations who would like to mentor a NDIP intern. For more information, visit the ODI Web site or contact the NDIP Program Manager. Parts of this article taken from http://www.utb.edu/newsinfo/Pages/UTB-graduate-receives-on-the-job-training-as-HACU-intern-in-Houston.aspx.
VA Demographics
Report for the Department of Veterans Affairs, August 2015

VA’s workforce diversity remains relatively steady through the end of the August 2015. Although the VA workforce increased by 13,305 employees since the beginning of the new fiscal year, the changes in representation for all groups in VA’s permanent and temporary workforce are negligible.

Comparing the demographic characteristics of VA’s workforce against the Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF), the representation of White women, Hispanic men and women, Asian men, and men and women reporting two or more races are lower than expected.

The Diversity Index is a single measure of workforce diversity that measures the convergence of VA’s aggregate workforce distribution by race, ethnicity, and gender to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF) or RCLF. Since September 2014, the RCLF-based diversity index increased 4.63 percentage points and the CLF-based diversity index increased 4.06 percentage points.

The proportion of individuals with targeted disabilities in VA’s workforce has increased by 0.08 percentage points since the beginning of the fiscal year. We continue to exceed the Secretary’s 2 percent onboard goal. The hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities also increased since the start of the fiscal year. Among all hires, individuals with targeted disabilities represent 3.20 percent, which is above the Secretary’s 3 percent hiring goal. Let’s keep up the good work, VA. For more information, contact ODI’s Workforce Analysis Team.

---

**VA Demographics Report for the Department of Veterans Affairs, August 2015**

VA’s workforce diversity remains relatively steady through the end of the August 2015. Although the VA workforce increased by 13,305 employees since the beginning of the new fiscal year, the changes in representation for all groups in VA’s permanent and temporary workforce are negligible.

Comparing the demographic characteristics of VA’s workforce against the Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF), the representation of White women, Hispanic men and women, Asian men, and men and women reporting two or more races are lower than expected.

The Diversity Index is a single measure of workforce diversity that measures the convergence of VA’s aggregate workforce distribution by race, ethnicity, and gender to the Civilian Labor Force (CLF) or RCLF. Since September 2014, the RCLF-based diversity index increased 4.63 percentage points and the CLF-based diversity index increased 4.06 percentage points.

The proportion of individuals with targeted disabilities in VA’s workforce has increased by 0.08 percentage points since the beginning of the fiscal year. We continue to exceed the Secretary’s 2 percent onboard goal. The hiring of individuals with targeted disabilities also increased since the start of the fiscal year. Among all hires, individuals with targeted disabilities represent 3.20 percent, which is above the Secretary’s 3 percent hiring goal. Let’s keep up the good work, VA. For more information, contact ODI’s Workforce Analysis Team.

---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Sep. 2014</th>
<th>Aug 2015</th>
<th>Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Using RCLF</td>
<td>87.63%</td>
<td>92.26%</td>
<td>4.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using CLF</td>
<td>86.66%</td>
<td>90.72%</td>
<td>4.06%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

1 *Relevant Civilian Labor Force (RCLF) reflects all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed in or actively seeking employment in VA specific occupations. This is based on the 2010 Census and includes Puerto Rico. The RCLF here is based on the end of FY 2014.*

2 *Civilian Labor Force (CLF) consists of all U.S. Citizens 16 years of age or over, excluding those in Armed Forces, who are employed or seeking employment. The CLF contains all occupations and is an accurate comparative basis for Federal Government-wide comparison, the largest employer in the U.S. with all occupations represented. This is based on the 2010 Census which is shown to be a higher benchmark compared with the 2000 Census. The CLF does not include Puerto Rico.*