Upcoming Events
April 2017
National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month
Minority Health Month
Autism Speaks, Light It Up Blue
April 2
National Equal Pay Day
April 4
Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Program
April 26
Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
April 27

Message from the DAS
One of the many critical services the Office of Diversity and Inclusion (ODI) performs is the Adverse Impact Analyses of VA’s Leadership Development Programs when selection data becomes available. The purpose of these analyses is to identify potential barriers to equal employment opportunities (EEO), or significant disparities in the selection rates of candidates based on race, ethnicity, gender or disability status. Mr. David Williams, Director of Workforce Analysis, ODI, just completed the analysis for the 2016-2017 Corporate Employee Development Board program. ODI is pleased to report that the analysis indicates there is no significant disparity or obvious barriers to EEO in the selection rates by demographic group. This is important because these programs position people for leadership and Senior Executive Service (SES) positions, where VA has underrepresentation for women and most minority groups. Because of limitations in the available data, the analysis is not comprehensive from a legal standard; however, as an initial assessment, this is a good news story for VA. ODI will conduct similar analyses for the Leadership VA and other leadership development programs as selection data become available. Accordingly, it is important that the business owners for all of our leadership development programs and SES selection processes capture selections at every stage of the selection process (e.g., Application, Minimally Qualified, Best Qualified, Referred, Selection) so that ODI can perform a thorough adverse impact analysis. We look forward to working with those program managers.

Finally, I encourage you to join VA at the Federal Inter-Agency Committee’s Annual Holocaust Remembrance Program this month. More information about this event can be found below.

Georgia Coffey

ORM
Steps Toward Resolution
Alternative Dispute Resolution
(202-461-0280) can help with resolving conflict. To file a discrimination or harassment complaint, you must contact the Office of Resolution Management at (toll free) 888-737-3361 within 45 calendar days of the date of the alleged discriminatory incident.

Commemorate
Federal Inter-Agency Holocaust Remembrance Program

The Federal Inter-Agency Committee will hold its 24th Annual Holocaust Remembrance Program on Wednesday, on April 26, 2017, at the Lincoln Theatre located at 1215 U Street NW in Washington, D.C. from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm. (Continued on the next page.)
Commemorate
Continued from the previous page

Supported by Federal agencies including the Department of Veterans Affairs, this program is designed to provide the experience through the voice of eyewitnesses. The Holocaust survivors, rescuers, liberators, resisters, witnesses, or relatives of these individuals remind us of what can happen if prejudice, hate, and intolerance against any individual or group of people are not challenged by each one of us.

The program, “Evade and Endure: Survivors’ Stories, Lessons Learned,” will present eyewitness testimony from the Holocaust, the systematic, state-sponsored murder of six million Jews by Nazi Germany and its collaborators. The Holocaust was part of the “Final Solution” – the Nazi plan to annihilate all nine million Jews in Europe. Five million non-Jews from such groups as Roma, Communists, homosexuals, and the disabled were also murdered. This year, the program will feature two survivors of the Holocaust:

- Roman Kent, born in Lodz, Poland, survived the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz, and other concentration camps, but lost his parents, a sister, and other family members. After coming to the United States and becoming a successful businessman, he became a philanthropist and one of the leading voices and advocates for justice for Holocaust survivors throughout the world. Mr. Kent has written books and produced a documentary on the Holocaust, and has received countless honors for his tireless Holocaust-related work and accomplishments.
- Renée Fink, born in Holland, went into hiding at age four with a Catholic family until after World War II ended. She lost her parents during the war. While in hiding, she lived in an occupied and heavily bombed part of Holland. Later, she was reunited with her grandmother and aunt, eventually coming to the U.S. in 1948. Ms. Fink speaks about the resistance, goodness, and courage of people in those times and why those traits remain so important. Ms. Fink has spoken frequently about her experiences in her home state of North Carolina.

The moderator will be the Washington Post’s Ruth Marcus. Ms. Marcus is a reporter, columnist and the Deputy Editorial Page Editor for the Post, as well as a television political commentator. She was a finalist for the 2007 Pulitzer Prize in Commentary. The program will feature a tribute to the late Elie Wiesel, probably the best known Holocaust survivor, Nobel peace laureate, and author of Night. The program also includes the 6th in the City Chorus, a Jewish and Sacred music choir that features members from the Sixth & I Historic Synagogue and the Turner Memorial African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The program is open to the public and admission is free. For more information, please visit http://holocaustremembrance.org.

Training

Section 508
The Section 508 Office offers a variety of training available to anyone with a VA email address. To sign up, visit the Section 508 Office intranet site and download the Outlook calendar invite for each individual course you would like to attend. The calendar invite has a brief description and information on how to connect to the course. The courses can also be found on the Talent Management System (TMS) at https://www.tms.va.gov.

Diversity News
Diversity News is a 15-minute video produced by ODI and the VA Central Office Broadcast Center. Current and past episodes are available on the ODI Web site at https://www.diversity.va.gov/products/dn.aspx. The March/April 2017 edition focuses on the State of the Agency for Fiscal Year 2016 and examines VA’s workforce analytics in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. These are necessary tools that can help you to measure the impact of VA’s diversity and inclusion efforts as you strive towards those goals and objectives listed in the Department’s recently published VA Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2017-2020 at https://www.diversity.va.gov/products/plan.aspx.
Engagement Drivers Series
Organizational Inclusiveness—At VA, Inclusion and Engagement Go Hand in Hand

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” —Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Organizational Inclusiveness is a key driver of employee engagement at VA: in order for employees to feel highly motivated and committed to the organization’s mission, they must first feel included. At the same time, employees need to actively be included in order to build and sustain a culture of engagement. It is a typical chicken or egg dilemma—which comes first, inclusion or engagement? The answer is neither; at VA, inclusion and engagement go hand in hand and need to happen simultaneously to be most successful.

VA’s workforce is exceptionally diverse—our employees bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values, and beliefs to our organization. This diversity is multidimensional, with intersecting factors that include age, gender, race, ethnicity, religious beliefs, sexual orientation, disability, work experience, education, geographic location, customs, and values, among others. In fact, VA’s rich diversity is a great asset; each employee brings a unique set of talents, knowledge, opinions, ideas, and beliefs that contribute significantly to our organization’s performance and mission. One of the VA’s strategic goals for an inclusive and engaged organization is to “cultivate an inclusive work environment and create an engaged organization that leverages diversity and empowers all contributors” (See the Department of Veterans Affairs Diversity & Inclusion Strategic Plan for 2017-2020 at https://www.diversity.va.gov/products/plan.aspx).

At the same time, with such a diverse workforce, it can be challenging to achieve both a fully inclusive and engaged culture. Doing so requires deliberate, purposeful efforts to create work environments that enable everyone to have a voice and contribute to the mission, ultimately empowering all employees to perform to their highest potential. While there are numerous ways to foster an inclusive and engaged workforce, here are a few key areas to focus on that will help reach this objective:

- **Awareness**: Recognize and acknowledge differences and keep an open mind. Put yourself in someone else’s shoes to understand their perspective. This will increase acceptance, open-mindedness, understanding, and compassion.
- **Communication**: Maintain continuous, open, honest, and transparent communication to ensure all employees feel informed and knowledgeable.
- **Participation**: Ensure all employees have multiple platforms to provide direct input and feedback. Encourage individual creativity, innovation, and divergent thought in tandem with collaboration. Remove barriers or silos preventing full participation.
- **Psychological safety**: Promote an accessible and approachable work environment where team members feel comfortable asking questions or bringing up team issues without fear of retribution. Show civility and respect in communication with others. Enforce standards of appropriate conduct and a respectful atmosphere. Taking these steps will help strengthen both inclusion and engagement in the workplace. The goal is to cultivate a flexible, collaborative, and inclusive work environment that leverages diversity and empowers all employees to reach optimum performance, making VA a place people want to serve and furthering the VA mission to care for our Nation’s Veterans.

For more information on Organizational Inclusiveness and how it drives Employee Engagement, please visit the Office of Diversity and Inclusion’s website at https://www.diversity.va.gov or contact the Employee Engagement Service at engagement@va.gov. —Ms. Clarise Cannings