Commemorate
Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month

VA Central Office (VACO) will commemorate Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month on Thursday, May 18, 2017, in the G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Veterans Conference Center, room 230, at noon (ET). This year’s theme is “Unite Our Voices by Speaking Together.” (Continued on the next page.)
Commemorate
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Dr. Miguel LaPuz, Acting Principal Deputy Under Secretary for Health, will serve as this year’s featured keynote speaker. Mr. Matthew Sullivan, Deputy Under Secretary for Finance and Planning/CFO, National Cemetery Administration, will serve as this year’s senior host.

AAPIs have been serving honorably in the United States military since the War of 1812. The first AAPI to reach general officer rank was Brigadier General Albert Lyman, who was Hawaiian and Chinese American and the commanding general of the 32nd Army Division that fought in the Leyte campaigns in the Philippines in World War II. The highest ranked AAPI in the military was the Honorable Eric K. Shinseki, who was a four-star general, the Army Chief of Staff, and the seventh Secretary of Veterans Affairs. The first Asian American to receive the Medal of Honor was U.S. Army Private José Nísperos, from the Philippine Scouts Unit for his actions in the Philippine–American War on September 24, 1911. The one and only Medal of Honor awarded during peacetime was to Filipino fireman 2nd class in the U.S. Navy Telesforo Trinidad on January 21, 1915. Twenty one of the twenty four Medal of Honor recipients during WWII were Japanese Americans serving with the 442nd Regimental Combat Team or the 100th Infantry Battalion. In the Korean War, the first Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders, Private First Class Anthony Kaho'ohanohano and Private First Class Herbert Pilila'au were awarded the Medal of Honor for their actions on September 1, 1951, and September 17, 1951, respectively. Three Asian Americans were awarded the Medal of Honor in the Vietnam War: Corporal Terry Kawamura, Staff Sergeant Elmelindo Smith, and Sergeant First Class Rodney Yano. A total of 33 AAPIs have received this prestigious honor for their actions during war and in peacetime (https://www.va.gov/centerforminorityveterans/docs/factSheetAanhpiInDepth.pdf).

A rather broad term, Asian/Pacific encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji, and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru, and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia, and Easter Island). AAPI Heritage Month offers the opportunity to commemorate the contributions of these people to the United States. Like most commemorative months, AAPI Heritage Month originated with Congress. In 1977 Representative Frank Horton of New York introduced House Joint Resolution 540 to proclaim the first ten days in May as Pacific/Asian American Heritage Week. In the same year, Senator Daniel Inouye introduced a similar resolution, Senate Joint Resolution 72. Neither of these resolutions passed so, in June 1978, Representative Horton introduced House Joint Resolution 1007. This resolution proposed that the President should “proclaim a week, which is to include the seventh and tenth of the month, during the first ten days in May of 1979 as ‘Asian/Pacific American Heritage Week.’” Congress passed Public Law 101-283 in 1990 which expanded the observance to a month. Then, in 1992, Congress passed Public Law 102-450 which annually designated May as Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month.

For more information on VA’s National AAPI Employment Program or the VACO observance, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA’s National AAPI Employment Program Manager, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, at Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov or visit VA’s AAPI Employment Program Web page at https://www.diversity.va.gov/programs/aapi.aspx.

Training

FAPAC NLTP
The Federal Asian Pacific American Council (FAPAC) National Leadership Training Program will be held in Rockville, Maryland, May 15-18, 2017, at the Hilton. The FAPAC NLTP is an excellent leadership and professional training opportunity. It will deliver workshops on strategic leadership, science and technology, communications, language and cultures, supervisory essentials, and equal employment opportunity and diversity. Costs associated with attending must be authorized by each employee’s organization. No centralized funding is available to pay for registration or travel. Employees who plan to attend the FAPAC NLTP should follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. For additional information, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA’s National AAPI Employment Program Manager, Office of Diversity and Inclusion, at Tynnetta.Lee@va.gov. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available online at http://www.fapac.org.
Celebrate Public Service Recognition Week

"Start with good people, lay out the rules, communicate with your employees, motivate them and reward them. If you do all those things effectively, you can't miss." – Lee Iacocca, Former President of Ford Motor Company

From May 7 to 13, VA will participate in Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW). PSRW is an annual celebration held the first full week of May to honor the country’s many public servants and show appreciation for their contributions to Federal, state, county and local government employees.

VA will celebrate PSRW by acknowledging all employees in the organization for their dedication to serving Veterans and their families. VA recognizes its greatest strength lies within its workforce—the men and women of VA exemplifying the Core Values of Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect and Excellence. High-performing, dedicated employees work hard every day to deliver excellent customer service to improve the Veteran experience.

VA’s goal is to ensure that all employees, including virtual employees, are able to participate in PSRW and be recognized for their service to our Nation’s Veterans. PSRW events will be held at VA facilities around the country, as well as national PSRW events in Washington, DC. Check with your Managers and Supervisors to find out about events taking place at your local facility.

VA encourages employees to take time during PSRW to recognize colleagues for their dedication to public service and the organization. A great way for employees to recognize colleagues is by giving out I CARE Recognition Certificates available at https://www.va.gov/ICARE/ICare_certificates.asp. These certificates may be given by any employee to another as a direct and meaningful acknowledgment of exceptional service.

Additionally, VA leadership can nominate outstanding employees exemplifying the VA Core Values for a variety of VA Employee Recognition awards, which are found on the Office of Human Resources Management Awards intranet site.

For more information on how employee recognition helps drive engagement, check out the Employee Engagement Resource Center at http://go.va.gov/engagement.

The committed work that VA employees do every day is the foundation of VA and is what makes the organization’s mission possible. Additional information on the history and national celebration of PSRW is available at the Public Service Recognition Week website at http://publicservicerecognitionweek.org.

If you have any questions, please contact the Employee Engagement Service at engagement@va.gov.

Policy Alert
Limitation on Administrative Leave for Employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs

Public Law 114-315 amended 38 U.S.C. by adding section 717, thereby limiting the amount of administrative leave available to Title 5 and Title 38 VA employees who are subject to an investigation for the purposes of determining whether such individual should be subject to any disciplinary action under Title 38 or Title 5; or against whom any disciplinary action is proposed or initiated under Title 38 or Title 5. The agency may not place any such individual on administrative leave, or any other type of paid non-duty status without charge to leave, for more than a total of 14 calendar days during any 365-day period (beginning on or after December 16, 2016).

The VA Secretary may waive the 14 calendar day limitation and extend the administrative leave or other paid non-duty status without charge to leave, provided the Secretary submits to the Committees on Veterans’ Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives a detailed explanation in accordance with 38 USC 717.

For questions regarding placing an employee on administrative leave for disciplinary action issues, contact OHRM Employee Relations.
Let Your Voice Be Heard!
Take the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

Starting the second week of May, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) will administer the annual Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) to employees at each government agency. The FEVS is a tool that measures employees’ perceptions of the workplace, and covers topics including leadership, work environment, and talent management. The survey provides leaders with data that shows what works well and which areas need improvement within each agency. This information is then used to improve their organizations.

At VA, leaders use the FEVS results for data-driven decisions aimed at improving the employee experience. The VA mission to provide the best possible care to Veterans and their families relies on employees feeling engaged and satisfied in the workplace. The FEVS assists in this mission by gauging employee perceptions and sentiment to identify areas for improvement. VA leaders use this feedback to develop action plans aimed at improving the employee experience, and ultimately, our service to Veterans.

VA has worked hard to give more employees the opportunity to take the survey this year. For the 2017 FEVS, approximately two-thirds of full-time permanent and part-time permanent employees will be sent this voluntary survey, compared to the approximately one-third of employees who received the survey last year. This will allow more employees than before a chance to share their perspectives on VA.

Selected employees will receive an email from OPM (evva@opm.gov) with a link to the survey. If you do not receive an email from OPM, you were not selected. All responses are voluntary and confidential. Employees should rest assured that their responses will not be disclosed.

Last year, approximately 89,000 VA employees were selected to take the survey and approximately 30,000 responded, resulting in a 34% response rate. This response rate decreased from the previous year by two percentage points. This year, we encourage you to participate in the survey to help us capture a more accurate representation of employee viewpoints across the Department.

The FEVS is important as it not only gathers insight on strengths and inefficiencies in the workplace, but also compares the organization to other government agencies. Each Fall, the Partnership for Public Service creates the Best Places to Work in the Federal Government (BPTW) rankings from the FEVS results. For more information about BPTW, visit http://bestplacestowork.org/BPTW/about.

The FEVS is different from the All Employee Survey (AES) and Pulse surveys, which are administered through VA. However, each of these surveys is important in providing VA leaders with employee feedback used to improve the employee experience.

To find out more about how employee feedback is used within VA, visit the Employee Engagement Resource Center at http://go.va.gov/engagement.

For more information on the FEVS, go to the Workforce Surveys Portal at http://aes.vssc.med.va.gov/Pages/FEVS.aspx.

If you have any questions, please contact the Employee Engagement Service at engagement@va.gov.