Commemorate
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month

VA Central Office (VACO) will commemorate Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month on Thursday, June 22, 2017, in the G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Veterans Conference Center, room 230, at noon (ET). This event will feature a keynote speaker on the subject of Transgender and the numerous issues and concerns that have prominently arisen in the workplace, in our communities, and in our society at large. (Continued on the next page.)
**Commemorate**  
*Continued from the previous page*

VA joins the Nation in observing LGBT Pride Month in June. This year’s theme is “It Takes A Rainbow”, which speaks to the strength and diversity of our workforce and acknowledges the many contributions of VA LGBT employees who demonstrate the Department’s “I CARE” values daily while providing outstanding services to our Nation’s Veterans.

The LGBT community is an integral part and a growing segment of VA’s workforce diversity. VA continues to demonstrate its commitment to building this workforce diversity and cultivating workplace inclusion, in accordance with its established employee protections with regards to sexual discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity, in the annual VA-wide EEO, Diversity & Inclusion, and No Fear Policy Statements and associated Directives.

To this end, the VA LGBT Workgroup was created in 2012 under the auspices of the Diversity and Inclusion in VA Council. The purpose of the Workgroup is to establish a Department-level framework to develop strategies and recommendations to identify and eliminate systemic barriers to the LGBT community. The Workgroup aims to ensure VA has an inclusive environment that is free from discrimination or harassment based on sexual orientation or gender identity.

In collaboration with the Workgroup, VA is pleased to announce the issuance of its first Transgender Employee Transition Guide, VA Handbook 5975.4, to assist VA managers, supervisors, and employees. The Guide provides information on laws, policies, and tips on facilitating a smooth and supportive transition for employees who identify as a gender different from their sex assigned at birth, and who are undergoing gender transition in the workplace.

Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPMs) and the Veterans Health Administration’s Veteran Care Coordinators across VA continue implementing programs and services to create inclusive work and customer service environments for LGBT Veterans and employees. For information on these initiatives or on the VA LGBT Workgroup, contact Mr. Sterling Akins, VA’s National LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager, visit the LGBT Program Web page.

VA managers and supervisors are encouraged to support attendance at events and activities that recognize the contributions of LGBT individuals to our Nation. SEPMs should seek local management approval, and consult the Office of Public and Intergovernmental Affairs and/or regional counsel as deemed necessary by local management to ensure that use of VA resources in support of a SEP activity is authorized. For more information on the VACO observance, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VACO Special Emphasis Observance Coordinator, ODI.
**Training**

**AAGEN Workshop**
The 2017 Asian American Government Executives Network (AAGEN) Leadership Workshop will be held at the Crystal City Double Tree Hotel (300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, Virginia) on June 13, 2017, from 7:30 am to 5:15 pm. This year’s theme is “High Impact Leadership.” This workshop will offer critical executive management skills and networking tools to enable you to make your vision and execution count in your career and organizations. This executive-level leadership training program is designed for emergent leaders in the Federal civilian or military workforce who are currently at O5/O6 or GS-13/14/15 or equivalent management level to gain effective and actionable executive level skills, information and lesson learned from senior executives across the Federal and local Government, Congress, and industry. 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 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, ODI. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available on the AAGEN Web site.

**AAFEA Fellows Program**
The African American Federal Executive Association, Inc. (AAFEA) Fellows Program selects high performing African American Federal employees in grades GS-14 and GS-15 (or equivalent pay grades) for a one-year intensive leadership development and mentoring program aimed at making them highly competitive for Senior Executive Service positions. The AAFEA Fellows Program is open to members of AAFEA who are GS-14 or GS-15 (or equivalent pay grades) and who have completed an Executive Development Plan. If you are in doubt regarding your eligibility for this program, contact AAFEA at fellows@aafea.org. Applications are to be sent electronically and are due no later than June 30, 2017. Applicants will be notified by September 1, 2017, if they have been accepted. Selected participants must pay a $250 fee to AAFEA within 10 days of notification of acceptance to confirm their spot in the program. For more information, visit the AAFEA Web site.

**SAIGE National Training Program**
The Society of American Indian Government Employees (SAIGE) 14th Annual National Training Program (NTP) will be held at the We Ko Pa Resort and Conference Center in Scottsdale, Arizona, June 5-8, 2017. SAIGE is a national 501(c) (3) non-profit organization representing American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) Federal, Tribal, State, and local government employees. The SAIGE NTP offers workshops for professional development, cultural awareness, equal employment opportunity, diversity and inclusion, to include workshops, where attendees will learn about current issues, opportunities, and challenges facing members of the AI/AN community. 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 should follow appropriate conference attendance approval procedures established for their respective organizations. For additional information, contact Ms. Mercedes Kirkland-Doyle, VA’s National AI/AN Employment Program Manager, ODI. Additional conference information including registration costs, course descriptions, and schedules is available on the SAIGE Web site.

**Barrier Analysis Training**
Barrier Analysis Training covers all aspects of the barrier analysis process under Equal Employment Opportunity Commission Management Directive 715 to include analysis and interpretation of workforce statistics, trigger identification, barrier analysis investigation, preparing action plans, and following up on the action plan. This training will allow participants to work through the majority of the process using VA specific workforce statistics. Attendees must register through the VA Talent Management System. The course will be offered on the following dates from 1:00 to 4:00 pm (EST):
- Thursday, July 27, 2017
- Thursday, August 17, 2017
- Thursday, September 21, 2017
For more information, contact Ms. Ryan Pugh, Management Analyst, ODI.

**VSSC Training**
VISN Support Service Center, or VSSC, training is designed to alert a wide range of managers, human resources specialists, EEO specialists, 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 validate or begin to address potential barriers to equal employment opportunities at VA. Attendees must register through the VA Talent Management System. This interactive training will be offered on the following dates from 10 to 11:30 am (EST):
- Tuesday, June 6, 2017
- Tuesday, August 8, 2017
- Tuesday, September 26, 2017
For more information, contact Ms. Camille Whitfield, Management Analyst, ODI.
Office of Resolution Management (ORM)

Harassment Prevention Program Reporting Process

The ORM’s Harassment Prevention Team ensures allegations of harassment, including bullying and cyber-bullying, receive a prompt, thorough, and impartial investigation (preferably before harassment becomes severe or pervasive). ORM ensures that VA takes immediate, appropriate corrective action when it determines harassment has occurred.

Harassment Prevention reporting process is different from the EEO complaint process. The Harassment Prevention Program exists to stop harassment immediately.

Reporting Harassment

- Employee reports the matter to the immediate supervisor, or other management officials, or the Harassment Prevention Coordinator (HPC), or the Harassment Prevention Team at 1-888-566-3982.
- For a list of Harassment Prevention Coordinators, please visit http://www.va.gov/ORM/HPP.asp.

Investigation

- An informal investigation will typically be conducted by a supervisor, or, an appropriate management official or designee.
- If the allegation is against a senior manager, it will be referred to the Office of Accountability Review.

Outcome

- An appropriate management official, usually the supervisor of the alleged harasser, will determine in consultation with subject matter experts what action, if any, is recommended in the case and take action, as necessary.
- The appropriate management official will notify the employee who reported harassment of the completion and outcome of the process.

Quality Review

- The Harassment Prevention Team follows up with employees to ensure that management notified them about the outcome, the situation was resolved, and that any concerns about the process are addressed.
- The Harassment Prevention Team reviews all outcomes for appropriateness, timeliness, and trends.

If the matter raised before the ORM’s Harassment Prevention Team does not fall within its purview, the employee is informed of his or her options for redress. Contacting the Harassment Prevention Team does not preclude you from filing an EEO complaint. Please bear in mind that if you contact the Team, you have not initiated the EEO complaint process and you do not delay your time limits for filing an EEO complaint. However, if you want to file an EEO complaint you must contact ORM within 45 calendar days of the date of the alleged discrimination by calling 1-888-737-3361. For additional information, please visit our website at http://www.va.gov/ORM/HPP.asp.
Helping Organizations Pursue Excellence (HOPE)
James Zipadelli

I currently serve as a technical writer for the VA Office of Construction and Facilities Management (CFM) in Washington, DC. Because of my disability, it was not easy for me to be appointed in Federal service, but I was fortunate; I connected with CFM.

I was a contractor for CFM in 2011 because CFM had a specific need for a technical writer. After hard work, my talent and contributions were recognized and I was hired as a full-time employee under the Schedule A hiring authority in 2012.

While many organizations strive to create a diverse and inclusive workforce, CFM distinctly succeeded because they:

- Engaged me in a positive, professional manner;
- Had employees trained in using the Schedule A authority which made the hiring process easy;
- Asked me what I wanted to do to help execute CFM programs;
- Recognized my professional accomplishments;
- Gave me progressively more responsibility in my current position; and
- Provided opportunities for advancement.

Statistics show that most individuals with disabilities are not afforded the same opportunities. As of March 2017, the average population in the Federal Government of individuals with targeted disabilities is about one percent. VA’s goal is to have a two percent population of individuals with disabilities. VA’s hiring goal is three percent.

VA should hire employees with experience in hiring individuals with disabilities so the agency can evaluate what placements are appropriate.

I have a bachelor’s degree in journalism and political science from the University of Connecticut and a Master’s degree in journalism from Emerson College. I received minimal reasonable accommodations from both schools. However, as a working adult, until I worked for CFM, I have found it problematic to secure the same access to resources. Talented, hardworking individuals are denied opportunity because some organizations haven’t provided the appropriate level of support to these individuals.

To improve the success rate of individuals with disabilities, VA should try to provide the same level of support that I received from my colleagues and superiors at CFM. CFM has impacted me so much that I developed a program concept called Helping Organizations Pursue Excellence (HOPE). It would help VA:

- Hire qualified individuals with disabilities;
- Match individuals with the right program or hiring authority;
- Expand training opportunities for employees and hiring officials; and
- Provide stable employment for individuals with disabilities.

I would be happy to present my concept to interested parties.

I am grateful to the CFM Executive Leadership team and staff for giving me the opportunity that other Federal agencies did not extend.

It would be an honor and a privilege to lead this program, to help others succeed like I did, and to see them reach heights they may have otherwise thought unachievable. Let’s get to work. Thank you for your support.

For more information on the HOPE initiative, contact Mr. Zipadelli.