Commemorate
Women’s Equality Day

On August 26, 2018, VA joins the Nation in commemorating the anniversary of the adoption of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, securing women’s right to vote. The Women’s Equality Day theme is “Celebrating Women’s Right to Vote.” VA managers and supervisors are encouraged to support events and activities that recognize women and their many contributions to American society. The VA Central Office (VACO) Women’s Equality Day event will be held on Thursday, August 23, 2018, in the G.V. “Sonny” Montgomery Veterans Conference Center, room 230, at noon. Ms. Jacqueline Hayes-Byrd, Chief of Staff, Office of the Secretary, will serve as this year’s senior host. Ms. Doris L. Gruntmeir, Chief Counsel, Personnel Law Group, Office of General Counsel, will serve as this year’s keynote speaker. For more information, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, Special Emphasis Program Manager, Office of Diversity and Inclusion. (Continued on page 4.)
The new VHA:IE podcast features frontline VA employees committed to developing, implementing, scaling, and spreading innovations that solve challenges in the field and improve the way VA serves Veterans.

**EPISODE 004**

**ENGAGING AND SUPPORTING LGBTQ+ VETERANS**

**HOST & INTERVIEWER**

Brynn Cole  
Innovation Specialist and Program Analyst,  
White River Junction VA Medical Center

**GUESTS**

Dr. Tiffany Lange-Altman  
LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator,  
Hampton VA Medical Center

Dr. Michelle Hilgeman  
Clinical Psychologist,  
Tuscaloosa VA Medical Center

Jessica Homan  
LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator,  
Chalmers P. Wylie VA Ambulatory Care Center

Calvin Smith  
LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator,  
White River Junction VA Medical Center

Jennifer Dane  
Diversity and Policy Analyst, The American Military Partner Association (AMPA)

**EPISODE HIGHLIGHTS**

Listen to the fourth VHA:IE episode to learn more about how:

- **Serving All Who Served**, a health education group for LGBT Veterans, aims to improve identity-related stress, well-being, mental health, and health care utilization.

- **The LGBT Champion Education Program** creates comprehensive training in VA facilities to improve LGBT Veteran access to health care by identifying LGBT Champions that are educated in LGBT-affirming care.

- **The Queens, Queers, and Camo Drag Cabaret** is a new fundraising event for the White River Junction’s LGBTQ+ Health and Equality workgroup.

- **The American Military Partner Association** is working toward equality for LGBTQ military families by connecting and supporting families, honoring them for their service, and advocating on their behalf.

VHA:IE Episode 004 can be accessed on the podcast **VA Pulse page**!

Find VHA:IE on iTunes and **SoundCloud**.
Facilities Earn Top Marks in Healthcare Equality Index

By Dore Mobley, Communications Specialist, Patient Care Services, Veterans Health Administration

Veterans with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) and related identities face increased health risks and unique challenges in accessing quality health care that is delivered in a welcoming, inclusive environment.

During Pride Month (June), VA was pleased to announce that 59 VA facilities are designated as a “2018 LGBTQ Healthcare Equality Leader” by the Human Rights Campaign’s Healthcare Equality Index (HEI). This annual, independent survey is a valuable tool for LGBT Veterans looking for both great health care and participating health care facilities.

“The index gives Veterans a website to go to and see where they can get inclusive health care in a safe and welcoming environment,” said Lorry Luscri, LGBT Veteran Care Coordinator at the Edward Hines, Jr. VA Hospital.

“It’s helpful for Veterans receiving care within VA, but may be even more helpful for those receiving care elsewhere. It helps encourage unenrolled Veterans to explore their options and then choose VA care.”

Luscri sees a lot of advantages for LGBT Veterans to receive care at VA. She describes VA care as health care specifically designed for Veterans and care that leverages state-of-the-art technologies to offer Veterans safety, security and convenience.

“It’s health care tailored to Veterans by knowledgeable and informed staff,” said Luscri. “It comes with a sense of community for Veterans that is often difficult to find in care settings outside VA. The bond between Veterans is very unique, and no one understands them better than our staff and the Veterans who get care here.”

The HEI has been around since 2007 and Luscri began managing Hines’ involvement shortly thereafter. She says participating in the index has helped to raise the standard of care for LGBT Veterans at VA in many ways. Hines, like other VA medical centers, has used HEI related resources to identify and implement best practices and staff training at the facility.

VA making enhancements to LGBT program nationwide

In past years, facility staff may have been trained using materials developed by the Human Rights Campaign, but this year, Hines began offering staff in-house training developed by Hines staff called EVOLVE—Engaging Voices of LGBT Veterans Everyday. This is evidence of the program’s evolution and VA’s commitment to deliver excellent care to all Veterans.

In addition to local-level program advancements, VA is making enhancements to its LGBT program nationwide. These enhancements include:

- Launching LGBT care websites for each facility;
- Increasing awareness of the availability of facility-level and regional-level LGBT Veteran Care Coordinators that serve as resources for Veterans and staff; and
- Promoting use of the new medical record demographic fields for Birth Sex and Self-Identified Gender Identity (SIGI).

It’s implementation of initiatives, like these and others, that have helped VA facilities earn the HEI Leader designation. The index rates hospitals and healthcare facilities on policies and best practices in four key areas: Non-discrimination and staff training; Patient services and support; Employee benefits and policies; and Patient and community engagement.

Participation in the HEI is voluntary and open to all healthcare organizations in the U.S. with 100 or more employees. This year, VA medical centers made up 13 percent of all 2018 HEI participants. In addition to the Leader designations, 25 other VA facilities were designated as Top Performers.

View a list of VA facilities recognized as Leaders or Top Performers. Subscribe to LGBT Veteran updates and get VA LGBT news and policy updates delivered to your inbox. This article originally appeared on VAntage Point.
Training

BIG NTI
Blacks in Government (BIG) 40th Annual National Training Institute (NTI) will be held August 13-16, 2018, at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside in New Orleans, Louisiana. Each year, the BIG NTI draws a large number of attendees enabling it to also serve as a platform for networking and information sharing. This event is a great opportunity for federal employees to obtain leadership, equal employment opportunity, diversity and inclusion, career advancement, and management training, as well as gain useful information regarding current policies directly affecting federal employees. It will also offer free seminars and programs specifically designed to assist Veterans obtain benefits and identify other opportunities available to them. Additionally, participants will be able to visit agency exhibitor booths to gain information about employment opportunities and internships. VA employees who plan to attend are responsible for obtaining supervisory approvals. Please note that centralized funding is not available for attendance. Registration and/or travel must be funded by the employee’s benefitting program office. Following supervisory and budget approval, attendees who wish to participate in the conference must also register through the BIG Web site. For more information, contact Ms. Tynnetta Lee, VA’s National Black Employment Program Manager, ODI.

Commemorate
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Women’s Equality Day marks a turning point in the history of the struggle for equal treatment of women and women’s rights. In 1920, the day stood for the result of 72 years of campaigning by a huge civil rights movement for women. Prior to movements like these, even respected thinkers such as Rousseau and Kant believed that women’s inferior status in society was completely logical and reasonable; women were “beautiful” and “not fit for serious employment.”

The world has witnessed great women proving these views wrong. From civil rights activists Rosa Parks and Eleanor Roosevelt fighting for equality to scientists such as Marie Curie, American Chien-Shiung Wu, Rosalind Franklin, and Jane Goodall, the last century has shown what women are capable of achieving given the opportunity.

Today, women’s equality has grown to mean much more than just sharing the right to the vote. Organizations such as Federally Employed Women, Equality Now, and Womankind Worldwide continue their commitment and dedication to continuing to advocate for equality for women and girls. They work to provide women across the globe with equal opportunities to education and employment, fighting suppression and violence towards women and against the discrimination and stereotyping which still occur in every society.

On Women’s Equality Day, we honor those courageous, relentless, and dedicated women who had marched, advocated, and organized for the right to cast a vote; that precious right has reinvigorated generations of women and galvanized them to stand up, speak out, and let their voices be heard across this great nation.

As we celebrate the anniversary of this achievement and pay tribute to the trailblazers and suffragists, we must continue to advance forward on our journey towards equality and investing in our future!

Sources:
https://www.daysoftheyear.com/days/womens-equality-day