

Inside this issue:

It's What's in the Middle That Counts – Moving Towards Cultural Transformation

Building Strategic Diversity Alliances with Networks

Diversity Awards Program

Diversity at it Best!
(Minority Veterans Program Coordinators Conference)

DAB Employment and Advancement of Women Committee's Forum at ACHE

DAB Black/African American Committee Development Program and Graduation

Summer Enrichment Program

Employees that are Veterans

VA Chaplain Diversity Awards Program

On the Frontline of Diversity: Something to think about.

Get on Board! Riding the Waves of Change and Transformation

It's What's in the Middle That Counts: Moving Toward Cultural Transformation



Linda Belton
Network Director, VISN 11

Creating and sustaining a healthy cultural climate and work environment are key to Veterans Health Administration's (VHA) continued success. This edition of VALuing Diversity features the philosophy and work of Linda Belton, Network Director, VISN 11. Ms. Belton is a VHA senior leader with an enormous vision and a system-wide challenge for VHA employees.

Over the past four years, Ms. Belton has championed the cause for "organizational cultural health" transformation in VHA. Ms. Belton has made numerous presentations at conferences and forums throughout the country and has briefed the Under Secretary of Health about the importance of adapting an organizational cultural health perspective regarding how we do business at our medical centers, nursing homes, and community base clinics.

Ms. Belton encourages VHA leaders, managers, and front-line employees to become more aware of two competing demands. The first demand focuses on patient-centered care, and the second

focuses on employee-centered support. Simply put, Ms. Belton believes that patient-centered care and employee-centered support are tied together. "For us to get to the point of providing the highest level of care to veterans, VHA employees will need to feel that they are highly respected, supported, and nurtured. This all starts with leadership and leaders taking the responsibility for ensuring that cultural climates and work environments are healthy."

In bringing her theory to light, Ms. Belton likes to compare the health of an organization to the health of a patient. "When we want to know how well patients are doing, there are well known and established indicators that help health care professionals tell what is going on: a patient's blood pressure, genetics, weight, diet, and body temperature, to name a few. Similarly, when we want to know how well organizations are doing, there are indicators that we can monitor. Indicators in VHA can include such things as the all-employee survey, patient safety reports, EEO complaints,

(Continued on page 2)

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

(Continued from page 1)

employee satisfaction scores, patient satisfaction scores, Survey of Health Experiences of Patients (SHEP) results, etc. "

Another way of looking at “organization cultural health” is to picture a circle within a circle; one may be larger but they both exist in relationship to the space occupied. The space between the smaller circle and larger circle is where the action takes place. “It’s what’s in the middle that counts,” says, Belton. Often, what’s in the middle is the “soft stuff”--respect, valuing differences, leadership, unspoken assumptions, espoused values, conscious and unconscious behaviors, civility, recognition of goodness and fairness, negotiations, teamwork, communication, attitude towards change, etc. Sometimes the soft stuff is the hard stuff.

“Every organization has a culture. The question is whether the culture is one that is healthy or one that is not. Healthy organizational cultures are ones that are productive, nourishing, and engaging to employees. Unhealthy organizational cultures are unproductive, stressful, and toxic. Both healthy and unhealthy cultures will have a significant impact on how employees treat one another and how they treat the veterans we serve,” says Belton.

Just like physical health, organizational health can be monitored and, if necessary, an intervention can be used to improve the condition(s). Ms. Belton believes that the first step in addressing unhealthy work conditions is problem-identification with staff to determine what is aligning the organization. “From there, plans and target interventions can be set to address the issues.” With the support and backing of Senior Leadership at the facility, project action teams, and/or support from outside organizations such as the National Center for Organizational Development, informed and systematic plans can be executed and then evaluated to determine if the organization is getting the desired results.

The old adage “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure” is something in which Belton strongly believes. “In VHA there are several initiatives that are going on to support healthy work environments, programs such as Civility, Respect, and Engagement in the Workplace (CREW); Respect, Education, Awareness, Collaboration (REACH), Affirming the Commitment; and the Honesty for Diversity Campaign. These initiatives and others are helping to shape and support the layers of culture within our organization. These initiatives should not be seen as stand-alone or the ‘flavor of the month.’ Instead, they should be viewed as complementary and ongoing processes

to strengthen our organization--they all fit together,” says Belton. Attempting to change an organizational culture is difficult, due to systemic and ingrained beliefs and behaviors as well as long-held patterns and cycles of operations. Yet, Belton believes that with strong support from top leadership, it is feasible, achievable, and sustainable for employee engagement to determine the root issue(s) and then to develop and execute action plans. “The impact of organizational cultural health is massive as it relates to our meeting the VA’s bottom line of serving veterans and being a provider and employer of choice. Executive Career Field (ECF) staff need to be held as accountable for organizational cultural health as for patients' clinical health.”

“We have a big challenge before us,” Belton says. “We can do it! There will always be people who will not understand the importance of organizational cultural health, and people who will be resistant or not on board, but we will get to the tipping point where the preponderance of employees believe and act in a way that best meets our business and patient care goals. We will get to a point where cultural health is just not a way--it is the way. Our goal is to have *the* best work climate of any health care organization and to be the benchmark where people get their care and where people are employed.”

Template for Integration of Cultural Initiatives



“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

Building Strategic Diversity Alliances with Networks

Recognizing that our strength is our diversity, the USH’s Diversity Advisory Board (DAB) has joined forces with Network leadership and initiated DAB/Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) Diversity quarterly conference calls in order to assist with diversity dialogue and program enhancements throughout VHA.

Linda Watson, Co-Chair of the DAB, believes that this new strategic alignment with VISN Diversity Councils and Committees will assist Networks in implementing strategies to improve outcomes that will assist VHA in meeting Diversity priorities and goals: “I’m excited about the quarterly conference calls and the opportunity for the Board to drill down to support and help network leadership to expand their diversity programs. The partnership, networking, and collaboration

are already showing that this initiative will net positive outcomes for our organization.”

According to Kara Merendo, Chairperson, VISN 2 Diversity Council, the conference calls are an excellent resource that provides the field with expert advice and guidance in the area of Diversity. “For many, diversity is new territory, and the DAB/VISN quarterly conference calls provide me with necessary support and ideas to engage VISN 2 employees in our diversity initiatives. It is wonderful to be able to speak to your peers and get answers to questions and share new ideas. The best part for me is connecting with my peers in this area and being a part of such a beneficial program, knowing the impact it will have on VA as a whole and the employees within my medical center.”

Topics that have already been discussed in the quarterly conference calls include how to roll out the VA Diversity Learning Map, REACH for Diversity Resources, VHA Diversity Environmental Scan, USH Diversity Awards Program Application

Process, and the Institute for Diversity Summer Enrichment Program for students that have an interest in health care administration. The work of the DAB committees will be showcased, and Chairpersons of the DAB Asian American & Pacific Islander Committee (Vincent Ng), Black/African American Committee (Guy Richardson), and Special Initiatives Committee (Rosalyn Cole) have already dialed in to discuss their committees’ mission, goals, and current achievements.

Some projected future topics are Diversity Performance Measures, Enhancing VHA’s Cultural Climate and Diversity Best Practices, Professional Alliances, Cultural Competencies, VHA Partnerships, showcase of VISN initiatives, an overall evaluation of the initiatives, and the quarterly calls. The DAB/VISN Diversity Council/Committees’ strategic alignment is a win-win towards realizing VHA’s goals of promoting diversity, excellence, and satisfaction in the workforce and of fostering a culture that encourages innovation.

Under Secretary of Health Diversity Advisory Board (DAB) Membership

NAME	TITLE	OFFICE	EMAIL	PHONE Admin Assistant
Watson, Linda F. Co-Chairperson	Director, Office of Operational Quality for Clinical & Business Process	Department of Veterans Affairs VA Heart of Texas Healthcare System 2301 E. Lamar Blvd. Suite 650 Arlington, TX 76006	l.watson@va.gov	817-652-1111
Hunter, Joy W. Co-Chairperson	VHA Chief Learning Officer	Department of Veterans Affairs VHA Headquarters 810 Vermont Ave., NW Washington, DC 20420	joy.hunter@va.gov	202.501.3400 Tracy Dudley
Rica Lewis-Payton Performance Measure Work Group	VISN 16 Deputy Network Director	Department of Veterans Affairs VISN 16 1600 E Woodrow Wilson Ave Jackson, MS 39216	rica.lewis-payton@va.gov	601-364-7906 Shirley Trest
Cole, Rosalyn L. Special Initiatives Committee	Associate Director	Department of Veterans Affairs Fayetteville VAMC 2300 Ramsey Street Fayetteville, NC 28376	rosalyn.cole@va.gov	701.239.3702 Keninthe Hines
Fraser, Francine Data Outcomes & Public Affairs Committee	Health Systems Specialist / Director EEO / ADR / MVP VISN 3	Department of Veterans Affairs New York Harbor Healthcare System 123 East 23rd Street New York, NY 10010	francine.fraser@med.va.gov	212.686.7500 ext. 7100 Katherine Lynch
Lee, David Native American Committee	Chief of Staff	Department of Veterans Affairs Boise VA Medical Center 500 West Fort Street Boise, ID 83702	david.lee@va.gov	208-422-1102 Elizabeth Celaya

(Continued on page 4)

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

(Continued from page 3)

NAME	TITLE	OFFICE	EMAIL	PHONE Admin Assistant
McClenney, Lucretia Representative: Center for Minority Veterans	Director	Department of Veterans Affairs Center for Minority Veterans 810 Vermont Ave., NW (00M) Washington, DC 20420	Lucretia.mcclenney@va.gov	202. 273.6708
McCoy, Chaplain Michael Representative: VACO Chaplain Service	Associate Director, VACO Chaplain Service	Department of Veterans Affairs VA Central Office 100 Emancipation Dr. Hampton, VA 23667	michael.mccoy@med.va.gov	757.728.3180
Ng, Vincent Asian American & Pacific Islander Committee	Director	Department of Veterans Affairs VA Medical Center 830 Chalkstone Avenue Providence, RI 02908	vincent.ng@med.va.gov	401.273.7100 ext. 3042 Cheryl Klein
Perez, Gabriel Hispanic Committee	Director	Department of Veterans Affairs Aleda E. Lutz VA Medical Center 1500 Weiss Street Saginaw, MI 48602	gabriel.perez3@med.va.gov	989.497.2500 ext. 3000 Faith Mereaux
Reese, Rita Financial Management & Evaluation Committee	EEO Manager	Department of Veterans Affairs VA Central Office 810 Vermont Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20420	rita.reese@hq.med.va.gov	202.273.8883
Richardson, Guy B. Black/African American Committee	Director	Department of Veterans Affairs Dayton VA Medical Center 4100 W. Third Dayton, OH 45428	guy.richardson@va.gov	937.262.2114
Million, Gary DisAbilities Committee	Associate Director	Department of Veterans Affairs Iowa City VA Medical Center 601 Highway 6 West Iowa City, IA 52246	gary.million@va.gov	319-338-0581 Nancy Rohwedder
Thompson, Deborah Employment & Advancement of Women Committee	Director	Department of Veterans Affairs VA Northern Arizona Health Care System 500 Highway 89 North Prescott, AZ 86313	deborah.thompson7ec@med.va.gov	928-776-6001 Ame Callahan

“It takes a variety of people to challenge us, encourage us, promote us, and most of all, help us achieve a broader dimension of ourselves.”

Glenn Van Ekeren

VISNs Diversity Councils/Boards/Committees

Point-of-Contact	VISN	Address	Telephone #	Email
Christine Covington Lead, EEO Program Manger	VISN 1	Department of Veterans Affairs VA New England HCS 950 Campbell, Ave VA Connecticut, CT 06516	203-932-5711, Ext. 4584	christine.covington@va.gov
Kara Merendo Lead, EEO Program Manager	VISN 2	Department of Veterans Affairs Albany VAMC 113 Holland Ave Albany, NY 12208	518-626-6737	kara.merendo@va.gov
Francine Fraser Lead, EEO/ADR/Diversity Program Manager	VISN 3	Department of Veterans Affairs New York Campus NYHHCS 423 East 23 rd Street New York, NY 10010	212-686-7500, Ext. 7100	francine.fraser@va.gov
Sandra Simmons Lead, EEO Program Manager	VISN 4	Department of Veterans Affairs Coatesville VAMC 1400 Blackhorse Hill Coatesville, PA 19320	610-380-4301	sandra.simmons2@va.gov

(Continued on page 5)

*“We are trying to
construct a more
inclusive society . . .
We are going to make
a country in which no
one is left out.”*

Franklin D. Roosevelt

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

(Continued from page 4)

Point-of-Contact	VISN	Address	Telephone #	Email
Hope C. Light Lead, EEO Program Manger	VISN 5	Department of Veterans Affairs 510 Butler Avenue Martinsburg, WV 25401	304-263-0811 Ext. 4059	hope.light@va.gov
James Scott Labor and Employee Relations	VISN 6	Department of Veterans Affairs VA Mid-Atlantic Health Care Network 300 West Morgan Street, Suite 1402 Durham, NC 27701	919-956-5541	jamesS.scott@va.gov
Ernest Johnson Lead, EEO Program Manager	VISN 7	Department of Veterans Affairs Augusta VAMC 1 Freedom Way Augusta, GA 30904-6284	706- 733-0188, Ext. 6154	earnest.johnson@va.gov
Malcolm Porter Lead, EEO Program Manager	VISN 8	Department of Veterans Affairs Bay Pines VAMC P.O. Box 406 Bay Pines, FL 33744	727-319-1320	malcolm.porter@va.gov
Juan Morales AMCD for Patient/Nursing Service	VISN 9	Department of Veterans Affairs James H. Quillen VAMC P.O. Box 400 Mountain Home, TN 37864	423-926-1171, Ext. 7215 or 7213	juan.morales2@med.va.gov
Darlene Mathes EEO Coordinator, Director's Office	VISN 10	Department of Veterans Affairs Cincinnati VAMC 3200 Vine Street Cincinnati, OH 45220	513-475-6515	darlene.mathes@va.gov
Cathi Spivey- Paul (FACHE) NHCS Director	VISN 11	Department of Veterans Affairs Northern Indiana HCS NIHCS Fort Wayne Campus	260-460-1310	spivey-paul@va.gov
Sarah Fouse Clinical Coordinator/Nurse Manager	VISN 12	Department of Veterans Affairs North Chicago VAMC Bldg , Room 129 3001 Green Bay Road North Chicago, IL 60064	847-688-1900, Ext. 85757	sarah.fouse@va.gov
James Todd EEO/Diversity Program Manger VISN 15 Diversity Committee Chair	VISN 15	Department of Veterans Affairs Poplar Bluff VAMC 1500 N. Westwood Blvd Poplar Bluff, MO 63901	573-778-4267	james.todd2@va.gov
Judy McKee Lead, EEO Program Manager	VISN 16	Department of Veterans Affairs Fayetteville VAMC 1100N. College Ave. Fayetteville, AR 72703	479-433-4301, Ext 5968	judy.mckee@va.gov
Jonathan. L. Cruse Sr. VISN 17 Lead EEO Program Manager	VISN 17	Central Texas Veterans Health Care System 1901 Veterans Memorial Dr Temple TX 76504	254 743 1866	Jonathan.cruse@med.va.gov
Susan Cox Lead, EEO/ADR/Diversity Program Manager	VISN 18	Department of Veterans Affairs Prescott VAMC 500 Hwy. 89N. Prescott, AZ 86313	928-776-6146	susan.cox@va.gov
Vernell Rhodes Lead, EEO Program Manager	VISN 19	Department of Veterans Affairs ECHCS, Director's Office/EEO Hale, Room 212 (OOE) 1055 Clermont St. Denver, Colorado 80220	303-370-7561	vernell.rhodes@va.gov
Sharon Helman Associate Director	VISN 20	Department of Veterans Affairs Roseburg VA Medical Center 913 N.W. Garden Valley Blvd. Roseburg, OR 97470	509-527-3450	Sharon.helman@va.gov
Chicketa Hill Lead, EEO Program Manger	VISN 21	Department of Veterans Affairs VACCHS Fresno 2615 E. Clinton Ave. Fresno, CA 93707	559-288-5318	chicketa.hill@va.gov
Mary Berrocal Associate Director for Administration for Greater Los Angeles Healthcare System	VISN 22	Department of Veterans Affairs 11301 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90073	310-268-4007	mary.berrocal@va.gov
Petra Hartness Lead, EEO Program Manager	VISN 23	Department of Veterans Affairs Minneapolis VAMC One Veterans Drive Minneapolis, MN 55417	612-725-2000, Ext. 4330	petra.hartness@va.gov

“If there must be a stereotype, let it have nothing to do with race, creed, color, gender, or advantage. Let it have everything to do with effort, energy, ideas, commitment and capabilities.”

Dan Zadra

Congratulations to the 2006 Under Secretary for Health Diversity Awards Program Winners!

The 2006 Diversity Awards Program winners through various innovative and noteworthy initiatives developed programs that promoted enhanced and advanced VA diversity practices.

LEVEL ONE WINNER – VISN 15: Comprehensive Diversity Management Program, Diversity Strategic Plan and Programming

Deploying a three-pronged approach to attain its strategic goals, VISN 15 achieved innovations and success in advancing diversity and inclusion; involved employees in implementing diversity throughout the Heartland Network; educated and communicated the importance of diversity and inclusion to all managers, supervisors, front line employees, and volunteers; and implemented programs that enhanced employee satisfaction and personal development

LEVEL ONE WINNER – Fargo: Honorable Mention – Comprehensive Diversity Management Program

The Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC) Fargo, North Dakota demonstrated a comprehensive diversity management program by dynamically pursuing operational inclusion; diversity awareness; community partnerships; increased opportunities for all employees to reach their potential through developmental programs such as LEAD, Technical Career Field (TCF), and Executive Career Field (ECF) interns;

and improved dialogue and goal setting between People with DisAbilities and Engineering Service to identify areas of concerns as well as make improvements as needed.

LEVEL TWO WINNERS – USH Diversity Awards

Component A Winner – St. Louis: Workforce Development and Succession Planning – “School at Work” and “READ at Work” Programs

The VAMC St. Louis, Missouri implemented two unique career development programs to equip their lower grade employees with the education and skills necessary to prepare them for future advancement within the healthcare setting and to gain entrance into local community colleges. This Medical Center has graduated 24 entry level employees in two graduating classes of the “School at Work Program”- six in FY 05 and eighteen in FY 06.

Component B Winner – Southern Arizona VA Health Care System (HCS): Leadership and Governance

The Southern Arizona VA HCS is recognized for its sustaining leadership, governance, and incorporation of diversity management into strategic business plans; sponsored the 1st Annual Diversity Day that incorporated educational information on Special Emphasis Groups and Minority Veterans

Coordinator Outreach; and sponsored a Diversity Film Festival.

Component C Winner – Dayton: Business Practices/Economic Goals

The VAMC Dayton, Ohio is acknowledged for its successful strategies and systematic processes in increasing participation of small owned businesses as well as diversifying its portfolio of participating vendors through women, minority, small and veteran-owned businesses to support business operations. VAMC Dayton has also exceeded all eight socioeconomic targeted goals set forth by the Secretary.

Component D Winner – Fargo VAMC: Cultural Competency

VAMC, Fargo developed cultural awareness training, special emphasis outreach programs and clinical guidelines that promoted the concept of culturally competent care and quality improvement. In collaboration with the Dakotas VA Regional Office, Veterans Service Organizations, and Social Security Administration, Fargo sustained outreach efforts on seven of the eight Native American nations (the eighth nation will host a veteran benefit fair in Spring of 2007) and co-sponsored with Indian Health Services (IHS) the 1st Annual/Tribal Open House.

For additional information regarding the specific achievements for each of the above winners, visit www.va.gov/diversity.

“It's a mistake to surround yourself only with people just like you. Throw off that worn comforter – and replace it with a crazy quilt of a different and imaginative people. Then watch the ideas erupt.”

Betty Bender

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

Diversity at its Best

The Center for Minority Veterans (CMV) in conjunction with the Veterans Health Administration, Veterans Benefits Administration, National Cemetery Administration, VA Learning University and the Employee Education System conducted its 9th Biennial Minority Veterans Program Coordinators (MVPC) Conference from June 5-7, 2007 at the Double Tree Hotel at Westport in St. Louis, MO. The theme of the Conference was “Celebrating the Diversity of All Who Served.”

The MVPC position is an appointed collateral duty at each VA medical center, regional office, and national cemetery. The MVPCs serve as advocates for minority veterans by promoting the use of VA benefits and services, identifying gaps in services to make recommendations to improve service delivery within their facilities, and supporting and initiating activities that educate and sensitize internal staff to the unique needs of minority veterans. The participants over a course of three days were exposed to a myriad of topics to include issues concerning minority veterans (cultural issues, female veteran's issues, and research).

The Honorable William F. Tuerk, Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs provided the keynote address on behalf of Deputy Secretary Mansfield. The Honorable James E. Clyburn, The Majority Whip, U.S. House of Representatives provided video taped remarks that pledged his continued support for all veterans. Mr. Myles Hunt provided a moving testimony of his experience as an OEF/OIF veteran. In addition, an educational presentation entitled “Unequal Treatment: Confronting Racial and Ethnic Disparities in Health Care” was presented by Dr. Darrell Gaskins of John Hopkins University. Participants were also provided the opportunity to attend 2 out of 3 concurrent workshops on the following topics: “Cultural Competency and Civil Rights-Understanding the Correlation Between Civil Rights and Cultural Competency;”

“Operation Plan 101-Development and Execution of Your Program Objectives with Outcomes and Performance Measures;” and “Outreach-Understanding How to Partner, Collaborate, and Network in Outreaching to Minority Veterans.” Attendance at the Operation Plan 101 workshop was mandatory for all newly appointed MVPCs.

The second day began with a stirring presentation on Cultural Competency by Dr. Kennita Carter, VA physician at the Baltimore VAMC. Dr. Carter provided great insight on the cultural differences between western and non-western traditions and the significant role cultural competency plays in enhancing the quality of care and services we provide to our veterans and their families. Four expert panels, one for each minority group the CMV is congressionally mandated to oversee, provided invaluable insights on challenges confronting minorities and minority veteran's issues. Panel members included nationally renowned speakers and VA experts:

African American: Dr. Larry E. Davis, Dr. Donna Washington, Mr. Dwayne Campbell

Hispanic/Latino: Dr. David Alcaras, Ms. Terry Villot, Dr. Reuben Wright

Asian American/Pacific Islander: Mr. Vincent Ng, Mr. Miyun Kang

Native American: Dr. Michael Trujillo, Ms. Michelle Kierstead, Ms. Geri Bahe-Hernandez

The last day began with presentations from senior VA leaders who provided an overview of their respective Administration and support of the MVPC program. Administration leaders included: VHA - Mr. Joseph Williams, Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health Operations and Management, NCA - Mr. Richard “Dick” Wannemacher, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs, and VBA - Mr. Jack McCoy, Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Policy and Program Management, Veterans Benefits Administration. Ms. Joy Hunter, Dean of VALU/Director EES, discussed

opportunities for MVPCs to partner with the Diversity Advisory Board and VISN Diversity Councils and available educational resources such as the Diversity Learning Map.

The MVPCs had an opportunity to experience the Diversity Learning Map at an “Alternatives Happy Hour” session that was held at the end of the first and second days of the conference. Mr. David Rabb, Executive Assistant, VHA Diversity Advisory Board (DAB) and Ms. Francine C. Fraser and Mr. Vincent Ng — both members of the DAB helped to facilitate these sessions. The day concluded with a MVPC Best Practice Panel comprised of Mr. Robert Pittman (VHA) who discussed how he incorporates diversity into his new staff orientation, Mr. Bill Livingston (NCA) who discussed his outreach strategies, and Ms. Diane Shearod (VHA) who discussed her training initiative to educate enrollment clerks on capturing veterans' race/ethnicity data.

Overall the Conference provided the MVPCs with the tools necessary to promote and create cultural competencies within the veteran's community and throughout the VA regarding issues affecting minority veterans who receive health care and benefits from VA. The knowledge gained will help MVPCs become better advocates in identifying strategies for increasing outreach, understanding cultural competency concerns and/or issues, composing culturally sensitive materials and communicating with their leadership through an outlined, strategic operation plan.

Quotes From Conference Attendees:

“This conference has to be one that every VA employee must come to. The information shared, best describes how we have become a successful organization. “

*Vivieca Wright-Simpson
Executive Assistant
VHA MVPC VACO Liaison*

(Continued on page 8)

Our Strength is Our Diversity!

(Continued from page 7)

“This conference was filled with experience, strength and hope for all Minority Veterans Program Coordinators to take with them, and make this program SOAR!”

*Catherine M. Bess,
MVPC
Bath VAMC*

“All of us are living with labels that may not describe who we are but provoke an image we have to live with. From Native Americans to Muslims, no group is reduced to a single term. Our task is not to label veterans but to serve veterans. For as Dr Martin Luther King, Jr. stated: “As I pass this way, if I can help somebody then my living will not be in vain.” I believe it's a great honor to serve our veterans.”

*Vera Campbell
Veterans Service Center
Montgomery, AL*

“The Center for Minority Veterans and the Minority Veterans Program Coordinators extend the promise “To take Care of him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and orphan” to groups of individuals who were not considered when this noble promise was originally made. We help to remove obstacles in their paths, and help the VA to improve services for minority veterans. This helps to improve services for all veterans and their family members.”

*Earl S. Newsome, III,
Deputy Director,
Center for Minority Veterans
Former MVPC, DC VAMC*

DAB Employment and Advancement of Women Committee's Forum at ACHE

The Department of Veterans Affairs Employment and Advancement of Women Committee (EAWC) continues to develop and implement many exciting initiatives under the leadership of Deborah A. Thompson, Chair, Director; Williams Middleton Memorial Veterans Hospital, Madison, Wisconsin. This group is

convened as a subcommittee of the VHA Diversity Advisory Board.

Ms. Thompson hosted a Face to Face Committee meeting in Prescott, Arizona on January 30-31, 2007. The objectives for this forum were to develop initiatives to support the recruitment, retention and advancement of women in VHA. The meeting provided a wonderful opportunity for many of the members to meet for the first time. Much of the ground work for development of the initiatives had been laid in the monthly conference calls, review of articles, key points from the Senior Management Focus Group and the Women Executive Survey. The National Center for Organizational Development provided a breakdown of data from the Women Executive survey into VACO, VISN and Field responses.

Based on a dynamic and lively discussion and consideration of this very interesting information and data, the committee identified priority areas which were developed as the following initiatives including:

1. Leaky Pipeline
2. Recruitment of Younger Women
3. Gender myths/bias and self imposed barriers
4. Accountability for Choices
5. VHA issues same as Private Sector
6. Family friendly Issues
7. Communication
8. Need for Inclusion
9. Internal Networking strategies

Committee members assumed responsibility for each of the strategies and are engaged in development of charters and membership for these new subcommittees. Many actions in support of the initiatives have already been implemented.

As a result of the success of the Networking Session and Focus Group conducted at VHA Senior Management Conference in 2007, the committee requested to present a Federal Women Executive Program sponsored by the EAWC at the American College of

Healthcare Executives (ACHE). EAWC members Kalpana Mehta, Health System Specialist; VISN 12, Wendy Hepker, Health System Specialist, VISN 7, and Sharon Helman, Director; Jonathan M. Wainwright Memorial VAMC, Walla Walla, Washington, spearheaded this outstanding program offering. The objectives of the program were to showcase the career opportunities for women in VHA, hear personal stories of career success and professional advancement of current women VHA leaders and generate interest in VHA careers by non-VA attendees.

Ms. Thompson moderated this excellent panel which was fortunate to have the following distinguished panelists: Barbara Watkins, Director; Alexandria VAMC, Louisiana; Rebecca N. Williams, RN, MSN, Associate Director, Patient & Nursing Services; Eastern Colorado Healthcare System, Denver; DeAnn Dietrich, Associate Director; VA Puget Sound Healthcare System, Seattle; and Divya Shroff, M.D., Senior Hospitalist; Washington D.C. VAMC. Each of the women leaders told stories of their professional journeys, personal experiences and acknowledged the persons and experiences which have contributed to their success. In addition, each spoke of their passion, and commitment to VHA and the opportunities which VHA provided to each of them. The program was a resounding success and, many of the attendees voiced their appreciation for this opportunity. In addition, quite a few networking connections were forged between VA Women Executives and hopefully, future VA Women Executives.

This is the first of many updates that will be provided by the EAWC. For questions regarding activities, or how to become involved, please contact EAWC members listed below:

Isabel.Duff@va.gov
Kalautie.Jangdhari@med.va.gov

“Nothing will work unless you do.”

Maya Angelou

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

DAB Black/African American Committee Development Program and Graduation

In June 2006, the Recruitment & Retention Committee, a subcommittee of the Under Secretary for Health Diversity Advisory Board Black African American Committee, developed and implemented a leadership development program. The program was designed to identify potential Black African American leaders and assist them in improving performance in their current roles and prepare them to advance in progressive leadership positions.

The program was patterned using the ECF and Senior Executive Services (SES) Development Program as a guide. Like the ECF and SES Development Programs, minimum qualification standards were established for selection of both the Mentor and Mentee, and a comprehensive program curriculum was developed for selected candidates.

A formal application process was implemented where a committee rated and ranked all applications. The ten highest rated applicants were selected and matched with mentors, who were solicited from the senior level ranks of VHA. Following the selection process a kick-off meeting was established to begin the one-year comprehensive program.

Monthly training conferences were held and various topics were presented. Each month a selected Mentee presented a topic of choice and a guest speaker was identified. Mentees and mentors both attended the training conferences where

value added discussions took place following the presentations. The following are examples of topics presented:

- Multicultural Leadership.
- Understanding the VA.
- Presentation is Everything (effective communication).
- How to prepare to be an Executive.
- Financial Management.
- Avoiding Pitfalls.
- KSAO Writing.
- Leadership Styles.

Other aspects of the program included the requirement for participants to conference at least monthly with their mentor and complete an Individual Development Plan and a 360 degree assessment.

A formal graduation ceremony was held on May 17, 2007 and the key note speaker Mr. Joseph Williams, Assistant DUSHOM, spoke on the subject, “Where Do You Go From Here.” In addition, the graduates selected graduate Linda Townsend-Green to speak on their behalf and provide remarks. Special remarks were given by Mr. Guy Richardson, Chair of the Black African American Committee, and Ms. Joy Hunter and Linda Watson, Co-chairs of the Diversity Advisory Board. The program was facilitated by Ms. Wanda Mims, Chair of the BAA Recruitment & Retention Subcommittee. Nine out of ten participants successfully completed all program requirements and received Certificate's of Completion.

Graduates

Russell Bland, Program Specialist - Hampton VAMC
Deesha Brown, Compliance Officer –

Birmingham VAMC
Alesia Coe, ACNS, In-Patient Care -
Deirdre Garrett, EEO Program Manager –
Alexandria VAMC
Joyce Lewis-Barrett, Staff Attorney – San Francisco Regional Counsel
Linda Townsend-Green, Executive Asst. to Director – Cincinnati VAMC
Gloria Williams, Patient Safety Officer
MidSouth Healthcare VISN 9
Ericka Mattis, Health Systems Specialist
Cleveland VAMC

Mentors

Robin Hindsman, Quality Management Officer – VISN 7
Ira Richmond, Associate Director Patient Care System – Pittsburgh VAMC
Audry Drake, Deputy Chief Nursing Officer – VACO 108
Rosalyn Cole, Associate Medical Center Director – Fayetteville VAMC
Lena Richardson, Executive, Allied Health Service Line – Augusta VAMC
Guy Richardson, Medical Center Director – Dayton VAMC
Bruce Triplett, Medical Center Director – Fayetteville VAMC
Joe Williams, Assistant DUSHOM – Central Office
Wanda Mims, Medical Center Director – Hampton VAMC

The unique aspect about this program is that it was accomplished virtually. The program prepared participants for progressive leadership positions. It established a communication framework for Black African Americans to share work experiences and knowledge, and it enhanced the development of potential Black African American leaders.

“Listening to contemporary music, you may hear an artist who is blind. If you prefer classical, you may enjoy a symphony written by a composer who couldn't hear. The president who set an unbeatable American political record could hardly walk. A woman born unable to see, speak or hear strands as a great achiever in American history. The 'differently-able' among us have enriched our lives. Let's enrich theirs.”

Grey Matter

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

“My weakness may be your strength, and vice versa. When we work as a team, the strengths cancel the weaknesses. The result is mutual respect throughout the entire team.”

Mike Power

USH Diversity Advisory Board partnership with American Hospital Association's Institute for Diversity in Health Management's Summer Enrichment Program

The Under Secretary for Health Diversity Advisory Board has partnered with the American Hospital Association's Institute for Diversity in Health Management Summer Enrichment Program for five years. Through this partnership, numerous VHA facilities participate in their Summer Enrichment Program (SEP) annually. The SEP is a 12-week paid internship program that provides rising college seniors, recent college graduates and graduate students in health administration with an introduction to working in the health care management field. The program provides on-the job training, executive mentoring, classroom instruction, leadership development and career planning. Several SEP interns have been successful in screening employment within VHA after completing the program. This is an avenue that the Under Secretary for Health's Diversity Advisory Board contributes to the agency's early succession planning efforts.

The USH Diversity Advisory Board (USH DAB) sponsors conference calls with speakers from the VHA Graduate Healthcare Administrative Training Program to include graduates of the program, Human Resources concerning the Student Educational Employment Program to include its components of Student Career Employment Program, and opportunities for the interns to share their experiences. These interns will be

included in the new VA National Database for Interns to share job opportunities and experiences. Some of these interns will continue with the VA through the Student Education Experience Program (SEEP) while completing their studies. Again, one of the goals is for the interns to come into the VA via the Technical Career Field or Graduate Healthcare Administrative Training Programs.

To date, five former SEP interns have been hired as permanent employees within our agency. One currently works as a Program Analyst in VHA Business Operations at Veterans Affairs Central Office in Washington, DC; one works as an Administrative Assistant to the Chief of Staff in Dublin VA Medical Center, Dublin GA, and one is enrolled in the Graduate Healthcare Administration Training Program.

This program is very influential to the success and career planning of young students who seek a career in the healthcare administrative field. “Prior to this summer, I was clueless in regard to the opportunities that existed in the VA. I thought there were not a lot of openings for people like me and that you had to be a Veteran to work for the VA. Thanks to this program, not only did I discover I was wrong, I learned through unsurpassed EXPERIENCE that there is more opportunity here than in any other health care system in our nation. My Summer Enrichment Program has

literally charged me to reevaluate my career goals,” Brian Wofford – Fayetteville VAMC.

This partnership with the Institute for Diversity in Health Management has added to early succession planning and career growth for various ethnicities, cultures and races. This program is now recognized by the VA as a healthcare administration intern program. The USH Diversity Advisory Board looks forward to continued growth in the program with more sponsorship and funding opportunities for the field as well as VACO. If you have any questions concerning the program, please contact Ms. Rosalyn L. Cole, Chair, Special Initiative Committee, USH DAB at 910.822.7060. Thanks to all of the facilities and preceptors who have made this program a success in the preparation of our next generation of diverse healthcare administration leaders!

NOTE: Since its initiation in 2003, the program which started with seven interns has placed 14 out of 24 interns in the SEP program around the VA system, to include VACO, this year! To learn more about the program and the success story feature about Mr. Brian Wofford, view www.diversityconnection.org or link through the VHA Diversity Website www.va.gov/diversity.

For the participating sponsors, facilities and interns this year see the next page.

(Continued on page 11)

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

(Continued from page 10)

Summer Enrichment Program Participating Sponsors, Facilities And Interns

AGENCY		PRECEPTOR		STUDENT	UNIVERSITY
Veterans Affairs Boston Healthcare System	Dr.	Steven	Lieberman, MD	Aailyah Eaves-Leanos	Norfolk State University
Veterans Affairs Northern Indiana Healthcare System-Fort Wayne Campus	Ms.	Cathi	Spivey-Paul	Marcus Walker	Tulane University
Veterans Affairs Northern Indiana Healthcare System-Fort Wayne Campus	Ms.	Cathi	Spivey-Paul	Maunika Patel	University of South Florida
Veterans Integrated Service Network - VISN 17, VA Heart of Texas Healthcare Network	Ms.	Linda F.	Watson	Lori Thibodeaux	Spring Hill College
Veterans Integrated Service Network - VISN 17, VA Heart of Texas Healthcare Network	Ms.	Linda F.	Watson	Ashish Patel	University of Houston-Clearlake
Albany Veteran Affairs Medical Center: Samuel S. Stratton	Ms.	Mary Ellen	Piche	Leslie Rosario	University of Central Florida
Veterans Affairs- Northern California Healthcare System	Ms.	Donna	Iatorola	Charles Umunna	University of Chicago
Veterans Affairs Palo Alto Healthcare System	Mr.	Paramita	Ghosh, Ph.D.	Raman Singh	George Washington University
Portland Veteran Affairs Medical Center	Ms.	Kathleen	Champman	Crystal Juarez-Henderson	Portland State University
Providence Veteran Affairs Medical Center	Mr.	Vincent	Ng	Mary Kwan	University of Minnesota
Veterans Affairs Central Office Academic Affiliation Office	Ms.	Hwai-Tai C.	Lam	Dignya Patel	University of North Carolina
Fargo Veteran Affairs Medical Center	Mr.	Robert P.	McDivitt, FACHE	Juli Green	University of North Dakota
Fayetteville North Carolina Veterans Affairs	Ms.	Rosalyn	Cole	Brian Wofford	Florida State University
VISN 7 Veterans Affairs Southeast Network	Dr.	Robin	Hindsman	Nichia McDowald	Emory University

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

The Employment of Veterans in the Department of Veterans Affairs

The Department of Veterans Affairs equal employment opportunity plan for fiscal year 2007 (see Web address below) calls for increasing the percentage of VA employees who are veterans. Currently, veterans comprise approximately one-third of VA's workforce. (At the VISN level, the percentage of employees who are veterans ranges from 21 percent to 39 percent.)

Over the past ten years, the number of veterans employed by VA has remained fairly constant. Although the number of veterans has not changed significantly, the percentage of VA

employees who are veterans has decreased (since the size of VA's total workforce has increased).

Over the next ten years, many of the veterans who are currently working for VA are expected to retire, since the average age of veterans employed at VA is slightly above 50. Because the average age for non-veterans is slightly less than 47, the loss of veterans through retirements is expected to outpace the loss of non-veterans through retirement, which could further reduce the percentage of VA employees who are veterans.

Adding fuel to that fire, the average age of veterans hired is typically older than that of non-veterans. In fiscal year 2006, for example, the average age of veterans hired was almost 44, while the average age of non-veterans hired was less than 38.

For additional information see the Department of Veterans Affairs FY 2006 EEO Report and FY 2007 EEO Plan on the Internet at this address: www.va.gov/dmeeo/annualreport/

Demographic Characteristics of VA Employees (Veterans and Non-Veterans), Compared to RCLF1 and All Veterans

%	White Male	White Female	Black Male	Black Female	Hispanic Male	Hispanic Female	Asian Male	Asian Female	Amer. Indian Male	Amer. Indian Female	Other Male	Other Female
All VA Vets	45.3	12.5	22.2	8.0	6.4	1.3	2.4	0.6	0.9	0.3	0.1	0.0
Disabled VA Vets	45.3	10.5	22.7	8.5	6.6	1.3	3.1	0.5	1.1	0.3	0.2	0.1
Non-Disabled VA Vets	45.3	13.1	22.1	7.8	6.3	1.4	2.2	0.7	0.8	0.2	0.1	0.0
Non-Veterans	16.3	46.6	2.9	18.0	1.8	4.6	2.8	5.9	0.2	0.8	0.0	0.1
RCLF ¹	25.3	47.2	3.3	8.1	3.3	4.4	2.4	3.3	0.3	0.6	0.4	0.5
All U.S. Veterans ²	80.9	4.5	8.7	1.0	4.0	0.4	1.1	0.1	0.7	0.1	1.3	0.1
Active Military ³	56.9	7.5	13.3	4.1	7.6	1.4	3.8	0.8	1.5	0.3	2.3	0.5

¹ Relevant Civilian Labor Force, based on 2000 U.S. Census

² Based on 2000 U.S. Census

³ Based on Department of Defense demographic profile for fiscal year 2005

“There is somebody that is smarter than any of us, and that is all of us.”

Michael Nolan

National VA Chaplain Center Presents the First Annual Director, Chaplain Service Diversity Award

The Honorable Gordon H. Mansfield, Deputy Secretary of Veterans Affairs, and Chaplain Keith Ethridge, Deputy Director, Chaplain Service presented the first annual Chaplain Service Diversity Award on January 8, 2007 at a ceremony at the National Chaplain Center in Hampton, Virginia.

The Director of Chaplain Service, Chaplain Hugh Maddry, established this award to recognize a Chaplain Service at a VA healthcare facility that exemplifies in word and deed both an appreciation of the value of diversity and commitment to the goals of equal employment opportunity.

The nominees for the award are evaluated on criteria including:

1. The chaplains and support staff reflect the diversity of the veteran population in their area, including religion, race, nationality/ethnicity, age, and gender.
2. The Chaplain Service maintains excellent relations with the

community. It succeeds in meeting the religious needs of all patients. The members of the Chaplain Service participate in community organizations and activities that promote diversity awareness and appreciation.

3. All Chaplain offices and locations at which worship takes place are fully accessible to persons with disabilities. The Chaplain Service accommodates special religious needs of persons with disabilities.
4. The Chaplain Service staff actively support EEO and diversity efforts within their medical center.

The first annual award was presented to the VA Palo Alto California Healthcare System. Chaplain Kenneth (John) Coleman, Chief, Chaplain Service, received the award on behalf of the Healthcare System. The Chaplain Service at Palo Alto reflects the exceptionally diverse population that it serves. Chaplains and consultants minister to Buddhists,

Hindus, Muslims, Latter-Day Saints, Christian Scientists, and Sikhs. The Chaplain Service spearheaded building a nationally-recognized American Indian Veterans Cultural Center that includes a sweat lodge. The Palo Alto Chaplain Service has ten women chaplains.

Palo Alto's Chaplain Service includes an education program that has trained persons of many nationalities and cultures. It maintains partnerships with over 100 community-based organizations.

For additional information contact: Chaplain (Associate Director for Diversity Development) Michael McCoy, or John J. Batten, Program Analyst, at the National VA Chaplain Center in Hampton, Virginia: 757-728-3180

On the Frontline of Diversity: Something to think about



Theresa Hilliard has a knack for teaching Veterans Health Administration (VHA) employees how to manage differences through diversity. As a VHA Certified Mediator, she is the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO)/Affirmative Employment Program (AEP)/Diversity Manager and Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Coordinator at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Center (VAMC) in Charleston, SC and has been conducting diversity training since 1998.

Ms Hilliard shared the following thoughts on diversity and how it can be utilized in the workplace:

“Diversity allows us to explore many different options to reach our goals and get where we need to go. When diversity is a part of our life and culture, it gives us more choices to determine the best way to get things done. Diversity creates a variety of ways – someone else may have an easier, better, or faster way to reach the same end. I use diversity mainly to provide education and to resolve employee disputes. Some disputes are definitely healthy, but some are not. Those that are not really impede patient care and when we impede

(Continued on page 14)

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

(Continued from page 13)

patient care, we are not doing what we promised to do – to take care of our veterans. When we are focusing on disputes, we are not focusing on patient care.”

Ms. Hilliard who has been on the frontline for diversity since 1998, provides diversity outreach at the Ralph H. Johnson VA Medical Centers as well as diversity education and training at various VA Community Base Outpatient Clinics (CBOC), (Beaufort Primary Care Clinic, Goose Creek Primary Clinic, Myrtle Beach Primary Care Clinic, Savannah Primary Care Clinic, Savannah Vet Center and Charleston Vet Center). These outpatient programs are located in different areas for the benefit of our veterans – it's close to their homes and their communities. Employees working at CBOC's receive the same training as the medical center employees. Although, training is additionally provided through the Synquest computer training program, it is important to go out and talk directly with employees when providing diversity training, says Ms. Hilliard. “Going out to the CBOCs allows the staff to interact amongst each other with a facilitator and the training takes place in the environment where the employees' work and interact daily. This gives the employees the opportunity to talk about diversity in an environment that is familiar, non-threatening and mutual; an opportunity to share and hear the varying opinions and concerns of their colleagues about diversity; as well as the opportunity to talk things through and receive feedback (positive as well as negative). Providing diversity education and training is an opportunity to be proactive in addressing employees' issues before they become problems. It also helps to dispel some myths and concerns of co-workers and allows the opportunity to get feedback from others with the same or similar concerns.”

Having to confront diversity issues head on during the past nine years has given her much insight into changes as it relates to diversity in VHA. Ms. Hilliard notes that the workforce has become more integrated and more inclusive. “When I started doing diversity education and training, in my opinion, diversity wasn't something that was fully embraced. It wasn't part of the everyday workforce. Although diversity existed as long as we can remember, it wasn't something that was discussed or talked about much. Now, because of diversity education, many employees know that there is more than just “one viewpoint” out there - more than one way to do something. We also know that we really need to embrace, include, and invite a variety of cultures to be part of our VA culture. I have seen a lot of inclusiveness over the years because of the education and training that has been undertaken.”

Because Ms. Hilliard feels that diversity education is the key, she recommends that all VHA employees become familiar with the REACH (Respect, Education, Awareness, Collaboration, Honesty) for Diversity program, to view the videos and take the training on diversity. “I took the first video in the series – Respect – on the road with me to the CBOCs and the Savannah Vet Center. I also conducted several monthly sessions at my facility to give all employees an opportunity to attend the classes. I think that employees that came to the training were very, very, excited to be there and they provided a variety of feedback to each other. We used many of the exercises in the discussion guide that came with the REACH video and it was fun! The video was just long enough to get the message across, but the participation and interaction amongst the employees were fantastic. I think that you get the best results when training is participative.” Diversity gives employees the opportunity to learn something about

themselves that they didn't already know and many employees were said to have voiced a new self awareness regarding diversity subsequent to taking the training, as well as requested that more of this participative training is offered.

Ms. Hilliard will continue the REACH initiative by using the recent diversity education training that highlights Native Americans. “I will be using it to continue the REACH initiative, as I make my rounds to the CBOCs and Vet Centers. I'm also setting up several interactive education sessions at my facility for our employees as well as offering it on the Synquest educational computerized training program. I am passionate about diversity and would love to see it continue to strive as a culture.”

Next year, the REACH for Diversity focus will be on Awareness. The training will consist of topics such as: conscious (explicit) and unconscious (implicit) biases, prejudice, stereotyping, and micro-inequities (small slights and behavior that demeans (e.g., lack of eye contact, people who use their Blackberry while talking to you or in a meeting or interrupting someone in the middle of their sentence). Ms. Hilliard is a wonderful example of an individual on the frontline of diversity who is making a positive difference by making steady gains in advancing diversity in VHA employees. Diversity has a positive influence on VHA employees, the overall organization and the veterans we serve. Something to think about: How are you making a difference in advancing diversity?

“Our Strength is Our Diversity!”

Get on Board! Riding the Waves to Change and Transformation

The third phase of the Civility Respect and Engagement in the Workplace (CREW) pilot was successfully launched at the CREW meeting held in Cincinnati, Ohio, May 2-3, 2007.

CREW is an initiative that is intended to enhance VHA's cultural climate. According to Robin-Graff Reed, Staff Psychologist at the National Center for Organization Development (NCOD), and a CREW Phase III Coordinator, CREW is an initiative that is fundamentally driving change in the VHA culture to one that capitalizes on civility and respect.

So what do things such as consideration, courtesy, kindness, fairness, tact, honesty, listening, compassion, friendliness, being accommodating, politeness, tolerance, sincerity, and going out of your way to lend a hand have to do with accomplishing VHA's mission? Plenty. Recent social psychology research in the area of civility has shown that civility has a strong relationship to patient and employee satisfaction, employee retention rates, and grievances and EEO complaints.

The CREW pilot rollout has been implemented in small and deliberate increments. The first phase of the CREW pilot started in 2005 with only eight sites participating. The second phase of the pilot increased to 22 participating sites. The third phase of the pilot includes 40 sites (27 are new pilot sites, and 13 sites are continuing from Phase II; see below). Robin-Graff Reed acknowledges, “The long-term ideal outcome is to have CREW activities in every VHA facility until civility and respect are part of everything we do.”

Linda Belton, VISN 11 Network Director and one of the original founders of CREW,

insists that CREW is not another “flavor of the month” program that ends after a short time period. Instead, she says, “CREW is a real cultural change initiative that renews itself with ongoing dialogue, joint ownership, and steadfast commitment.”

Linda Jeffrey, Business Manager for Surgical Services at the Indianapolis VAMC, who coordinated CREW pilots in Phase I and II, stated, “Not a day goes by for me where I cannot see the value in CREW. It has improved communication, teamwork, inpatient and outpatient satisfaction, and employees' attitudes. CREW is helping to transform VA's culture. It is really exciting to me to see more of my co-workers incorporating the “Golden Rule” at work. CREW is not a program, it's a way to be, and it is contagious.”

Sharon Gainey, Information and Technology Specialists and AFG Executive Vice President at the Jackson Montgomery VA Medical Center in Muskogee, Oklahoma, believes that not only is CREW contagious, “It's hot and on fire! Employees love it and the interaction and engagement that come with it. Sometimes I am stopped in the hall by employees who ask me when the next

CREW meeting will be. CREW has increased communication and improved processes at our facility. It gives us an opportunity to work towards a common goal.”

In CREW Phase IV, it is anticipated that at every pilot site, one to two workgroups/departments will start up a CREW intervention every six months. Currently, NCOD is developing a maintenance plan that will support and sustain CREW initiatives after the pilots have ended. .

To enroll in CREW, an application must be completed and some basic criteria have to be met, to include:

- The facility director's support of pilot
- The support of the local union and its involvement in initial open discussion
- The facility's support and funding to send a site coordinator to three CREW pilot meetings in Cincinnati, Ohio.

For more information regarding enrolling your site in the CREW IV Pilot, Contact the National Center for Organization Development at 513-247-4660 or by email at NCOD@va.gov.

CREW III Sites

VISN 2

VISN 2 Office
Canandigua, NY
Bath, NY
Albany, NY
Syracuse, NY
Buffalo, NY

VISN 3

Bronx, NY

VISN 4

Coatesville, PA
Wolkes-Barre, PA

VISN 5

Maryland HCS

Martinsburg, WV
Washington, DC

VISN 6

Durham, NC
Fayetteville, NC
Beckley, WV
Salem, VA
Asheville, NC

VISN 9

Mount Home, TN
Louisville, KY
memphis, TN

VISN 11

Indianapolis, IN
Danville, IL
Battle Creek, IL

An Arbor, MI
Toledo, OH

VISN 12

Tomah, WI
Chicago, IL

VISN 16

Oklahoma City, OK
Muskogee, OK

VISN 17

Dalls, TX

VISN 18

Tucson, AZ
Amarillo, TX
El Paso, TX

VISN 19

VISN 19 Office
Denver, CO

VISN 21

Reno, NV

VISN 22

Greater LA, CA
Long Beach, CA
Loma Linda, CA
San Diego, CA
Las Vegas, NV

VISN 23

Minneapolis, MN
(3K, 3L, Pharmacy)

Valuing Diversity Newsletter Team

Francine Fraser, Chairperson, Diversity Advisory Board Public Affairs Committee
David Rabb (Writer/Editor) Minneapolis VAMC/VA Central Office
Ruth Holmes (Writer/Editor) VA Central Office
Ron Kovacs (Medical Media Center of Excellence Support) Atlanta VAMC
Howard Hall (Graphic Design and Layout) Atlanta VAMC
Lisa Respass (Newsletter Consultant) VA Central Office
Brett Day (Newsletter Consultant) Minneapolis VAMC
Michael Morgan (Writer/Editor, Diversity Management and EEO) VA Central Office

Please submit any suggestions, articles, other input for future Valuing Diversity issues and/or any innovations or best-practices at your facility to ruth.holmes@va.gov.



Our Strength is Our Diversity!