



HR HIGHLIGHTS

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Greetings Everyone!

On June 30, 2003, the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) rolled out the first "must have" components of the "Recruiters' Toolkit." In the June Human Resources Management Officer (HRMO) conference call, we made a commitment to obtain your input concerning what components a toolkit must include. We incorporated some of the components you recommended in the June 30 roll out and will incorporate additional recommendations in the second roll out scheduled for August 1. Thank you for your immediate and supportive responses. The June 30 roll out features the following on the recruiters' Web page:



Ventris C. Gibson

- Guide to Recruitment Fairs and Professional Conferences (where to find information, what to bring, suggested give away items, sample advertisement for conference brochure, etc.)
- List of current workforce planning occupation needs (VA's most critical, at-risk occupations)

- Recruiter Script (promote VA, what an applicant can expect in process, citizenship, etc.)
- National Veterans Employment Program brochure (for targeted recruitment)
- Employee Benefits fact sheet
- Salary Charts
- Federal Benefits for Veterans and Dependents booklet (for questions about VA benefits)
- Information on opportunities for professional growth and career advancement
- Handout on VA Technical Field Internship Opportunities (for targeted recruitment)
- Data on VA's affiliations and role as an educator of health care professionals
- Hire the Disabled and Reasonable Accommodation for the Disabled Applicant (for targeted recruitment)
- Handout on Recruitment Opportunities in VA (generic information on VA's Administrations and a list of VA occupations)
- Web link to current VA job openings
- Handout: How to Apply for a Federal Job (tailored for Title 5 and Title 38 – in easy to understand language)
- FAQs on pay flexibilities (e.g., advanced in-hire pay rates, paying for moves, salary advances, etc.)
- Guide to recruitment and retention flexibilities (recruitment and relocation bonuses, retention allowances, student loan repayment, special salary rates, appointments above the minimum rate of the grade, highest previous rate, dual compensation waivers)

Continued on Page 2, See **TOOLKIT**

VA in the News

Nicholson Sworn In As New Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs



On June 17, 2003, Secretary Principi swore in Brigadier General John W. "Jack" Nicholson (Ret.) as VA's new Under Secretary for Memorial Affairs.

He was nominated for the position by the President in January, and confirmed by the Senate in April.

As Under Secretary, General Nicholson will direct the National Cemetery Administration, a system of 120 national cemeteries providing dignified burial services for military veterans and eligible family members. He is responsible for land acquisition, cemetery construction, and operation and maintenance of the 120 national cemeteries, as national shrines.

General Nicholson also oversees other memorial-related programs for veterans, including providing headstones and markers, administering federal grant programs to establish state veterans cemeteries, and issuing Presidential Memorial Certificates to survivors of honorably discharged veterans.

Nicholson retired from the U.S. Army as a Brigadier General following 30 years of active duty. He is a 1956 graduate of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., where he received the General MacArthur Leadership Award for his class. He is an airborne ranger combat infantryman. He served 2½ years with infantry units in Vietnam. Other overseas assignments included duty in Germany, Korea, Lebanon, and Switzerland.

He served as a President Ronald Reagan appointee to Strategic Arms negotiations in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1982 to 1984, and currently serves as President Emeritus of the International Society of the 173rd Airborne Brigade Veterans and as a Trustee of the Virginia War Memorial Commission. General Nicholson holds a master's degree in public administration.

VARO Opens New Career Center

The Washington Regional Office hosted the grand opening of their VA Satellite One-Stop Career Center on June 5, 2003. The One-Stop Center is the first ever in the Nation that provides full-time collaborative veterans benefits with comprehensive job search and training assistance located in a VA facility. The center is a partnership between the Washington Regional Office vocational rehabilitation staff and the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES). Washington, DC's Mayor Anthony Williams was a guest speaker at the standing-room-only event, attended by more than 60 guests. Other key speakers included Washington Regional Office Director Rowland Christian and DOES Director Gregg Irish. A ribbon-cutting ceremony and tours of the new facility followed the grand opening ceremony, which also highlighted several success stories of veterans who worked with One-Stop Career Center counselors and resources to secure jobs.

TOOLKIT, Continued from Page 1

- How to assess past performance of recruitment activities to determine needed improvements
- A list of hiring authorities available to VA
- VA application forms
- Toolbox for hiring non-citizens
- Veterans Employment Opportunity Act information
- Managers' Guide to Recruitment and Retention (general information on employment)
- VA On-line Courses for Recruiters

We are also eliminating the publication "Recruitment Bulletin" and replacing it with a more up-to-date technology that allows uplinks from facilities into a database and is accessible on VA's "Job Opportunities" Web site.

We extend a hearty thank you to the Veterans Health Administration for developing VA's Technical Internship Opportunities. This brochure and CD feature opportunities throughout the Department and video of employees discussing the advantages of VA careers. OHRM is working with VHA to expand this CD and brochure to include a host of other occupations. The brochure introduced the slogan "**The career you want, the future you deserve.**"

The recruiters' Web site can be found on the OHRM Intranet at <http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm/RecruitmentToolKit/RecruitersToolKit.htm>.

National HR News

OPM Reports To Congress On Student Loan Repayment Program

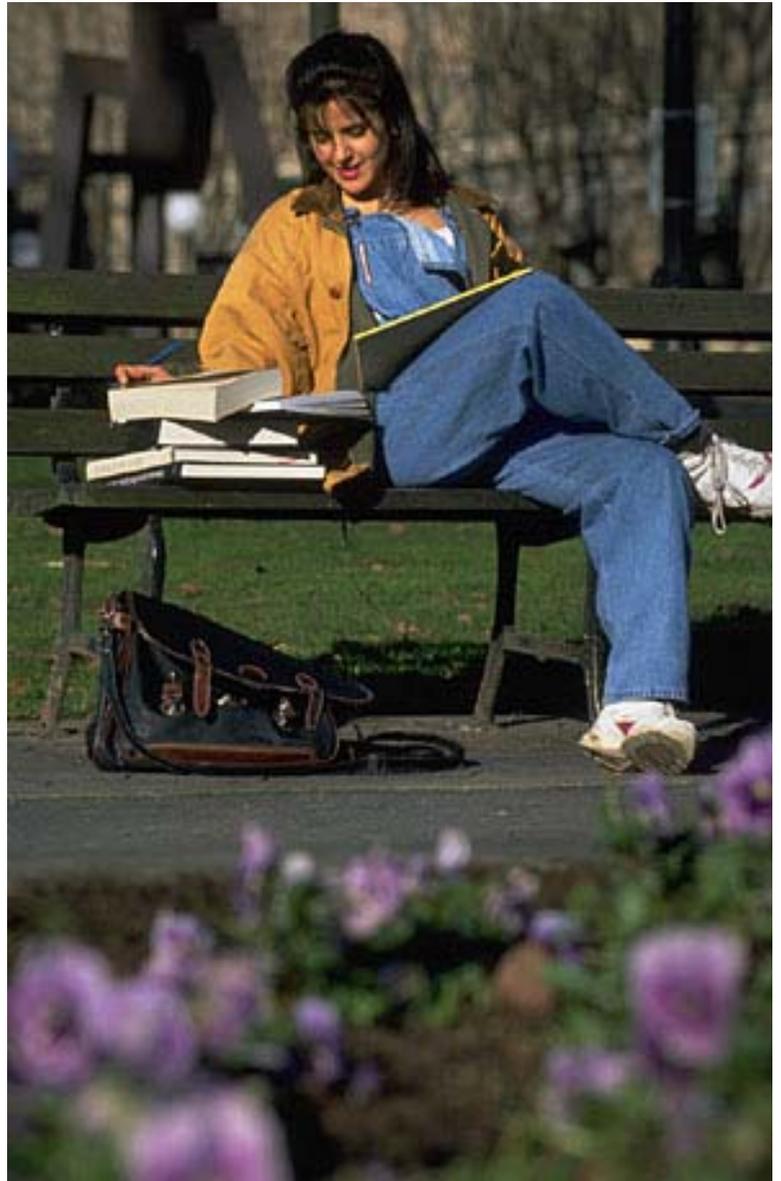
The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issued its report to Congress on the agencies' use of the Federal student loan repayment program in fiscal year (FY) 2002. The report showed that agencies have significantly increased their use of student loan repayments in FY 2002. Sixteen Federal agencies provided more than \$3.1 million in student loan repayments on behalf of 690 Federal employees. In addition, several agencies reported that use of the program has helped them achieve their recruitment and retention goals.

The Federal student loan repayment program permits agencies to repay Federally insured student loans as a recruitment or retention incentive for candidates or current employees of the agency. The program implements 5 U.S.C. 5379, which authorizes agencies to set up their own student loan repayment programs to attract or retain highly qualified employees. Any employee (as defined in 5 U.S.C. 2105) is eligible, except those occupying a position excepted from the competitive civil service because of their confidential, policy determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating nature (e.g., Schedule C appointees).

Loans eligible for payment are those made, insured, or guaranteed under parts B, D, or E of title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, or a health education assistance loan made or insured under part A of title VII or part E of title VIII of the Public Health Service Act. Although the student loan is not forgiven, agencies may make payments to the loan holder of up to a maximum of \$6,000 for an employee in a calendar year and a total of not more than \$40,000 for any one employee.

An employee receiving this benefit must sign a service agreement to remain in the service of the paying agency for a period of at least 3 years. An employee must reimburse the paying agency for all benefits received if he or she is separated voluntarily or separated involuntarily for cause or poor performance. In addition, an employee must maintain an acceptable level of performance in order to continue to receive repayment benefits.

The report is available on OPM's Web site at <http://www.opm.gov/oca/PAY/StudentLoan/index.ASP>. You can also link to the HTML version on the main OPM page under "Hot Links."



*For more information in this program, contact Deborah Allen,
OHRM, Compensation and Classification Division, at (202) 273-9700.*

OHRM Highlights

OHRM Welcomes New Interns



J.Davis/OHRM

Pictured from LtoR: Katika Floyd, Lauren Kuiper, Matilda Bruno-Gaston, Tershirra Yeager and Marlee Garrick.

OHRM is excited about welcoming Katika Floyd, Tershirra Yeager, Lauren Kuiper, Marlee Garrick and Matilda Bruno-Gaston as its 2003 HR Career Interns.

The HR Intern Program is a 2 year training plan for entry-level Federal Human Resources (HR) Specialists. Twenty Veterans Health Administration facilities throughout VA have been approved as HR Intern training sites. OHRM recently hired 5 interns for its program.

The program is patterned after the HR Intern Guide, which was developed and published by OHRM's Human Resources Development Service (HRD) late last year. Over the next 2 years, each intern will rotate through various HR specialties. At the end of the two year program, each intern will be well rounded in VA HR practices and competencies.

Ms. Floyd comes to VA from the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety and has special-

ized human resources experience in the areas of payroll and benefits. Lauren Kuiper joins VA from Virginia First Banks, Inc., where she was a Benefits Administrator. Matilda Bruno-Gaston previously worked in the Human Resources office for the Department of Homeland Security, Transportation Safety Administration Project. All three earned a Master's degree in Human Resources Management from Marymount University. Marlee Garrick has been with VA for the past 11 months as a Program Support Assistant on OHRM's Human Resources Development staff. Prior to VA, Ms. Garrick worked in Training and Development at the Washington Hospital Center. She has 6 years of HR experience and a degree in Management with an emphasis on HR. Tershirra Yeager has been a VA employee for the past 3 years. She began her VA career in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration as a Program Support Assistant. Ms. Yeager then moved to OHRM's Executive Resources staff, where she was involved in the staffing and recruitment of Senior Executives and Field Directors (GS-15's). Before coming to VA, Ms. Yeager was a Marketing Assistant with the Department of Agriculture. She brings vast knowledge of government to the intern program.



Do you think you have "Big News"? Feel free to contact [HR Highlights](#) via e-mail anytime to submit news, articles, or other information that may be suitable for inclusion in this publication. We also invite your questions and comments.

Highlights@mail.va.gov

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT LETTER NO. 05-03-03

Identifying Best Qualified Candidates in Title 5 Merit Promotion Actions When There Are Small Numbers of Candidates

1. Purpose.

a. This Human Resources Management Letter (HRML) provides guidance on complying with statutory and regulatory requirements for the identification of best qualified candidates in Title 5 merit promotion actions when there are small numbers of candidates. The guidance focuses on situations where no official rating and ranking panel is required by VA policy in VA Handbook 5005, Part III, or collective bargaining agreements. Changes reflecting this guidance should be incorporated into local merit promotion plans.

b. This HRML reinforces and amplifies earlier guidance contained in HRML 05-99-3, titled "Update to Internal Placement and Merit Promotion Staffing Policies and Procedures," dated April 2, 1999.

c. Once minimum qualifications are determined, there are various assessment tools that can be used by managers, supervisors, or subject-matter experts to assist in making better selections. These assessment tools can be used in combination or singly, depending on the particular occupation or position. Traditionally, human resources management specialists have determined distinctions among small numbers of candidates using a crediting plan. In order to achieve the high performing workforce that is necessary to meet VA's strategic goals, in most cases, managers, supervisors, or subject-matter experts can perform assessments to determine which candidates are best qualified with a higher degree of validity. This best qualified distinction is necessary to comply with merit system principles and other statutory requirements.

2. Background.

a. Merit System Principle Requirements. "Recruitment should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources ... and selection and advancement should be determined solely on the basis of relative ability, knowledge, and skills, after fair and open competition which assures that all receive equal opportunity" [5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1)]. In accordance with this merit system principle, the Federal regulations in 5 CFR Part 300, Subpart A, and Part 335 mandate that selections are to be made from among the best qualified candidates. Other than requiring that fair and consistent job-related criteria serve as the basis for merit promotion actions and other employment practices, the regulations do not specify how the best qualified distinction is to be accomplished.

b. OPM Evaluation of VA Human Resources Programs. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has periodically conducted evaluations of the human resources management (HRM) programs of Federal departments and agencies. As a result of its past two evaluations of VA's HRM program, OPM has cited continued widespread noncompliance with the requirement to identify the best qualified candidates in instances when, due to there being fewer than a certain number of candidates, local merit promotion plans and negotiated master labor agreements do not require that a promotion panel be held. OPM has observed that: employees have been referred if they meet the basic qualification requirements for a position without further differentiation; and VA facilities have not identified the best qualified candidates at any point in the selection process. In OPM's view, such a practice does not comply with the requirement that selection must be from among the best qualified candidates [5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1) and 5 CFR 335.103(b)(4)]. Best qualified determinations are to be made regardless of whether there is a promotion panel. Simply identifying those who meet minimum qualification requirements is insufficient. A further application of job-related criteria must be made at some point in the consideration/selection process to determine which qualified candidate(s) is/are actually "best qualified."

c. Labor Agreement Provisions. OPM additionally expressed concern about the way national and local negotiated labor agreement provisions are being administered. While a negotiated agreement may provide that a small number of candidates be referred without rating and ranking, neither merit promotion regulations nor statute [5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1)] permit a selection(s) to be made from candidates referred in such a manner when no best qualified determinations have occurred. Selections must be limited to those who have been identified as best qualified candidates through application of job-related criteria.

Continued Page 6, See HRML

HRML, Continued from Page 5

3. Guidance.

a. This HRML confirms that statute and regulations mandate that before any merit promotion selection decision occurs, there must be a determination that identifies the best qualified candidate(s) based on fair and consistent application of job-related criteria. It also confirms that all merit promotion selections must be from among those candidates determined to be best qualified "based on relative ability, knowledge, and skills."

b. This HRML specifies that the required comparison or assessment to identify best qualified candidates must be accomplished by applying job-related criteria fairly and consistently, but does not prescribe a standard or detailed procedure of how this is to be done. Instead, it outlines various types of assessment tools that may be used effectively. Options selected must use valid job-related criteria determined through a job analysis process.

c. Best qualified determinations may be made by subject matter experts (SMEs), recommending officials, selecting officials (when there are no intervening recommending officials), or HRM specialists, as specified in merit promotion plans.

d. The selecting official should ensure that the determination of best qualified candidates is reflected on the certificate before making selection(s) and that documentation to support that determination is/has been provided to the HRM office for inclusion in the merit promotion announcement file.

e. The best qualified determination can be made at different stages of the merit promotion process, depending on the job-related assessment method(s) selected, HRM guidance and the selecting official's preference. In some instances, when there are small numbers of applicants, a certificate of all basically qualified candidates may be referred to the selecting official (e.g., where a negotiated agreement provides for such referral). However, in such a situation, a determination of the best qualified candidates must occur before a selection can be made. Recommending/selecting officials may, personally or through SMEs, identify best qualified candidates through performance-based interviews (PBIs), work samples/simulations, intensive review of application packages, etc., or a combination of such evaluation methods. For example, a work activity simulation may be incorporated into a PBI process. In all cases, the official(s) making the best qualified determination will sign an appropriate document for the given merit promotion announcement file that identifies who the responsible official(s) is/are and the methods(s) used to make the determination.

f. HRM officers are responsible for ensuring that selecting officials receive appropriate instructions and advice on the process of identifying best qualified candidates and on documentation requirements.

g. All processes used in making best qualified determinations must be job-related and consistent with merit system principles.

h. The selecting official must choose from among the best qualified candidates for any selection(s) made from the certificate. Merit promotion certificates must document who identified the best qualified candidates. All documentation pertinent to the selection process must be made part of the official merit promotion file.

4. Questions.

a. Questions relative to the contents of this HRML may be referred to the Staffing Division, Human Resources Management Programs and Policies Service (051D) through e-mail to StaffingPolicy051D/VACO@mail.va.gov , or by telephone to 202-273-9827 for referral to a Specialist.

/s/
Ventris C. Gibson

East Coast, West Coast, and Worldwide



Now anyone, anywhere, anytime can enjoy HR Highlights. OHRM's newsletter has finally hit the World Wide Web. Until now, the newsletter was only available online via Intranet to VA Central Office employees, and other field employees who had access. The publication is also distributed as an Adobe .pdf file via e-mail to certain field facilities and other VA employees nationwide.

HR Highlights was established at the end of 2000, as a request from Ventris C. Gibson, after she was appointed Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management on November 7, 2000.

Robyn Hanna was made the publication's first Editor and the first issue was published in February 2001. The newsletter was designed to be the top source of information for the latest HR news, timely and accurately, to VA employees nationwide. It was to focus primarily on HR changes nationally, locally and Departmentally. After 13 months and 9 issues, a new Editor was named to HR Highlights.

Although the newsletter had received overall positive feedback from readers, under the direction of the new Editor, James A. Davis, the newsletter underwent a total transformation. It received a new look, a new reporting style, and took on additional areas of news reporting to include some of the top VA news, OHRM significant happenings, some of the latest training opportunities, a "Fun Corner," and much more.

With only 6 issues currently to his credit (not to include this issue), reader feedback is said to be very positive and readers are receptive to the changes made to the publication. When asked what prompted the complete makeover after only one

year of publication, Mr. Davis responded " I just didn't think the newsletter was reaching its full potential audience, and I had to figure out a way to make that happen. The best thing for me was to start over from scratch."

Mr. Davis said being an employee in the low percentile of VA's workforce that is under age of 35, he was able to draw on his youth, along with his maturity, to make the newsletter appeal to all employees. "I was very surprised that a considerable amount of feedback began coming from younger employees. They commented that they liked the new designs and sections, but some of the questions I received let me know that they were actually getting the information. And that's what's important," said Davis. Due in part to

the work he has accomplished with HR Highlights, he recently received OHRM's Employee of the Quarter Award.

Many requests were received from readers who could not access VA's Intranet. They wanted to know how they and others who may find HR Highlights information useful, could obtain access to the newsletter. With the help of OHRM's Web master, Beate Kriener, HR Highlights is now available on the Internet. On the site, you can access the current and past issues of HR Highlights, dating back to its first issue. You also have the ability to download the issue you wish to review as an Adobe .pdf file to read anytime at your convenience, or view it online. You also have the ability to send the editor an e-mail to make suggestions, leave comments, submit quotes, leave tips for possible HR or other VA related news stories, and much more.

For more information about HR Highlights, contact James A. Davis, Editor, via e-mail at Highlights@mail.va.gov. If you wish to log on to the Internet for the current and past issues of HR Highlights, please go to www.va.gov/ohrm/hrlibrary/hrhighlights.htm. To access HR Highlights via Intranet, please go to <http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm/HRLibrary/HRhighlights.htm>. Printed copies of HR Highlights are available from OHRM, and are located in VA Central Office, Suite 209.

"...but some of the questions I received let me know that they were actually getting the information. And that's what's important."

-James A. Davis
Editor, HR Highlights



Willie Hensley(R), presents James A. Davis, Editor HR Highlights, with OHRM's Employee of the Quarter Award.

Entrance and Exit Surveys

The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is pleased to announce two new innovative VA Directives:

- VA Directive 5004, "Entrance Survey," establishes an online survey to be administered to newly appointed employees. The purpose of the survey is to provide new employees with the opportunity to communicate their reasons for choosing employment with VA.
- VA Directive 5006, "Exit Survey," establishes an online survey to be provided to voluntarily separating employees. The purpose of the exit survey is to provide such employees with the opportunity to communicate their reasons for leaving.

The directives are available at the following Web sites: <http://vaww.va.gov/Ohrm/> and <http://vaww.va.gov/pubs/asp/edsdirec.asp>. Survey results will provide valuable information to guide VA's recruitment and retention efforts. Instructions for distributing the surveys to employees are contained in the directives.

Employee participation is voluntary and a number of safeguards have been built into the process to ensure confidentiality. However, each Human Resources Management office in VA must provide newly appointed and separating employees the opportunity to complete the surveys for this effort to be successful and provide useful information. We request everyone's assistance in getting the word out to ensure that the surveys are distributed following the instructions in the directives.

OHRM's Office of Workforce Planning will compile survey results, and access to the data will be available to VA's Administrations and Staff Offices. The entrance and exit survey results will enable VA to develop a comprehensive data base providing valuable information at the local and national levels describing the reasons why individuals choose to seek employment with or separate from VA.

Questions regarding the directives and survey should be directed to the Office of Workforce Planning at the following e-mail address: workforceplanning@mail.va.gov.





HR HIGHLIGHTS

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NOW AVAILABLE VIA ITRANET AND INTERNET!

Bookmark us today!

<http://vaww.va.gov/ohrm/HRLibrary/HRhighlights.htm>

NEW <http://www.va.gov/ohrm/hrlibrary/> ***NEW***

Recruitment Efforts Continue

In an effort to continue marketing VA to potential future employees, OHRM's Office of Marketing and Recruitment (M&R) participated in another job fair on June 6, 2003. The fair was held at the Navy Fleet and Family Support Center in Dahlgren, VA, and was sponsored by the Transition Assistance Program (TAP), Navy Fleet and Family Support Center.

TAP conferences are held quarterly, and the job fair is generally held the last day of each conference. In addition to general recruiting efforts, seminars are offered on interviewing, resume writing, and interviewing techniques.

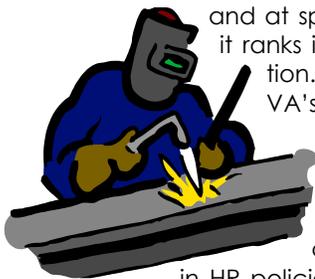
The TAP program also serves other branches of the armed services. Attendance at pre-separation and benefits briefings and seminars is mandatory for military personnel who are leaving the service.

There were over 50 employers participating in the job fair. Participants represented the private sector, contractors, schools, and state and Federal Government agencies. The fair was lively and well attended by active duty service members who were preparing to leave the Navy and enter into the civilian workforce.

Over 30 resumes were received for various positions in VA, with many seeking positions in the information technology profession. The Office of M&R believes these fairs will become an important source of obtaining well qualified candidates for VA positions. They plan to be in attendance for the next TAP job fair, which will be held in September 2003.

OHRM Does "On-Site" Construction

The OHRM Web site is constantly reviewed and updated. As a result, it has been one of the busiest sites on VA's Intranet



and at special times, such as salary changes, it ranks in the top five Web sites for information. Also attracting many visitors are VA's human resources policies, which were converted into a much more compact and convenient system of handbooks and directives. The growth of PCs as well as an increased interest from other agencies

in HR policies has resulted in expanding access to OHRM's information. On June 23rd, HR's policies and directives became accessible via the Internet at <http://www.va.gov/ohrm>. This development is expected to make it easier not only for those in the HR arena but also for employees who seek information but do not have convenient access at their worksites. This access will also provide much needed references for employees enrolled in VALO courses via the internet. OHRM expects to add other information in the future, subject to security guidelines, according to Webmaster Beate Kreiner.

CORRECTION!

In our last issue, we erroneously named one of the Presidential Rank Award recipients (Cover Story). We extend a sincere apology and congratulations to award recipient **Julius M. Williams, Jr.**, Former Director, Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment Service, VBA.



HR Monthly Conference Call

Please join us the 2nd Wednesday of each month at 3:00PM (EST), when we discuss various interesting HR topics.

The next set of conference calls are scheduled for July 9, August 13 and September 13.



**To call in, dial
1-800-767-1750**

**For more information, contact
Mr. Terry Young at 273-9821.**

Training News

Retirement Planning Seminar



If you'd like to know more about your retirement system, plan to attend an all-day VACO Retirement Planning Seminar in August 2003. The program is open to all employees of any age or length of service. For employees who will be eligible for early or voluntary retirement anytime in the next 5 years, attending the program will be especially helpful. If you are married, invite your spouse to attend with you to find out more about this topic. The seminar for employees in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or CSRS Offset will be offered on Tuesday, August 5, 2003. The seminar for employees in the Federal Employees Retirement System will be offered on Wednesday, August 6, 2003. Seminars will be held at the Office of Personnel Management Auditorium, located at 1900 E Street, NW., Washington, DC. Both sessions will also cover related benefits under Social Security, Medicare, and the Thrift Savings Plan. The seminar costs \$75 per employee. Spouses may attend free of charge but will not receive his/her own training manual. For more information and registration instructions, contact Arlene Williams at (202) 273-9731 or Mary Alan Beckley at (202) 273-5933, Central Office Human Resources Service.

For more information on training opportunities, contact

Human Resources Development Service



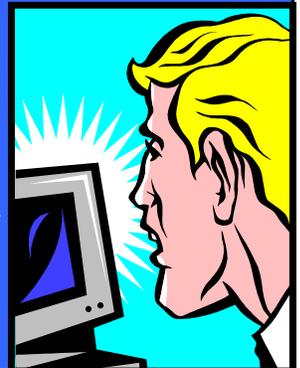
(202) 273-4911

Get to your summer destination by 'train-ing' it!"

TECH TIPS!

Have you ever been locked out of your computer after 3 unsuccessful logon attempts? Well, there's no need to worry, and no need to fret. Here's your Tech Tip for the month:

Once you're locked out, wait about 10-15 minutes without more attempts to log on, and then try again. During that time, the system automatically resets, allowing you to try again after you've calmed down and had time to remember the correct password.





“Summertime, Summertime , \$um, \$um, \$ummertime!”

Normally during the summer months, most people expect to see a portion of their earnings go toward a nice summer vacation. However, they forget to factor in the good portion of our earnings that will go toward the electric bill during this period. With the price of gas going down ever so slightly, some won't feel that financial relief immediately, as they can expect to see the amount due on their electric bills sky rocket. For those of you who are not fortunate enough to have "all utilities included" in your monthly housing payment, here are 10 interesting ways suggested by electric distributors to conserve energy, while saving a few dollars on your monthly electric bill. For more information, log on to your local electric company's Web site.



- Set your thermostat at 78 degrees F., a reasonably comfortable and energy-efficient indoor temperature.
- Don't set your thermostat at a colder setting than normal when you turn your air conditioner on. It will not cool faster, but it will cool to a lower temperature than you need and use more energy.
- Turn off your window air conditioner when you leave a room for several hours.
- Don't place lamps or television sets near your air conditioning thermostat. Heat from these appliances is sensed by the thermostat and could cause the air conditioner to run longer than necessary.
- Clean or replace air conditioning filters. Dirty air filters should be cleaned or replaced every month.
- Keep out the daytime sun with vertical louvers, or awnings on the outside of your windows. Draw any draperies, blinds and shades.
- Plant shade trees strategically around your home. Properly selected and planted shade trees can save up to \$80 annually on the average electric bill.
- Cook and use other heat-generating appliances in the early morning and late evening hours whenever possible.
- Use kitchen, bath, and other ventilating fans sparingly. You can blow away a houseful of air or heat in just two to three hours using ventilating fans. Turn them off when their job is complete.
- Consider using a ceiling fan with your window air conditioner to spread the cooled air to other rooms. However, be sure the air conditioner is large enough to help cool the additional space.

Tips For Having A Safe Summer

1. If you have left over fireworks, be sure to store them in a cool, dry place. DO NOT leave them in a hot car, garage, or your pockets!
2. When grilling, avoid leaving lighter fluid or gas in the hot sun or on the hot ground.
3. Whenever possible, do not personally handle fireworks. Enjoy a professional fireworks show.
4. Do not allow kids to swim without adult supervision, even if they are good swimmers.
5. Do not discard any unused fireworks in a sealed trashcan or dumpster. Possible heat could ignite them.
6. Do not use gas or kerosene to ignite a barbeque grill.
7. Place used fireworks in a pail of water to ensure they will not re-ignite.
8. NEVER stand directly over any firework when igniting.
9. Keep ALL fireworks out of the reach of children, and NEVER allow children to ignite fireworks.
10. Never underestimate the degree of injury a firework could possibly cause, including sparklers and "punks."
11. Don't drink and drive.
12. Do not smoke when fireworks are nearby.
13. Do not over exert yourself with physical activities in extreme heat. Always keep water handy.
14. Consider travelers checks when vacationing.
15. Do not leave children unattended in a locked car, with or without the air conditioning in operation.



Enjoy the summer!

This newsletter is published by
the
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The Fun
Corner



OHRM Spring Spelling Bee!

Unscramble these VA related words.

ASTNDOIARMINIT

IPPIRCNI

TVNRAEE

ETHRCAHLEA

FNETBESI

KYACMA

TREEYMEC

SNPOCMENIOTA

RH GTLHGHSII

TNLAVCOOIA NROEIHTABAITIL



Look for the answers in the next issue of HR Highlights.

Comings and Goings



Welcome to **Barbara Price**, who joins the Human Resources Development staff.

Best Wishes to **Laura Shugrue**.

Congratulations to **Mrs. Nyah Royal** who was married on May 29, 2003.

Below is the answer to the May issue's The Fun Corner, "Riddle Me This Spring Riddle" riddle.

Answer: April Showers Bring May Flowers

Quote of the Month

"In each of us are places where we have never gone.

Only by pressing the limits do you ever find them."



-DR. JOYCE BROTHERS

Submitted by Ann LaGrone

Submit a "quote" for future issues at
Highlights@mail.va.gov