



HR HIGHLIGHTS

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Greetings Everyone!

The Secretary of Veterans Affairs recently issued a message regarding **Operation Safe Harbor: VA's Newly Issued Preparedness Program**. I wish to take this opportunity to have his message reiterated here.

**Message from the Secretary,
Department of Veterans Affairs**
The Honorable Anthony J. Principi



The current threat potential to the Nation requires planning to maintain continued VA operations and to provide important information and support to VA employees and their families.

On March 7, 2003, I signed Operation Plan Safe Harbor to provide direct guidance to all VA personnel. Thus, VA will continue to operate and serve veterans and their families, protect its employees and facilities, provide back-up support to the Department of Defense (DoD), and support the Federal Response Plan and the National Disaster Medical System.

VA medical facilities are directed to assess their current capabilities and to be prepared to accept DoD casualties, and to handle casualties that may result from terrorist attacks. Each VA facility will develop a time-phased plan that includes staff training

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VA in the News

Campbell Named Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration



William H. Campbell, Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration

At the request of the President, Secretary Principi designated William H. Campbell to serve as Acting Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration on February 21, 2003.

In this capacity, Mr. Campbell oversees and directs both policy and operational functions in five major program areas: human resources management, diversity programs, EEO complaints resolution, labor management relations, and VA Central Office administration. Additionally, he is VA's designated agency safety and health official.

Mr. Campbell also serves as the Assistant Secretary for Management and Chief Financial Officer for the Department. In this capacity, Mr. Campbell is responsible for planning, managing, coordinating and overseeing all financial, budgetary, capital assets, acquisition and logistics policies, systems and operations for the federal government's second largest agency with an annual budget of \$60 billion and more than 220,000 employees. Mr. Campbell previously held the position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Finance and Deputy Chief Financial Officer.

The appointment of a new Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration is currently pending confirmation.

SECRETARY, Continued from Page 1

and appropriate material acquisition to respond to these situations. These plans will provide staff training to assure that VA medical facilities will sustain a high level of readiness.

Copies of the "Family Emergency Plan for VA Employees" are available at VA facilities. These concise brochures will assist VA members in preparing for natural disasters and terrorist attacks by developing effective family emergency plans. "The Family Emergency Plan for VA Employees" can be accessed via Intranet at http://www.va.gov/whnew_va.htm

The VA Office of Policy, Planning and Preparedness and the VHA Office of Public Health and Environmental Hazards jointly developed the brochure.

Life-safety concerns are the most important issue in both the workplace emergency training and the family emergency-planning brochure. Natural disasters and terrorist acts can strike quickly and without warning. Disaster preparedness takes essential precautions in advance, as a continuing part of daily life.

How Has Military Mobilization Affected VA?



Ventris Gibson, DAS for Human Resources Management recently provided VA's Crisis Response Team with an assessment of full military mobilization on the organization's work force. The briefing highlighted the facts pertaining to VA employees that had been called to active duty since September 11, 2001, with another group of VA employees who are subject to military mobilization. The briefing emphasized the importance of each administration and staff office developing contingencies (plans) that will address full mobilization and requirements generated through the Federal Response System as a part of VA's emergency support functions.

As of March 26, 2003, 823 VA employees are serving on active duty. The facilities most affected by military mobilization are:

- VA Medical Center Milwaukee, Wisconsin
- VA Medical Center Indianapolis, Indiana
- VA Medical Center San Juan, Puerto Rico
- VA Medical Center Salt Lake City, Utah
- VA Medical Center Bay Pines, Florida
- San Antonio, Texas Health Care System
- Albuquerque, New Mexico Health Care System
- Little Rock, Arkansas, Health Care System
- VA Medical Center Phoenix, Arizona
- VA Medical Center Washington, DC
- VA Regional Office Muskogee, Oklahoma

The top occupations affected by military mobilization are:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| - Registered Nurses | 102 |
| - Police Officers | 61 |
| - Veterans Service Reps | 47 |
| - Licensed Practical Nurses | 45 |
| - Physicians (varying specialties) | 41 |
| - Nurse – Other | 36 |
| - Nursing Assistants | 22 |
| - Housekeeping Aids | 30 |
| - Food Service Workers | 17 |
| - Chaplain | 16 |
| - Physician Assistants | 15 |
| - Patient Service Assistants | 14 |

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 set of conference calls are scheduled for April 9, May 14 and June 11. next con-

To call in, dial 1-800-767-1750
For more information,
contact Mr. Terry Young at 273-9821

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 questions and comments.



Highlights@mail.va.gov

National HR News



VA's Human Resources Management Strategic Mobilization Plan

Mission

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will ensure that sufficiently trained personnel are available at all times to provide the delivery of all benefits and services to veterans effectively and with a minimum of disruption across an all-hazards continuum that includes a nationwide hostile environment resulting from a domestic Weapons of Mass Destruction terrorist incident. Additionally, VA is prepared to provide available personnel to support requests from the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Health and Human Services, and other Federal agencies in accordance with existing plans, memoranda of understanding, Presidential directives, and laws, including VA/DoD Contingency Plan, the Federal Response Plan, and the Stafford Act.

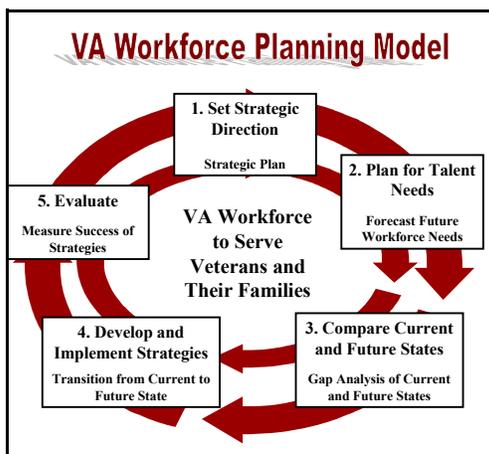
Execution

VA is in a constant state of preparedness to respond on short notice to safeguard people at its facilities, to safeguard the Departmental infrastructure, and to provide timely and effective assistance to other government agencies engaged in mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery operations. The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management (HRM) promulgates human resources policies, programs, and practices, which enable VA's administrations and staff offices to attract, develop, and retain people necessary for the Department to accomplish its primary and secondary missions. Additionally, OHRM's role in emergency preparedness and response includes the following responsibilities:

1. **Track** and **monitor** reservists and national guard mobilization trends and activities;
2. **Ensure** that policies and procedures governing the transition of VA employees to active military service are in place;
3. **Replenish** VA's work force through ensuring the effective and efficient execution of HR flexibilities by Central Office and field Human Resources professionals; and
4. **Provide** advice, guidance, and assistance to senior level officials during emergency preparedness and response.

To ensure the accomplishment of these most critical responsibilities, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management and key Office of Human Resources Management officials from VA Central Office in Washington, DC are an integral part of VA's continuity of operations plan and serve on the Department's primary Crisis Response Team (CRT).

Integration of Mobilization into the Department's Workforce and Succession Planning Efforts



The Department has a framework that enables management to address workforce needs while also considering internal and external factors that aid as well as hamper the employment of a qualified workforce. VA piloted the Workforce Planning Model in its three Administrations – Veterans Health, Veterans Benefits, and the National Cemetery Administrations. The model embraces five steps that ensure VA has the talent now and into the future to meet our mission of serving the Nation's veterans. A critical part of the workforce planning model includes having human capital plans that address the impact of mobilization on responding to emergency situations and/or catastrophic events.

Continued Page 4, See PLAN

STRATEGIC MOBILIZATION PLAN

Mobilization communications include the corporate Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) providing weekly updates of reservists and National Guard mobilization to CRT members and other senior level officials. OHRM developed and distributed CDs containing all necessary rules, regulations, policies, and guidelines that field Human Resources professionals may use in the event of a national crises requiring the implementation of this Strategic Mobilization Plan. This includes staffing, placement, compensation, benefits, employee assistance, personal family planning, employee relations, labor relations, and workers compensation. Through monthly, and on occasion special, conference calls with field HR professionals, numbering nearly 300, corporate Human Resources provides updates, gain information, and provides policy guidance on sensitive issues. For example, on January 31, 2003, the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources conducted a special nationwide conference call to share information on full military mobilization and its resulting impact on staffing, employee relations, family care, benefits for reservists, and the effect of mobilization on employment, compensation, and benefits necessary for reservists to make a smooth transition from active VA employment to active military duty.

As of February 20, 2003, 450 of the potential 15,204 VA employees are serving on reserve or National Guard duty. The bullets below address the impact of full mobilization on the Department's ability to provide service and respond to a national emergency:

- 15,204 VA Employees are on the DoD Military Mobilization Listing. This mobilization listing includes employees by occupation, grade, and facility. Further, the listing captures facilities within networks for Administrations to use in determining resource availability to support across the network or across the nation.
- 8,812 of these 15,204 are military retirees.
- While 8,812 are retirees, VA assumes activation in the event of a catastrophic event requiring the activation of retirees with special and/or unique skills, i.e., physicians, engineers, psychiatrists, nurses, information technology specialists, dentists, anesthesiologists, etc.
- 6,253 employees are active reservists in health care related occupations.
- Full mobilization would impact every organization within the Department.
- Each VA organization has assessed the impact of full military mobilization on its capacity to accomplish VA's primary and secondary missions.
- No VA employee in the Ready Reserve is unavailable for active military duty in a national emergency by reason of his or her VA position or assignment.

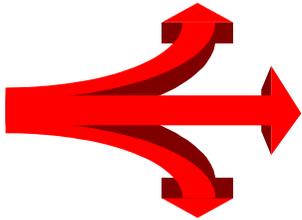
MOBILIZATION IMPACT ON SELECT CRITICAL NEEDS OCCUPATIONS

Occupations	Number Subject to Mobilization	Total Occupational Population
Nurse Anesthetist and Registered Nurse	2129	37,361
Practical and Vocational Nurse	536	10,195
Physician	468	15,336
Nursing Aid/Assistant	385	8,952
Health Care Technician	369	4,818
Medical Supply Assistant	359	4,896
Physician Assistant	253	1,419
Housekeeping and Food Service Worker	743	14,303
Police Officer	622	2,259
Program Assistant	1231	15,390
Veterans Service Representative	956	6,626
Information Technology Specialist	457	4,733
Program Specialist	298	3,716
File Clerk	256	2,293

Continued Next Page

The intent of the occupational listing above is to provide an overview of those positions most affected within the Department. Other positions affected to a lesser degree include senior executive positions and other senior leaders as well as attorneys, engineers, psychiatrists, human resources specialists, public affairs specialists, cemetery caretakers, facility directors, acquisition and materiel management specialists, and financial/budget officers.

OPM provides a wide array of authorities that VA can use to immediately replenish our workforce. VA's Strategic Mobilization Plan maps these hiring flexibilities in the following categories:



- Contract hiring to fill critical positions
- Direct hire authorities
- Temporary or Term Appointments
- Reemployment of Federal Retirees

Contract Hiring to Fill Critical Positions

Use of commercial temporary help services for brief periods for short-term situations makes contracting hiring optimal when regular recruitment and hiring procedures are impractical as in a national emergency or crisis. VA facilities have broad authority to enter into contractual arrangements based on local marketing supply. Using Federal Acquisition Regulations, field facilities are aware of the availability of contractual resources for critical care specialties and the necessary mechanisms to immediately affect such arrangements.

Direct Hire Authorities

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has published an array of hiring flexibilities. Field HR professionals are aware of these flexibilities and have the necessary expertise to exercise these authorities consistent with all necessary rules and procedures. Examples of these direct hire authorities include the appointment of disabled veterans, veterans eligible under the Veterans Readjustment Act, the Veterans Employment Opportunities Act, Presidential Management Interns, and Student Education Employment Program. Under VA's separate personnel system, Title 38, appointment authorities exist to appoint health care professionals with ease and in the minimum time needed.

Temporary and Term Appointments

These authorities exist to provide agencies flexibility in appointing individuals temporarily based on "temporary" needs. We have the flexibility to bring in temporary assignees from state and local governments, colleges and universities, Indian Tribal governments, and other not for profit organizations under the Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) Mobility Program. We can appoint such individuals temporarily or negotiate a detail involving cost sharing arrangements with participating organizations. Pure temporary appointments are for short-term needs only and are generally not expected to last longer than one year. Regarding the use of Term appointments. These appointments are generally for 1 to 4 years where the employees' service is needed for a specific project or extraordinary workload.

Field facilities also have the authority to employ experts or consultants for a temporary or intermittent period of employment. These individuals must be specifically qualified by education and experience to perform difficult and challenging tasks in a particular career field well beyond the usual range of achievement.

Reemployment of Federal Retirees

Following September 11, 2001, VA sought and received the Office of Personnel Management's approval to waiver dual compensation restrictions and repayment of monies received under the Voluntary Separation Incentive Program (VSIP) This strategy was necessary to re-employ highly skilled Federal retirees without a corresponding reduction in retirement annuity or repayment of the VSIP. VA field facilities continue to develop listings of retirees who are willing to return to employment as a result of a national emergency. The duration of the reemployment would be contingent upon the need and length of mobilization and readiness.

Continued Page 6, See PLAN

PLAN, Continued from Page 5

**ADDITIONAL STAFFING SUPPORT ACROSS THE DEPARTMENT THAT
WILL MINIMIZE THE AFFECT OF MOBILIZATION**

Separate and distinct from the hiring flexibilities described above, VA's Strategic Mobilization Plan includes other staffing support:

- Calling in intermittent and part-time employees to work full-time, implement emergency overtime provisions, change work schedules (12 hour tours), consolidate wards, cancel routine outpatient appointments, place certain patients in community facilities, and reduce non-emergency, non-critical surgeries.
- Using fee basis and locum tenens arrangements, and reassignment of existing staff to maintain coverage;
- Detailing certain employees from one VA facility to another to assist in meeting emergency response or to fill critical positions resulting from a catastrophic event.
- Having certain VA employees and or volunteers report to local medical centers to provide assistance in the following areas:
 - VA has a cadre of nearly 118,000 volunteers. 80% of these are retirees, the remaining are high school and college students. Volunteers are available to assist VA facilities in an emergency situation.
 - Nurses who process claims can assist in triaging patients or in providing other health care support.
 - Assist in food service and housekeeping.
 - Assist in securing and maintain a vigilant watch of the facility under the direction of the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Security and Law Enforcement.
 - Provide telephone coverage and assistance to veterans, their families, and employees.
 - Psychologists in the Veterans Benefits Administration can assist in minimizing trauma on the workforce by providing counseling and support services consistent with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) publication, Handling Traumatic Events: A Manager's Handbook and VA's 5 point plan that addresses support for employees who may experience fear or anxiety.
- If telecommunications is available, VA's Health Revenue Center will serve as the communication liaison with employees by use of an existing toll-free line. VA HRM officials will provide emergency response information for employees to the Health Revenue Center in Topeka, Kansas. This facility provides transactional HR processing for the Department's nearly 226,000 employees and currently has a toll free line for employees to call on human resources issues related to their pay, benefits, etc.

NATIONAL HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

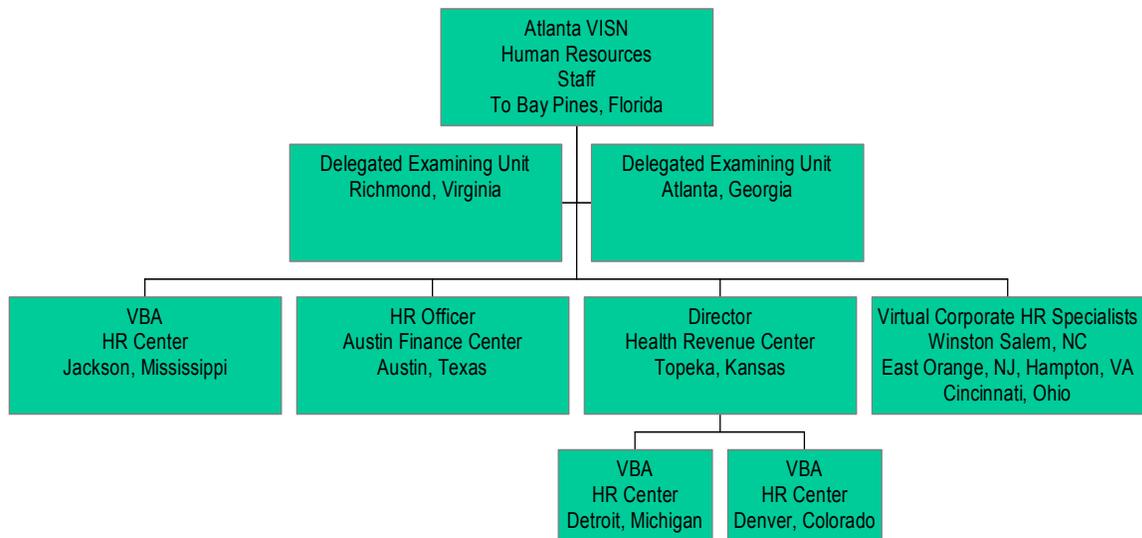
The Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources Management and key Central Office HR officials serve as the key technical advisors to senior leaders and field HR professionals. These officials are equipped with laptops, blackberries, cell-phones, walkie-talkies, CDs, and a secure satellite phone to respond within a 2 hour notification. Additionally, additional staff will work virtually, from their homes, as needed. Should the Deputy Assistant Secretary and staff not be able to fill this critical responsibility, Human Resources developed a "out-of-region plan" that establishes a line of succession for command and control from Washington, DC, to Bay Pines, Florida. HR staff from the Atlanta, Georgia, Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) will report to Bay Pines and manage the Department's Human Resources Program with the assistance of the Jackson, Mississippi, Veterans Benefits Administration Human Resources Management Center. Further, a separate team of HR Professionals, in Richmond, Virginia, with expertise in staffing and placement will provide support to the Deputy Assistant Secretary (if present) or the Bay Pines, Florida, staff. The Human Resources Officer in Austin, Texas, where the Department's payroll system resides will also provide support as well as the Health Revenue Center in Topeka, Kansas. The benefits, although unfortunate in a crisis, of these centers include:

- Austin will be able to process payroll regardless of timekeeping input and is positioned to coordinate with Department of Treasury officials as appropriate.

Continued Next Page

- Having responsibility for processing employee benefits and other supporting transactional human resources needs, the Health Revenue Center in Topeka, Kansas, is responsible for processing “mass” employee death cases regardless of location. If magnitude of processing becomes prevalent, Veterans Benefits Human Resources Centers in Denver, Colorado, and Detroit, Michigan, are also positioned with the expertise to accomplish processing.
- Human Resources at the corporate level also have outbased HR professionals who specialize in employee relations, staffing, and compensation who will report virtually to the Bay Pines HR group and receive instructions regarding work.
- Where communications may not be possible, Atlanta HR professionals understand clearly that they are to report to Bay Pines, Florida, within 24 hours of “no response” from corporate Human Resources.
- Field Human Resources officials are keenly aware of instructions they will need to provide to their employees concerning his or her responsibility and reporting requirements.
- Field Human Resources officials must incorporate emergency preparedness information in employee orientation sessions and employee handbooks.

The following chart depicts the Out-of-Region Plan for Human Resources if Washington, DC no longer exist:



Administration Specific Plans

In the National Cemetery Administration (NCA) – NCA does not anticipate any critical shortages as a result of mobilization. However, in the event that a shortage does occur, NCA will contract on a case-by-case basis similar to its current practice.

In VA Central Office (VACO), certain resources can be pooled to ensure the highest level of coordination and execution of policy, oversight, and support to field facilities. A survey of VA Central Office elements indicates that a full mobilization would not result in a major disruption of work. In anticipation of a full mobilization, the Administrations and staff offices have plans to utilize a number of options. Some organizations will need to draw from available staff in the field; others will be able to reassign various duties between remaining staff members. There are plans to detail employees to meet critical shortages and to use temporary hires for other vacancies. These positions may be filled through recruitment, direct hire authorities or noncompetitive hiring authorities. These options present a variety of candidates, including those who previously worked for the Department of Veterans Affairs or veterans who may not be recalled.

In the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) – each facility has plans to replenish its workforce as a result of mobilization. These plans include many different strategies to achieve the Department’s mission and secondary support to the nation. These plans are being converted to CDs for use by the various HR support centers.

Continued Page 8, See PLAN

PLAN, Continued from Page 7

Other Areas Affecting Mobilization and Impact on VA Employees

Managerial and Employee Responsibility

The Deputy Secretary has required that each organization head accomplish the following:

- Keep employees fully informed of the threat status and what they should be doing.
- Monitor radio and/or television for current information and instructions.
- Determine need to restrict access to facility and take appropriate measures.
- Contact vendors and suppliers to confirm their ability to continue to provide services and products.
- Monitor the capability of organizations to provide essential services.
- Ensure communication channels are operational.
- Be prepared to support additional Crisis Response Team activities.
- Talk to families.
- Be alert and aware.

Line managers have the responsibility of ensuring that they properly discharge their responsibilities in the following areas:

- Care, compassion and sensitivity to heightened employee concerns.
- Communicating use of available survival measures.
- Educating employees in staff meetings of responsibilities during emergency exercises and events.
- Communicating VA's Personal Family Plan.

Workforce and Succession Planning Policy

Like many other Federal agencies, VA is facing a major human capital challenge over the next several years as a result of the tremendous number of employees eligible to retire. The potential for a massive wave of retirements, coupled with the inability to hire new employees to fill mission-critical positions on a timely basis and at competitive salary levels, will severely impact and diminish VA's capability to deliver service to veterans. The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is working with the Administrations and VA organizations to respond to this challenge by developing a workforce and succession planning policy.

VA currently lacks a consistent workforce planning process. Though individual Administrations and staff offices conduct workforce analyses and human capital planning, no consistent requirements exist across the Department. The workforce and succession planning policy and guidance is to be signed imminently and identifies consistent workforce analysis requirements, including leadership succession and diversity analyses. The policy will enable the Department to analyze its workforce issues, identify strategies to address the issues, and deploy and share best practices in alignment with other management processes.

All organizations with over 100 employees will be required to submit workforce and succession plans. The plans will then be rolled-up into a Departmental Human Capital Plan. OHRM had set an ambitious timeline for the development of the policy and the workforce plans:

- Policy due December 31, 2001
- Administration and Central Office Plans due March 2003
- Department of Veterans Affairs Human Capital Plan due April 2003

VA plans to take immediate, aggressive action, to maintain a high quality workforce to serve our Nation's veterans.

For more information on VA's Human Capital Plan, contact Laura Shugrue on (202) 273-9925.

OHRM Highlights

2003 OHRM Manager of the Year Announced at Ceremony



Mel Sessa proudly holds his award as he poses with Ventris Gibson, DAS of HRM.

Mel Sessa was selected as the 2003 OHRM Manager of the Year. With his nomination highly recommended and endorsed by members of his staff, Mr. Sessa's accomplishments over the last year were more than enough to earn him the esteemed award.

Mr. Sessa has recently been at the forefront of several highly visible local and national projects. Over the last year, he was instrumental in leading the way for the development of VA's Restructuring Plan, the establishment of VA's Workforce Planning Council, VA achieving a "green light" on OMB's scorecard for human capital progress, and revitalizing a corporate recruitment and marketing program in VA.

He was also at the forefront of piloting the VA Leadership Forum, establishing a Web site for VA workforce planning, improving the recruitment Web site for VA, revitalizing VA's corporate recruitment and marketing program, and recently spearheaded a request by VHA to develop an online exit interview. With Mr. Sessa's leadership, his staff was reportedly four months ahead of schedule in delivering the product to VHA.

Having genuine interest in VA's future workforce, Mr. Sessa assisted with the formation of the Next Generation Work Group. The group was developed to obtain the input of aspiring young VA employees on issues such as recruitment, retention and development issues that face the Department. With his guidance, the group presented its findings to the VA Strategic Management Council, identifying key recommendations regarding how VA could address recruitment, retention and development issues, particularly for younger employees.

Mr. Sessa's accomplishments have really set the standard for future Manager of the Year candidates. His work ethic and many accomplishments exemplify the mission of the Department and OHRM.

Gresham Selected as 2003 OHRM Employee of the Year

Proving that she is truly "A Level Above the Best", Iris Gresham, Human Resources Assistant with OHRM's Programs and Policies Service (PP&S), Compensation and Classification Division, was the recipient of the 2003 OHRM Employee of the Year award. This makes the second year in a row that a PP&S employee has won the coveted award.

Ms. Gresham received a standing ovation from fellow employees as her name was called at the 2003 OHRM Employee Appreciation Ceremony, held on February 25, 2003. The theme for this year's ceremony was "A Level Above the Best." Overwhelmed with surprise, and with tears in her eyes, a host of co-workers emotionally joined her as she accepted her award.

A summarization of her nomination stated that she consistently exceeds expectations and demonstrates a highly responsible, initiative-driven work ethic. Ms. Gresham has assisted with highly visible projects such as the Childcare Subsidy Initiative, the preparation and content of several Congressional reports. She also took on the responsibility of maintaining and updating the master documents for the HR System of Directives and Handbooks and for having necessary changes to these issuances posted to the electronic documents maintained on the OHRM Web site.

For these accomplishments, Ms. Gresham was honored as the 2003 OHRM Employee of the Year and received a Special Contribution Award and a beautiful marble, metal and glass plaque. Ms. Gresham's accomplishments have inspired all OHRM employees with the incentive to strive for the best.



Iris Gresham shown as she accepts her award from Ventris C. Gibson, DAS for HRM.

Training News

VA Learning Catalog Highlights Women's Month Topics

In honor of Women's History Month, the Employee Education System is highlighting a variety of products, programs, and courses pertaining to women on topics such as leadership, special veterans' issues and patient care processes. To see a complete listing and course description, visit the VA Learning Catalog at <http://vaww.sites.lrn.va.gov/vacatalog/>. Enter "Women" in Key Word Search and click Go.

Planning for Retirement?

Several employees wanted to know more about their retirement system, so they attended the all-day VACO Retirement Planning Seminar held in March 2003. The program was open to all employees, but was most important for employees who will be eligible for retirement anytime in the next five years. Married employees were encouraged to invite their spouse to attend with them to find out more about this topic. The seminar for employees in the Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) or CSRS Offset was held on Tuesday, March 25, 2003.

The seminar for employees in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) was held the following day, on Wednesday, March 26, 2003. Seminars were held at the OPM Auditorium at 1900 E Street, NW. Both sessions also cover related benefits under Social Security, Medicare and the Thrift Savings Plan. The seminar cost was \$75 per person. Spouses could attend free of charge, but did not receive his/her own training manual.

For more information on retirement planning, contact Arlene Williams (273-9731) or Mary Alan Beckley (273-5933), Central Office Human Resources Service.

For more information on training opportunities, contact Human Resources Development Service



(202) 273-4911

Come join us, because "March is the time to 'Spring' into training!"

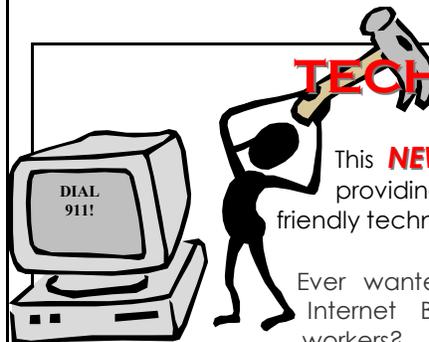
Labor Relations for Practitioners

Federal Personnel Management Institute conducted the first session of the Labor Relations for Practitioners workshop. The training was held at the Employee Education Service Training Center in Durham NC. The three-day training began on March 11, 2003. Twenty-five VA employees participated in the workshop.

The next Labor Relations for Practitioners workshop will be held in Denver, CO on April 1-3, 2003. Currently, 28 employees registered for the training. For course descriptions and registration forms, go to the Web site <http://vaww.sites.lrn.va.gov/vacatalog/>.

Hotel and travel information are available upon request. For more information on training opportunities, contact the Human Resources Development Service at (202) 273-4911.

TECH TIPS!



This **NEW** section is dedicated to providing you with helpful user friendly technical computer tips.

Ever wanted to share your favorite Internet Bookmarks with your co-workers? Maybe you just want to make a backup list in case your hard drive fries. Here's how...

Internet Explorer

1.) Open Internet Explorer. 2.) Choose Import and Export in your File menu. 3.) Once the Import and Export Wizard opens, click next, highlight Export Favorites, and click next again. 4.) Choose the Favorites folder. 5.) Click Export to a File or Address, save your bookmark.html file onto your C drive or disk, and click next. 6.) Click Finish and OK.

When you double-click your new file, it will open as a Web page and you'll be able to click links to go to sites. Here's how to print a list of URLs, as well as the names of your links.

1.) Open your HTML file in Internet Explorer. 2.) Choose Print from the File menu. 3.) Check the "Print Table of Links" box at the bottom of your print menu.

For assistance, contact your organization's IT professionals.



Outside the Box



Happy St. Patrick's Day

St. Patrick's Day (March 17th) is an Irish holiday honoring Saint Patrick, the missionary credited with converting the Irish to Christianity (in the A.D. 400's).

This year in Dublin, Ireland, St. Patrick's Day was celebrated for one full week!

For more information about St. Patrick's Day, you can visit www.st-patricks-day.com or www.stpatricksdays.ie

Spring is in the Air



In the northern half of the world, March 20th was the first day of spring. The cold winds of winter are gone and wild flowers are starting to bloom. It's time to find swimming suits, baseball gloves and plan summer trips.



While far to the south, across the equator, autumn is about to arrive. The hottest days of summer are past. Each day is shorter than the last. It will soon be time to rake leaves and get out warm coats.



National Women's History Month

VA proudly joined the Nation in celebrating Women's History Month in March. VA's theme this year is "Women Pioneering the Future."

National Women's History Month grew from an effort to recognize and celebrate the accomplishments of women in American history. In 1978, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County, California, Commission on the Status of Women initiated Women's History Week. In 1987--at the request of museums, libraries, and educators across the country--the National Women's History Project successfully petitioned Congress to expand the celebration to the entire month of March.

For more information about VA's National Women's Program, contact Lenore Jacobs at (202) 273-5866 or visit the Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity Web site at <http://www.va.gov/dmeeo>.

HR HIGHLIGHTS

Did you know that you can view the HR Highlights online via VA's Intranet!?

Bookmark us today!

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

HR HIGHLIGHTS

This newsletter is published by
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The Fun Corner



INSTRUCTIONS:

In the spirit of March's
celebration of St. Pat-
rick's Day, find 10
inconsistencies with the
matching pictures.



Comings and Goings

Welcome back to **Leona Ebird**, who has returned after an extensive convalescence. **Ron Clark** and **Christopher Morris**, who join the Worklife and Benefits Staff, and **Lorena Ruley** who is currently detailed to OHRM.

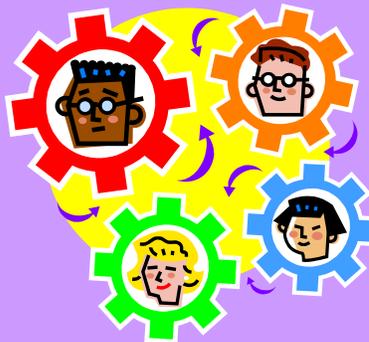
Best Wishes and Farewell to **Laetitia "Tish" Pryor**, **John Oswald**, **Cindy Hoffman**, **Ruby Nightingale** and **Nicole Sutherland**.

Our thoughts are also with **Julie Mosteller** of OHRM's Worklife and Benefits Staff, who was called to active military duty.

Quote of the Month

"INDIVIDUAL COMMITMENT TO A GROUP EFFORT - THAT IS WHAT MAKES A TEAM, A COMPANY WORK, A SOCIETY WORK, A CIVILIZATION WORK."

-VINCE LOMBARDI



Submitted by
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Submit a "quote" for future issues at
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