



HR HIGHLIGHTS

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Greetings Everyone!

Over the course of the next few weeks, we will ask HR Officers to provide information on Employee Clearance from Indebtedness procedures used at the local level. VA has become increasingly concerned about employees who leave employment having continued access to our computer systems, or who fail to satisfy government credit card debts, or who fail to turn in government equipment, i.e., cell phones, identification cards and badges, lap tops, pagers, home-based government PCs, and continue to have access to secure areas of VA facilities. For this reason, the Office of Human Resources Management, in collaboration

with the Office of Finance and the Office of Information and Technology, will conduct a study with specific recommendations going to the Secretary for his review and approval. VA facilities use VA Form 3248 to clear a separating employee. However, we found variations of this form that provide excellent examples of additional clearance information we should obtain when an employee leaves VA employment. You'll hear more very soon.

On a separate note, the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) issued its "Recommendations for Change. Making the Public Service Work". In its report, MSPB recommends that the Federal government accomplish the following:

- Simplify hiring to make it work better for both managers and job applicants;
- Improve how job applicants are assessed;



Ventris C. Gibson

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VA in the News

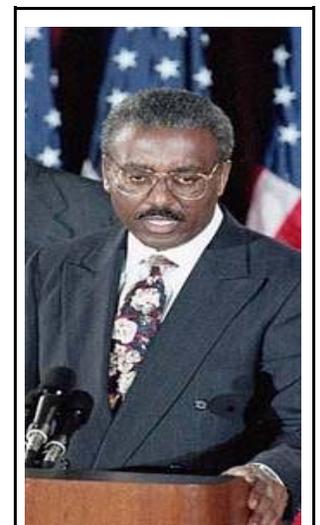
Former Secretary "for" VA Dies

On August 15, 2002, former Secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), Jesse Brown died after suffering from a long illness at the age of 58. During his tenure at VA, Brown liked to call himself the Secretary "for" Veterans Affairs and said he had won several battles with Congress because "we hold the high moral ground."

The Detroit-born Brown grew up in Chicago and graduated with honors from Chicago City College. In 1963, he enlisted in the Marines. Two years later, he was seriously wounded while on patrol in Vietnam, that left his right arm partially paralyzed. His disability became the motivating factor for his life's work.

In 1967, Brown returned to Chicago to work for Disabled American Veterans (DAV), then in 1973, he moved to DAV headquarters. Brown became a familiar figure on Capitol Hill, pushing Congress to support legislation ensuring that veterans receive their entitled health care services and benefits programs. He was appointed Secretary of VA by former President Clinton in January 1993 and served until July 1997.

During his tenure at VA, Brown touched the hearts and lives of VA employees nationwide as well as veterans and other colleagues both local and abroad. His legacy lives on and he is missed by all.



The Honorable Jesse Brown
1944 - 2002

Celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month



VA proudly joined the Nation in celebrating National Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15. This year's theme was "Hispanic Americans: Strength in Unity, Faith, and Diversity." As the youngest and fastest growing segment of our population, Hispanic Americans are an increasingly vital part of our Nation's future. They have served our country with distinction and made important contributions in such areas as arts, business, academia, government, and the Armed Forces. For more information on Hispanic American contributions to our military, visit the Medal of Honor Recipients page at www.neta.com/~1stbooks/medal2.htm. For further information on the Department's National Hispanic Employment Program, contact Program Manager **Noemí Pizarro-Hyman** at **(202) 273-8921**.

September 11th Remembered



With most participants dressed in some combination of red, white and blue, or wearing some other patriotic symbol, VA employees and friends joined together to remember the events and pay tribute to the victims of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. Dr. Leo S. Mackay, Deputy Secretary for Veterans Affairs, addressed employees and others via VA Satellite television.

VA paused for a moment of silence at approximately 8:46 a.m. (the time the first plane hit the North Trade Tower) along with President Bush and the rest of the Nation to honor those who lost their lives during last year's terrorist attacks.

September 11th is definitely a day the world will never forget.

2003 SES Candidate Development Program Selectees Announced

The Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program (SESCDP) is a competitive program designed to create a pool of qualified candidates for Senior Executive Service (SES) positions. The program spans 12-18 months and addresses the five Executive Core Qualifications that embody the leadership skills needed to succeed in the SES.

Candidates will attend an orientation session in November where they will be assigned a mentor, complete developmental assignments, and shadow a current Senior Executive. Selectees will also attend formal executive-level training, Leadership VA (if they haven't already), a Human Resources Seminar, and receive other assignments to become VA and OPM certified.

Congratulations to the 2003 SESCO DP selectees, VA's future leaders!

Lou Ann Atkins, VAMC West Palm Beach, FL
Ronald Bednarz, VACO, Veterans Health Administration
Ernesto D. Castro, VACO, Office of Information Technology
Jeannette Diaz, VAMC San Juan, PR
Lily Fetzer, VARO Houston, TX
Willie Hensley, VACO, Ofc. of Human Resources Mgmt.
Joyce M. Hunter, VACO, Veterans Health Administration
Sonia M. Moreno, VARO San Juan, PR
Steve L. Muro, NCA, Oakland, CA
Ricardo Randle, VARO, Jackson, MS
James R. Sandman, Office of Management, Denver, CO
 Distribution Center
Linda D. Smith, VAMC Cleveland, OH
Rebecca Wiley, VAMC Augusta, GA
Suzanne C. Will, Ofc. of General Counsel, San Francisco, CA
Keith Wilson, VARO New Orleans, LA
Janice Young, Department of Navy, Patuxent, MD

VA's Restructuring Plan Status

Recently, the Department (VA) submitted its Restructuring Plan to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB). OMB scores VA quarterly on our ability to strategically manage our human capital. The score is largely based on progress toward completing and implementing this Restructuring Plan. VA has held several meetings with OMB regarding the plan. In early September, OMB provided official comments to a draft of the plan submitted in July 2002.

In response, VA's Workforce Planning Council appointed a number of the Department's top human resources and subject-matter experts to a Human Capital Work Group to address OMB's comments. In only 20 days, with much hard work and long hours, the work group was able to address OMB's specific comments, put together comprehensive assessment of VA's Human Capital program, identify strategies VA will pursue to implement a more corporate approach to human capital management, obtain concurrence from the Administrations and key staff offices, and obtain the Secretary's signature. OMB's initial reaction to the plan and the approach VA used was positive. More detailed comments from OMB are forthcoming.

Secretary Principi Hosts Women's Executive Roundtable



On October 2, 2002, the Honorable Anthony J. Principi, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, hosted a roundtable with 26 women from across VA to discuss the professional growth and development of women in the VA workforce. The Secretary wanted to gauge how well VA is responding to the concerns of women as they aspire to leadership positions. Participants included:

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| Nora Egan | Chief of Staff of the Department |
| Ventris Gibson | Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Resources |
| Linda Belton | VHA Network Director |
| Geraldine Johnson | VBA Associate Deputy Under Secretary for Management |
| Diana Ruebens | VBA Area Director |
| Linda Watson | VHA Director, Central Alabama |
| Fay Norred | VBA Director, Boston |
| Irene Trowell-Harris | Director, Center for Women Veterans |
| Phillipa Anderson | Associate General Counsel |
| Joy Hunter | Acting Director, VALU & Chief Learning Officer |
| Caren Eirksen | NCA Director, Human Resources Service |
| Angela Porter | Executive Assistant to the Deputy Secretary |
| Terri Williams | Director of Protocol |
| Deborah Bittinger | Executive Assistant, Congressional Affairs |
| Marisa Palkuti | Director, Human Resources Development |
| Wanda Jones | National Federal Women's Program Manager |
| Jennifer Duncan | Program Management Officer, Information Technology |
| Patti Costello | Executive Assistant, Office of Management |
| Jeanne Yoo | HR Specialist, OHRM |
| Clara Trapnell | HR Specialist, VHA |
| Alvertis Ramsey-Parrish | Budget Officer, Resolution Management |
| Susan Perez | Acting Assistant Director for Data & Information Services |
| Ivone Ladomirak | Computer Specialist, Information Technology |
| Beth Beardesley | Staff Assistant, NCA |
| Judy Reyes-Maggio | Program Analyst, VBA |
| Patricia Murray | Nurse Executive, VHA |

Continued next page, see WOMEN

DAS, Continued from Page 1

- Provide tools to attract, retain, and reshape the workforce;
- Enable and support effective management by adopting a simpler, more flexible classification system, authorizing pay-banding in all agencies, and appointing chief human capital officers; and
- Divide the current functions of the Office of Personnel Management. OPM should provide Government-wide policy leadership, identify and promote good human capital practices, and manage Government-wide programs such as benefits. Program evaluation and oversight responsibilities should be conducted by an independent agency to avoid the potential conflict of interest from compromising the evaluations.

For a copy of the report, go to www.mspb.gov

WOMEN, Continued from Page 3



Also in attendance were the Honorable Jacob Lozada, Assistant Secretary for Human Resources and Administration, and Mr. Willie Hensley, Director, National Veterans Employment Program. The exchange of ideas and shared experiences provided an enlightening and educational event. The Secretary directed the establishment of a taskforce to develop a comprehensive plan to address the under representation of women at the senior grade level. The plan must contain recommendations for the Secretary to consider. Additionally, he directed the expansion of the Women's Executive Leadership Forum to VA field facilities. Feel free to submit ideas, suggestions, or recommendations to Ms. Ivone Lodomirak by e-mail or to Highlights@mail.va.gov.



National HR News

OPM's Audit Report is In!

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) conducted a review of the Department of Veterans Affairs' Human Resources Management program during fiscal year 2001. The review focused on adherence to merit system principles and selected HR management activities involving HRM accountability, workforce management, and workforce staffing. For the first time, OPM reviewed the Title 38 HR system. The audit included visits to numerous VA Medical Centers, VBA HR Centers as well as specific site visits to Regional Offices, VA Central Office Human Resources Service, and the former Shared Service Center in Topeka, Kansas. Overall, the results of the audit included the following concerns:

1. VA must establish an agency-wide human resources accountability system that assesses human capital strategies and holds managers accountable for their decisions.

2. In its 1997 review, OPM noted several problems in VA's staffing program at the facility level. Although VACO issued policy guidance, the problems continued and there was no accountability for not following policy guidance. Additionally, OPM found that veterans' preference was not being applied to Title 38 positions in a consistent manner.

3. The lack of workforce confidence in the pass/fail performance management system. The primary objection is that the system is another area needing priority attention. The primary objection is that the system does not differentiate between employees who barely pass and those who

are truly outstanding performers.

Since these concerns can adversely affect employee job satisfaction and retention, OPM recommends that we conduct a thorough internal evaluation of the pass/fail system to identify additional actions that can be taken to insure the system is effective in meeting performance management goals.

I am pleased to announce that the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is dedicating resources to an HR Oversight and Accountability organization comprised of HR subject matter experts. OPM supports our establishment of such an organization.

We are working with those facilities where deficiencies were noted to ensure that we take corrective action where necessary or provide training where appropriate.

As to performance management, with the approval of the Deputy Secretary, we formed a team comprised of individuals from across the Department to develop recommendations for the VA Strategic Management Council to consider. The presentation included a 5-tier performance system, 3 tier performance system, or remain with the pass/fail system. Further, we provided information on "re-linking" incentive awards. At this time, we plan to brief VA's Executive Board on performance management and options the Board can consider.

OPM's Homeland Security Liaison Named

Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Director Kay Coles James recently announced that **Steven R. Cohen** will serve as OPM's representative to the White House, Office of Homeland Security, and Congress. His essential role will be to work with the White House Transition Team and the Office of Management and Budget to coordinate OPM advice and expertise on a full scope of personnel matters relating to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security. During a previous tenure in the Federal government that spanned 39 years, Cohen established an outstanding reputation among his peers for his strong leadership and human resources expertise.

One of Cohen's many accomplishments included serving as the Acting Director of OPM during the transition to the new administration. During that time, he led the development of legislative proposals that eventually formed the Federal Employee Management Reforms that are included in the President's Managerial Flexibility Act. Upon James' arrival at OPM, she appointed Cohen



her senior policy advisor. In addition, Cohen worked with the Office of Management and Budget and members of the President's Management Council on HR flexibilities. As Associate Director, Office of Merit Systems Oversight and Effectiveness, and Director, Office of Workforce Relations, Cohen played a key leadership role in shaping government-wide human resources policies in a variety of functional areas. He also ensured that all merit system principles, including whistleblower protections, were protected within Federal agencies.

In VA, Mr. Willie Hensley serves as the Office of Human Resources Management's National HR Emergency Planner. Mr. Hensley wears three different hats for OHRM: first as Emergency Planner, second as Director, National Veterans Employment Program, and third as Director, Marketing and Recruitment. Mr. Hensley is a U.S. Army retired Lieutenant Colonel and formerly served as the Director, Center for Minority Veterans. He is a native of Shreveport, Louisiana, and holds a Masters of Arts in Education from the Univ. of Northern Colorado.

OHRM Highlights

Title 38 Web Course Under Development

A team of Title 38 subject-matter experts recently met in Salt Lake City to begin development on content matter for courses that will make up the Title 38 Personnel Management Development Series, an interactive web course.

The team worked with a multimedia specialist and an instructional designer from the Star Mountain Executive Team, to develop course materials for the six curricula areas making up the Title 38 Personnel Management Development Series. Robert Swanson, former Chief, Title 38 Employment Division, currently with VHA Management Support, returned to work on the staffing and work life portions of the curriculum along with OHRM's Marianne Gray and Phyllis Isiminger from the Memphis VAMC. Alan Beale (OHRM), Jeffrey Kleiner (Biloxi VAMC), and Debra Walthal (Denver VAMC), worked on the pay administration portions of the course, while Larry Ables and Richard Watkins (OHRM) worked together to develop the employee relations portion. John Haltigan, Labor Management Relations, and Dan Flynn (Los Angeles VAMC), will be completing the labor management courses.

The 2-day meeting was reportedly an ambitious effort to capture Title 38 institutional knowledge. The team used a scenario-based instructional design approach to give participants a realistic learning experience. At the conclusion of the design portion of the course, a number of VA field HR specialists will test the course before it is launched.

The anticipated date for completion of the course is late December 2002. Alpha testing began September 30, 2002.

WIST Reports Online

The OHRM Workforce Information Systems Team (WIST) has established a new web page on the WIST portion of the OHRM website, entitled "WIST Standard Reports".

The web page currently contains an 8-page index for VA standard reports and two WIST reports. The goal is to have as many of the standard reports made accessible on the webpage as possible, as OHRM moves to eliminate e-mailing, photocopying or mailing paper copies of the reports. Regular users will be notified when reports are updated and those with general interest can download and review the reports at their convenience. The standard reports will not contain any safeguarded/privacy protected information that would compromise the integrity of our IT security measures.

For more information on WIST Reports, contact Leta Barner (202) 273-4909.

VA is Training the Trainer

The Workforce Information Systems Team (WIST) recently presented the first Human Resources Processing and Records "Train the Trainer" course in Little Rock, Arkansas. This course was specifically developed for experienced Human Resources personnel to provide basic Processing and Records (P&R) training to new P&R staff throughout VA. Nineteen Human Resources employees from 10 VISNs successfully completed the course.

Participants learned about the PAID/OLDE system and became skilled in a myriad of issues related to processing personnel actions for Title 5 and Title 38 employees.

The WIST advisory staff will continue to provide monthly training via nationwide conference calls. Advanced HR P&R training will also be provided, when necessary.



Quantock's Quiet Quest

The quest began in 1969, at the Allen Park, MI, VA Hospital, that's when Kenneth Quantock landed his first job with VA as a Personnel Management Specialist Trainee. Now, after 33 years of federal service, with the love and support of family at his side, he called it quits, and retired. He was honored at a special retirement ceremony by his fellow VA employees, which included an emotional Chief of Staff.

All of Mr. Quantock's federal service was with VA. Before transferring to the VA Central Office in 1974, he was also employed by the Madison and Manchester VA Medical

Centers.

During his career, Ken served in several capacities, played a key roll in several major projects, and has had plenty of impact on the way OHRM, VA and the government as a whole functions in certain areas.

A few of his accomplishments while at VA include, being responsible for a major reduction of backlogged salary cases, helping establish VA's locality pay system which resulted in the Nurse Locality Pay Act of 1990 and he also helped lay the foundation for OHRM's website.

Ken will be missed and we wish him well.

Who's VERA?

Voluntary Early Retirement Authority (VERA) is used in major reorganizations and transfers of functions related to funding or staffing difficulties brought on by issues such as budgetary shortfalls and/or unforeseen increases in personnel and employee benefits costs.

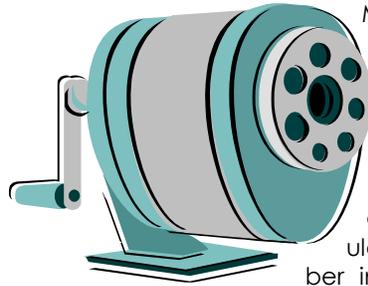
VA is to use this authority only to the extent necessary to minimize the number of employees reached for involuntary separation or demotion by achieving voluntary reductions in the work force that are required due to lack of funds, shortage of work, reorganizations, skills imbalance, or closures.

In the first three quarters of fiscal year 2002, 690 VA employees took advantage of Voluntary Early Retirement, with an average age of 54 and average grade of GS-8. During fiscal year 2001, 177 VA employees took advantage of Voluntary Early Retirement, with an average age of 53 and average grade of GS-7.

The Office of Human Resources Management obtained authorization from the Office of Personnel Management to use VERA during fiscal year 2003. VA's previous authorization expired September 30th 2002. The new authorization will enable VA to offer VERA through September 30, 2003. All VA employees are covered except the following: 1) employees who have not been continuously on VA's rolls since at least 31 days before September 6, 2002; 2) employees serving under time-limited appointments; and 3) employees in receipt of a decision of involuntary separation for misconduct or unsatisfactory performance. Additional information regarding the processing of VERA actions in FY 2003 will be provided to the HR community.

*For more information on VERA, contact
Elodie Murray at (202) 273-9823.*

Sharpening Supervisors Supervisory Skills



Marisa Palkuti, Director, OHRM Human Resources Development Service, worked with the Office of Personnel Management to develop new competencies for Federal supervisors, managers, and executives. This is scheduled to take place during October in San Antonio, Texas. Ms. Palkuti will join executives to review the latest research and best practices in the area of leadership development and to collaboratively design a new, integrated Leadership Journey Curriculum. The agenda will include competencies underlying executive core qualifications, interactive forum with key Federal agencies to identify needs, developing a leader's emotional intelligence, performance consulting, and effective adult education.

Continued

WGI effective date. The old procedure of requiring the supervisor to sign the SF 50-B caused problems and was very labor intensive. There is no longer a requirement for supervisors to sign the SF-50-Bs for this personnel action.

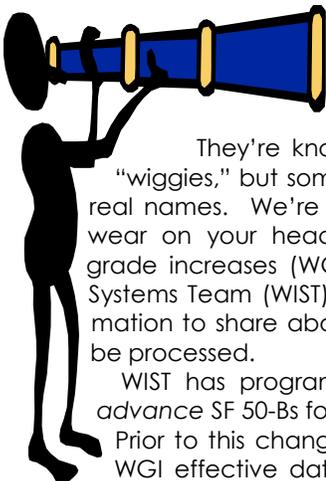
The new procedure eliminates a major expense by not generating approximately 10,000 advance SF 50Bs in November and December, with effective dates in the following calendar year. Since next year's pay rates are unknown, these SF 50-Bs would have blank salary fields. Once new salary rates were announced, HR had to calculate the new salary manually and type it on each SF 50-B before making distribution.

This change was made as part of a collaborative effort with Labor Management Relations, VHA, and OHRM's Compensation and Classification Division. Effective November 3, 2002, PAID will generate two VA FORM 5-97s, with the first being 6 months prior to the WGI effective date and the second 90 days prior to the WGI effective date. The notices will state that an employee is due a WGI and the effective date. It will also advise that the WGI will process automatically unless the supervisor notifies HR otherwise, prior to the effective date.

Once an employee has completed the waiting period, and HR has not taken adverse action to stop the WGI, an SF 50-B will be produced with the correct salary and appropriate remarks. Although the immediate supervisor does not sign the action, the HR Officer will sign it.

All VA stations were advised in detail of the new procedures in WIST Bulletin 02-21.

Where's My WIG?



ATTENTION!!!

They're known affectionately as "wigs" or "wiggies," but some people just call them by their real names. We're not talking about the wigs you wear on your head! We're talking about within grade increases (WGI). The Workforce Information Systems Team (WIST) has some very important information to share about the way your future WGI will be processed.

WIST has programmed PAID to stop producing advance SF 50-Bs for within grade increases (WGI's). Prior to this change, 5 months in advance of the WGI effective date, a VA FORM 5-97, with a remark to initiate a performance review, was produced. This was followed by the actual Notification of Personnel Action (SF 50-B) 10 weeks prior to the employee's

Training News

The VA and AFGE Joint Training Council comprised of union officials and management officials from Central Office, NCA, VHA, and VBA has jointly designed two courses for managers, union officials and labor relations personnel. The two courses are:

UNDERSTANDING AND APPLYING LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS LAW, TITLE V, CHAPTER 71 OF THE FEDERAL SERVICE LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS

This is a foundational course designed to provide union and management with an overview of their respective roles, rights and responsibilities as defined by the Federal Labor-Management Relations Statute. This course will assist union and management in understanding and applying the law which is key to resolving challenges raised in the workplace.

Target Audience: Managers, Union Officials, and Labor Relations personnel

VA AND AFGE NATIONAL JOINT TRAINING COUNCIL MASTER AGREEMENT TRAINING

This course is designed to help managers, supervisors, executives, and union officials understand the most misunderstood articles in the AFGE Master Agreement. Participants will be able to interpret and apply the articles to meet the challenges of operating in their current work environment.

Target Audience: Executives, Managers, Union Officials, and Labor Relations personnel

These courses will be piloted at the AFGE Human Rights Training Conference in the Portland Oregon Hilton from October 16th through 18th. The cost is \$100 and includes these two courses (1 day each) and an open forum on LMR issues held on the last 1/2 day.

Once the pilots have been completed and the courses refined, the intent is that they will be rolled out to sites on an as-needed basis and as determined by the VA/AFGE Training Council.

For additional information, contacts are:

Caren Eirkson, (202) 273-5218 for NCA
Bonnie Kerber, (760) 643-2057 for VHA
Jennifer Long, (202) 273-7320 for VBA
Jim Dunphy, (202) 565-9997 for AFGE
Robyn Hanna, (202) 273-9749 for Central Office

Tropical Storm Isadore Cuts VA Training Short

OHRM employees Richard Davis and Jim Halliday of the Compensation and Classification Division facilitated a training session on Position Classification at the VARO, Jackson, Mississippi, September 23 - 25. The scheduled 4-1/2 day course was cut short, due to the arrival of Tropical Storm Isadore on the Gulf Coast.

Because the course was shortened, the students were willing to work longer each day so that most of the course material was covered. In attendance were 31 Human Resources Specialists from across VISN 16.

VA Central Office and other classification programs nationwide are in desperate need of classifiers, as this occupation has been showing a rapid decrease of occupants. The training of these 31 HR Specialists and a previous session in which 29 HR Specialists were trained in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is a positive step toward addressing this issue.

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



Come join us as we
 "Grab our tools and learn the rules"

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

Title 38 Personnel Management Series

OHRM is pleased to announce the launching of the Title 38 Web Course, developed through a collaborative effort between the Employee Education System, the Office of Human Resource Management, VHA Management Support, and field facilities.

The course offers a series of six curricula with 20 courses designed to help HR Specialists enhance and develop their knowledge and skills regarding the principles, rules, and regulations governing the Title 38 System. In addition, it will assist with day-to-day operational challenges and enable HR Specialists to consult with management officials about how to effectively utilize the provisions of the Title 38 system in making appropriate HR decisions.

Employees may now log on to take two courses in the Fundamentals of Title 38 Personnel Management curricula: History and Background and Key Attributes. Additional courses are currently under development and will be posted as soon as they are completed. Participants can access the course through the OHRM web page and the EES web site at <http://vaww.ess.lrn.va.gov>. Once logged on, the participants will be able to enter the virtual world of Central City VA Medical Center. Here they will become familiar with the medical center and meet the executive team. The novice HR Specialist is introduced to the fundamentals of each area of Title 38 as they study with Chris Poplar, (fictional) HR Intern. Chris and participants will learn how to research rules, regulations and VA policies and will assume Chris's role to complete a number of activities that demonstrate what they have learned.

More experienced HR specialists will be able to be mentored by Senior HR Specialists Brian Lighthorse, Alan Bills, Larry Chang and Mary Alan Blake as they focus on skills development. Senior HR Specialists will solve advanced problems with Mark McBride, HR Director, and his staff of HR Specialists.

Special thanks to the following faculty members who developed these courses:

Office of Human Resources Management, HQ— Larry Ables, Richard Watkins, Alan Beale

VHA Management Support, HQ— Robert Swanson, Brian McVeigh

Labor Management Relations, HQ - John Haltigan

Field Facilities—Dan Flynn, Los Angeles, CA, Phyllis Isiminger, Memphis, TN, Jeffrey Kleiner, Biloxi, MS, Debra Walthall, Denver, CO

For more information on this series, contact Marianne Gray (202) 273-97459

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 November 13, December 11 and January 8.

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

A Day of Remembrance





Greeting Seasons!

As autumn, winter, and the holiday seasons approach, here are a few seasonal facts, suggestions and "did you know's" that you may find useful. Seasons Greetings!

1. Holidays — Columbus Day, Oct. 14; Veterans Day, Nov. 11; Thanksgiving, Nov. 28; Christmas, Dec. 25
2. Other Dates to remember — New Fiscal Year, Oct. 1; Election Day, Nov. 5; Daylight Saving Time Ends, Oct. 27
3. The first U.S. Thanksgiving was held in 1621 in Massachusetts.
4. Did you know that Thanksgiving was held twice in the year 1815?
5. Now would be a good time to request and plan your holiday leave schedules!
6. Start making plans for any "Use or Lose" annual leave.
7. You cannot carry more than 240 hours of annual leave into the next calendar year.



8. The new fiscal year begins Oct. 1 of each calendar year.
9. Fiscal year is defined as the 12 month period for which an organization plans the use of its funds.
10. Columbus landed in America on Oct. 12, 1492.
11. Did you know that John Hanson was the first U.S. President? He was unanimously chosen under the Articles of Federation and served from 1781-1782.
12. George Washington was the first U.S. President under the U.S. Constitution and served from 1789-1797.
13. Start thinking about any New Year's resolutions.
14. A good way to remember which way to move your clock for Daylight Saving Time is to say "You Spring forward, but Fall backwards." Therefore, since it will be Autumn, you will set your clock back one hour.
15. Did you know that Daylight Saving Time is also called "Summer Time"? It is a way of getting more out of the summer days by advancing the clocks by one hour during the summer. Then, the sun will appear to rise one hour later in the morning when people are usually asleep anyway, at the benefit of one hour longer evenings when awake.

16. **REMINDER** - Daylight Saving Time is also a good reminder to change the battery in your smoke detectors.
17. And YES!, it is Daylight Saving Time, not Daylight Savings Time! *Saving* is used here as a verbal adjective (a participle). It modifies *time* and tells us more about its nature; namely, that it is characterized by the activity of saving daylight. It is a *saving daylight* kind of time. Since *saving* is a verb describing a single type of activity, the form is singular. Nevertheless, many people feel the word *savings* (with an 's') flows more melliflously off the tongue, and *Daylight Savings Time* is also in common usage, and can be found in dictionaries.



Are you Emergency Prepared?

When it comes to Emergency Preparedness, it's always better to be proactive than reactive. Fire Prevention Week was October 6-12, 2002. This is a good time to get with family, friends, neighbors and fellow employees to develop emergency plans, to be prepared to prevent, control and respond to home and work-place fires and other emergencies.

If you have small children, this is a good time to educate them on the basics, i.e., "stop, drop and roll" procedures, how and when to dial 911, what information to give dispatchers, memorizing important family members' telephone numbers and their own address. Even if you've taught them in the past, make sure they haven't forgotten it. Don't assume they know this information.



We are normally used to evacuating during an emergency, we neglect to plan and practice procedures for shelter-in-place. Some examples where you would need to seek shelter indoors would be during a tornado, hurricane, chemical or biological threat.

Take the time to sit down, plan, and most of all practice the emergency plan you develop for your family. It will be time well spent and something that you and your family can feel more secure with having. Also, with Daylight Saving Time approaching, this is a good time to check the battery in your smoke detectors.

Free material is available for download from the National Fire Protection Association Web site at <http://www.nfpa.org/Education/fpwhome/fpwhome.asp>. The sample planning materials can be used for a public safety campaign designed to keep our children, families and friends safe from fire. You can also contact your local fire department for more information.

We are always looking for quotes to use in the "Quote of the Month" section of HR Highlights. If you have a quote that would be suitable for inclusion in this newsletter, please send it to

Highlights@mail.va.gov

Criteria: Quote needs to be positive, work oriented and/or motivational. You must also have the original author's name.

You will receive credit for submitting the quote.



Office of Human Resources Management

Mission: To provide exceptional support through human resources management practices and programs that enable the Department of Veterans Affairs to attract, develop, and retain people who provide high quality service to our Nation's veterans and their families.

Vision: To help the Department be an employer of choice through advocacy and support of excellence by promoting best practices, working with customers and stakeholders to create innovative programs; understanding customer needs and exceeding expectations; and supporting the empowerment of and investment in our employees.

The Right Answer!

The Right Solution!

The Right Way!

HR HIGHLIGHTS

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Ventris C. Gibson
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Editor
James A. Davis

Technical Editing
Carol Larsen and Jean Hayes

CONTACT US:
Department of Veterans
Affairs
Office of HRM (05)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420
(202) 273-4920

E-mail

Highlights@mail.va.gov

<http://vawww.va.gov/ohrm/>



This month's Fun Corner involves **TRIVIA** questions about VA. Rate yourself on how well you know your Department's history. Correct answers are 10 points each.

The Fun Corner!



1. Who was the first Administrator of VA?
2. Where was the Washington, DC, VA Regional Office, which is now located on I Street, NW, located before moving to Vermont Avenue, NW?
3. How many VISNs are there?
4. Where is the oldest VA medical facility located?
5. When was VA established?
6. What year did the Veterans Administration get its name changed to the Department of Veterans Affairs?
7. Who said "There is only one place for the veterans of America, in the Cabinet Room..."?
8. Who said "...to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan..."?
9. You've heard of a VISN, but what's a MSN?
10. Of the White House, U.S. Capitol and Pentagon, which is the closest to VA Central Office?

Answers can be found at the bottom of this page.

Comings and Goings

Welcome back to **Janice Lucas**, who rejoins the OHRM staff part-time after an extensive convalescence and **Tershira Yeager**, OHRM, Executive Resources Staff, who previously gave birth.

Best wishes and farewell to: Kenneth Quantock, Ruby Miller, Joyce Hunter, Janiel Bryant, Jessica Lewis, Ashli Evans, Elizabeth Larson, Sharia Barksdale, Cornelius McFadden, Abdulah Wright, Tara Parker, Shylan Scott and LaTasha Douglas.

Our sincerest wishes for a speedy and full recovery are extended to OHRM employee's Janice Lucas and Leona Efird. They have both been approved for the Leave Donor Program.



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