



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
Veterans Health Administration
Washington DC 20420

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UNDER SECRETARY FOR HEALTH'S INFORMATION LETTER

**JIMMY LEE AWARD PROGRAM FOR INNOVATION
IN HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT**

1. The Veterans Health Administration (VHA) Human Resources Management (HRM) Innovation Awards Program is a competition developed to honor innovative programs and practices that most clearly support the goals of the organization and reflect the standards, values and heart-felt dedication provided by the late Jimmy Lee.
2. A United States Army veteran, Jimmy Lee served tours of duty in both Korea and Vietnam and was awarded a Purple Heart. He joined the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) in 1972 and served as a Personnel Management Specialist at the VA Medical Centers in Washington, DC, Houston, TX, and Miami, FL. Mr. Lee also served as the Personnel Officer at the VA Medical Centers in Richmond, VA, and Portland, OR, before establishing the VHA HRM Office in November 1999 and becoming its first Director.
3. Mr. Lee was an innovative and imaginative manager with a passion for providing only the best in customer service. His commitment to assisting VHA managers and employees is embodied in his frequently quoted comment, "We don't have problems, we have solutions," which has become the operating principle and motto of the VHA HRM Group. This can-do attitude is Mr. Lee's legacy to the Department's HRM community.
4. In the last Innovations competition, two recipients shared the spotlight honoring teams. The individual category included a recipient and an honorable mention.
 - a. **Team Category.** The Wellness Initiative, at Central Arkansas Veterans Healthcare System, Little Rock, AR, is a collaborative program between Human Resources Management Service (HRMS), Employee Relations Section, the Office of Workmen's Compensation Program (OWCP), and the Employee Health Unit. A high level of communication and cooperation between these groups ensures that personal health and wellness and occupational safety are a carefully planned high priority. This program has yielded remarkable levels of workplace safety, containment of OWCP expenditures, and significant benefits for individual employees' health. The Wellness Initiative has received national attention through scholarly presentations and publications (Mayo Clinic, Kellogg Foundation, etc.).

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b. **Team Category.** The One-VA Learning Resources Center, VA Medical and Regional Office Center (VAMROC), Honolulu, HI, provides exceptional value-added support through practices and programs that attract, develop and retain people who provide quality services to veterans, their families, and to each other. This award winner is focused on the High Performance Development Model and, as such, provides management and leadership development; it coordinates the Mentoring Program, Wellness Program, Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation Program, Workplace Violence Prevention, Prevention and Management of Disturbed Behavior, New Employee Orientation, Incentive Scholarship and Tuition Reimbursement Programs, and much more.

c. **Individual Category Recipient.** Franchise Human Resources (HR) Services Program. Mr. Rafael Martinez, Human Resources Officer, Carl T. Hayden VA Medical Center, Phoenix, AZ, was deeply concerned of the impact that budget cuts would have on the level of services provided by his office to the medical center. In response, Mr. Martinez developed a program to franchise personnel management services for an agreed upon price to the Western Area Power Administration, a component of the Department of Energy. This initiative provided an additional source of funds for the medical center that allowed the HR Office to hire additional staff. As a result, the impact of budget constraints was reduced, no reductions in staff took place in the HR Office, and the HR Office was able to continue its high level of service to meet the needs of the medical center.

d. **Individual Category Honorable Mention.** Paperless Personnel and Accounting Integrated Data (PAID) Follow-up Process. Ms. Elizabeth Stenerson, VA Boston Healthcare System, Brockton, MA, is responsible for Employment Programs and the Processing and Records function of the Human Resources Management Service, which supports a complex organization consisting of three divisions, six outpatient clinics, and approximately 3400 employees. Ms. Stenerson developed a paperless PAID follow-up process to notify medical center organizations of personnel follow-up items. Tasks such as 90-day placement follow-ups, within grade increases, proficiency reports and probationary reviews that required four processing clerks 12 hours a month can now be done accurately and systematically in an hour or 2 per month by one individual.

e. The four winning nominations may be viewed at the HRM Advisory Group website: http://vaww.vhaco.va.gov/humanres/VHA_HRMAG.htm.

5. Criteria to be considered in competing for this year's award include, but are not limited to, the following:

- a. Innovative use of HR flexibilities.
- b. Linking awards and recognition to the accomplishment of organizational goals and customer service improvements.
- c. Use of technology in HR operations.
- d. Encouraging a culture of teamwork.

- e. Creating a stimulating, safe and appealing work environment.
 - f. Efforts to achieve diversity and equal employment opportunity within the workforce.
 - g. Ensuring the availability of necessary HRM tools.
 - h. Workforce and succession planning.
 - i. Improvements in recruitment and/or retention processes and practices, such as recruitment and retention for scarce occupations.
 - j. Being a learning organization.
 - k. Streamlining of HR procedures.
 - l. Innovative approaches to labor-management relations.
6. A subcommittee consisting of three or four Human Resources Management Advisory Group (HRMAG) members reviews all nominations and recommends recipients to the Under Secretary for Health. Nominations are to be no longer than three typed pages. Supporting material, such as brochures, videos, training documents, etc., that complement the narrative portion of the nomination is encouraged.
7. Individual and team nominations from field facilities are welcomed, and facilities may submit more than one nomination. Teams may be comprised of employees from within one office, from across organizational lines within a facility, from within multiple facilities, and so on. Award recipients must be Federal employees. Notable nominations will be asked to share their submission on the Virtual Learning Center at website <http://vaww.va.gov/vlc.htm> to be publicized for potential adoption by other facilities.
8. The recipient selected for the "individual" category will receive a plaque and a cash award of up to \$5,000. The winning team will receive a plaque and group cash award of up to \$15,000, and each member of the team will receive a framed certificate. Monetary award amounts are determined based on an assessment of the scope and/or value of the innovation. **NOTE:** *The subcommittee may also select additional recipients for honorable mention to be awarded certificates only.*
9. Nominations are to identify a program or practice that was implemented within the past 2 years and has accomplishments that can be documented. The first page of all nominations is to contain the following:
- a. The category for which the nomination is being submitted: Individual or Team.
 - b. Name, title, business address, telephone number, and fax number of all nominees.
 - c. Nominator's name, title, business address, e-mail address, telephone number, and fax number.

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d. A detailed description of the innovative practice or practices.

e. A description of the issue or problem being addressed, along with information on how the approach was developed, how efforts resulted in improvements in customer service, savings or cost avoidance, and any other appropriate information.

10. Nominations are to have the endorsement of the medical center Director and the Network Director.

11. All nominations are due by September 12, 2003. An electronic copy of the nomination is to be e-mailed to dot.brady@hq.med.va.gov, and an original and three copies of the nomination and any supporting materials are to be mailed to VA Central Office, Management Support Office (10A2A), Attention Dot Brady, 810 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20420.

12. For additional information, contact Dot Brady at 202-273-8873, dot.brady@hq.med.va.gov or Mary Cieplak at 202-273-8875, mary.cieplak@hq.med.va.gov.

Robert H. Roswell, M.D.
Under Secretary for Health

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