

MEDLEY

- a potpourri of diverse talent

April 2020

Diversity & Inclusion in the MWA

Submitted by: Vicki Finkenstadt

Vision Statement

To create a diverse workforce and promote a positive work environment where all employees are respected and valued for their contributions.

USDA-ARS Midwest Area Diversity and Equal Opportunity Council (DEOC) members:

Kelli Adkins, Chair, Lexington & Bowling Green, KY

John Prueger, Co-Chair, Ames, IA

John Baker, St. Paul, MN

Vacant, Peoria, IL

Karen Cichy, East Lansing, MI

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Bruce Hibbard, Columbia, MO

Leona Horst, Wooster, OH

Christina Olshawsky, AFM, Peoria, IL

Chris Wente, Morris, MN

Paul Scott, Employee Engagement Council

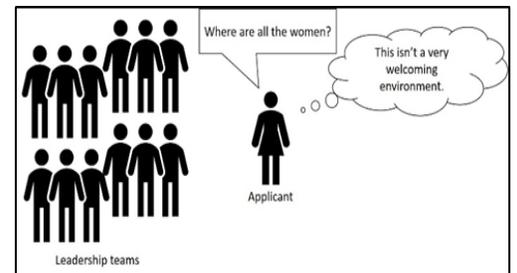
Sherri Buxton, Peoria, IL, Employee Engagement Council and MWA Office Advisor

The Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) Opportunities Act of 2019 authorizes programs and activities that engage the entire “talent pool” in order to educate and train more scientists and engineers to ensure the nation’s economic and scientific leadership and global competitiveness. Federal science agencies and national laboratories have been tasked with raising awareness and addressing barriers limiting the recruitment, retention, and promotion of women and historically underrepresented groups in government STEM research careers. This includes training to reduce implicit bias and sharing best practices to reduce barriers for groups historically underrepresented in STEM fields.

Barriers to diversity and inclusion in the agricultural enterprise include gender and gender roles, geographical locations, ethnicity, cultural norms, socio-economic status, institutional implicit bias, and the lack of opportunities and role models [1]. A US Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found that retention of female and black workers in STEM fields lagged significantly behind their male and non-black/non-Hispanic colleagues*. This is true in the civilian population as well where white and Asian males dominate (84%) the STEM fields [2].

While the U.S. Department of Education and the National Science Foundation (NSF) report that STEM graduates have increased over the last 30 years, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (Occupational Employment Statistics and Employment Projections 2018) predicts a shortfall in qualified employees for STEM jobs in the next 10 years. According to the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics at the NSF†, using data from 2017, women earn 37% of all STEM bachelor’s and doctorate degrees, and underrepresented groups earn 18% and 12% of STEM bachelor’s and doctorate degrees, respectively.

Female students and students from underrepresented minority groups who see few others “like themselves” among educational and employer populations often do not experience the social integration that is necessary for success in all disciplines, including STEM [3].



How are we doing?

The MWA workforce, while improving diversity and inclusion through the years, still falls short of its Civilian Labor Force (CLF) and EEOC goals. ARS uses Management Directive 715 (MD-715) which provides a roadmap comprised of six elements for creating effective equal employment opportunity (EEO) programs for all Federal employees. It provides current demographic data to identify challenge areas. The first Table shows the ethnicity breakdown for employees of the Midwest Area, the civilian population of the

* Action Needed to Ensure Workforce Diversity Strategic Goals Are Achieved. GAO-18-545: Aug 10, 2018.

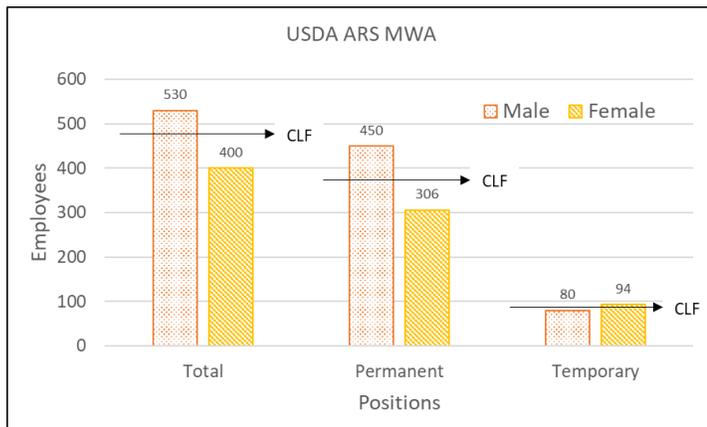
† Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering <https://nces.nsf.gov/pubs/nsf19304/>

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US Midwest Region, and the CLF goal for representation in the MWA. It is clear that the MWA needs to improve its recruitment and retention of underrepresented groups in its workforce. MWA faces unique challenges in that the CLF target is larger than the population demographics for the Midwest; however, many of our people are “transplants” from other areas of the country. The second graphic shows the total breakdown from the 2018 MD-715 for male and female employees in the Midwest with the CLF marked.

Ethnicity/Race Demographic					
	Hispanic	White	Black	Asian	Native
Midwest Area (IA, IL, IN, KY, MI, MN, MO, OH, & WI)	1.4	88.4	2.4	6.4	0.7
Midwest Region (KS, ND, NE, & SD)	7.3	76.6	10.4	2.9	2.8
Civilian Labor Force	9.9	72.4	12.0	3.9	1.8

Source: 2018 MWA MD715, US Census 2018
 percentiles may not equal 100%



Midwest Area Diversity & Inclusion Goals[‡]

- Goal: Create a MWA workforce more reflective of the CLF.
Barrier: Lack of diversity in applicant pools.
- Goal: Increase visibility and desirability of ARS as a career destination.
Barrier: Ag research is not recognized as a career option, or not viewed as desirable work, by some under-represented groups.
- Goal: Use existing mechanisms to increase MWA workforce diversity.
Barrier: Low use of direct hire authorities.
- Goal: Create a more inclusive work environment.
Barrier: Workplace engagement and support of diversity.

What can we do as individuals or groups to empower these goals?

Self-reflection

Change starts with me. Culture is a set of shared world views, meanings and behaviors that are derived from membership and participation in a group. We all have attitudes and beliefs that influence our perceptions of and interaction with individuals that are different from ourselves. Our identity is multi-dimensional, dynamic, connected to our environment, and defined by context. The key to change is self-awareness. ARS provides training on diversity, self-awareness, and EEO through AgLearn from USDA, SkillSoft and LinkedUp Learning. Individuals or groups can take advantage of this resource to host brown-bag lunches or Unit meetings that feature one of the free webinars.

Find and recruit a more diverse candidate pool

Much more than USAJOBS. Yes, ARS publishes position vacancies at the national level through USAJOBS; however, this is passive behavior. Achieving a diverse, qualified workforce, targeted actions are needed in a proactive manner. We can use our personal and

[‡]MWA Workforce Diversity Plan 2018 <https://www.ars.usda.gov/midwest-area/docs/mwa-workforce-diversity-plan/>

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professional networks to reach a larger talent pool especially at institutions of areas where underrepresented groups live, work, and study. This initiative ensures that a broad candidate pool is reached and minorities are made aware of career opportunities, including student programs within Agricultural Research Service and the USDA. ARS has many different hiring programs designed to attract and retain a qualified, diverse workforce from students to professionals.

Share our enthusiasm with others

Outreach. Almost all locations within the MWA have a robust outreach program to provide community education and information for myriad of agricultural research STEM topics. In addition to science and career related events, individuals and groups could contribute to local media news and newsletters featuring timely and topical research impacts for the location or highlighting a research team's people and research. This builds awareness of the importance of STEM opportunities in our own backyards.

Empower and engage others

Role models. Nothing is more powerful than seeing someone act on their beliefs. We all have the capability to act on those ideals we consider important. We also have the capacity to change our beliefs, attitudes, and behavior. It could be mentoring a student during a job shadow or coaching a hesitant colleague to reach out or participate in an event.

Leverage our resources for success

I'm OK. You're OK. We have the knowledge. We have the tools. We have the people. We have the purpose. We have the desire. We can make a difference.

References

- [1] Hagedorn, L. S., Purnamasari, A. V., A realistic look at STEM and the role of community colleges. *Community College Review* 2012, 40, 145-164.
- [2] Baber, L. D., Chapman, R., Cox, M. F., Madden, K., et al., *Diversifying STEM: Multidisciplinary Perspectives on Race and Gender*, Rutgers University Press 2019.
- [3] Harris, C. M., Quitting Science: Factors that Influence Exit from the STEM Workforce. *Journal of Women and Minorities in Science and Engineering* 2019, 25.

Twin Cities Regional Science Fair

On February 28, 2020, the 82nd Annual Twin Cities Regional Science Fair (TCRSF) was held in the Warner Coliseum on the Minnesota State Fairgrounds. Members of the Plant Science Research Unit (Debby Samac, Josh Gamble, Ted Jeo) and Cereal Disease Lab (Keshav Sharma and Jacki Morrison) from the St. Paul location awarded ARS Certificates of Appreciation to the best projects in the area of plant science and environmental science. Anggelo Mendoza Fierro (6th grade) had an outstanding project "Rainbow Flowers" on the effect of different wavelengths of light on plant growth. Matthew Beekman's (7th grade) project "Tomayto Tamahto" investigated differences in traditional and vertical farming with cherry tomatoes. Halina Tompkin's (7th grade) project "How does the amount of fertilizer affect the growth of little bluestem?" showed excellent use of the scientific method. Advanced use of bioinformatics was exhibited in Hanna Schneider's (11th grade) project "The effects of deforestation on soil microbial communities." Showing great enthusiasm for research was Tania Acevedo Garcia's (12th grade) project on "Lodging characteristics in small grains." The level of scientific excellence and enthusiasm from all the young scientists was very inspiring! ARS scientists from St. Paul have awarded certificates at the TCRSC annually since 1992.



Meet Dr. Michael Flythe, Research Leader, Lexington, KY



Michael Flythe was recently hired as the Research Leader of the Forage-Animal Production Research Unit in Lexington, Kentucky. He has been a USDA-ARS research scientist for 14 years with a combined total of more than 18 years of federal service. He is a rumen and gastrointestinal microbiologist who collaborates with scientists in other fields to understand the impacts of forage plants on the animals which they support.

Q: Tell us about your career journey and what brought you to USDA.

I enlisted in the Marine Corps out of high school, and served as an infantryman and in security-related positions. It was a natural choice for me. My dad was a Marine and most of my family were military and defense contractors, naval ship builders. My duty stations included the Republic of Panama and a deployment aboard the USS Nashville. I served in the Marine Corps reserves during college. My associate's degree came from the community college in my hometown, Hampton, Virginia. The Hampton Roads area is a military community, so I was surrounded by service members and veterans, people like me. However, I decided to get out of my comfort zone for the bachelor's degree. I attended a small, private liberal arts school, Bridgewater College, in Virginia's Shenandoah Valley. Bridgewater is affiliated with the Church of the Brethren, which came out of the Anabaptist movement, like the Mennonites. They are pacifists. It was a great opportunity to learn and live with people who did not see the world as I did. I was first exposed to microbiology at Bridgewater and got hooked on research.

I went to Cornell University in Ithaca, New York to pursue a Ph.D. in microbiology. There were many amazing research opportunities at Cornell, but the professor I connected with the best was a rumen microbiologist. His name was Dr. Jim Russell, a Supergrade SY who was located at the Plant, Soil and Nutrition Lab (now called the Robert Holley Center) at Cornell but affiliated with the US Dairy Forage Research Center. Jim became my graduate advisor and influenced me more than any other mentor. He introduced me to agriculture and the type of science that became my life's work. Jim convinced me that a career with USDA-ARS was a good choice.

Q: How do you think USDA could improve in regards to hiring veterans?

The most important thing any organization can do for veterans is recognizing them as a distinct group, a sub-culture. Acknowledging diversity is the first step in avoiding counter-productive or harmful assumptions about people. Many veterans experience something akin to culture shock when they first enter the civilian workforce. Norms, expectations, communication and many aspects of relationships are very different. When we are acknowledged as a distinct group that is welcomed as part of the organization, then we are more at ease talking about our differences and the challenges we might be having.

The difficulty veterans find fitting into a civilian workplace is compounded when they suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and other medical conditions from trauma. Our lab is adjacent to the VA hospital in Lexington. After meeting a young veteran with traumatic brain injury and PTSD, I started wearing articles of clothing that identified me as a vet. I felt comfortable self-identifying as a veteran in the workplace because USDA-ARS welcomes vets. I want veterans going to the hospital to feel like they are surrounded by friendlies and comfortable to ask for help. Interactions with other veterans has improved my ability to articulate my own post-traumatic stress and made me aware of how pervasive it is veterans and civilians alike.

Q: In your opinion, what personal attributes must one possess to excel in USDA-ARS as a scientist?

A person who pursues a career as a researcher has to have a certain level of curiosity and self-motivation. One needs those attributes to be a scientific researcher in any organization. USDA-ARS differs from academic or industry workplaces in terms of our size and geographic separation. These latter factors make it essential to have patience and a willingness to listen to people. Even before the corona virus response, we had to work with many offices and people remotely. The challenge of remote relationship-building compounds the universal problem of everyone thinking that everyone else's job is easier than their own. Patience and attentiveness will serve you well whether you are working with office staff, other scientists or stakeholders.

Q: What advice would you give a new scientist for managing a research program?

Make friends with the people who practice the type of agriculture to which your research applies. We researchers are hyper-focused by nature. Even if you were born in a farming family, you could put your nose into a problem and not come up for air until it is time to write your first RPES case. However, there is tremendous value in getting to know your farmers. Connect with the stakeholder-savvy SYs and university extension personnel who can introduce you to the forward-thinking farmers who value research. They have a wealth of knowledge and they are great people. If you are fortunate enough to catch both the research-bug and the agriculture-bug, then you will never find yourself wondering why you chose this career.

Q: In your personal life, what do you do to 'recharge' yourself from the constant demands of your administrative responsibilities?

I live with my wife, Iris Gonzalez-Flythe, and our two sons on a little farm outside of Lexington. We raise goats, keep laying hens and garden. We like outdoor activities, such as hiking, marksmanship and hunting. We are avid readers and game-players, too.

Meet the Newest DEOC Members and the MWA Equal Employment Program Manager



John Baker is a Research Soil Scientist, Research Leader of the Soil & Water Management Unit, and Location Coordinator for St. Paul, MN. His training is in micrometeorology and soil physics, and his current research interests include carbon balance, greenhouse gas emissions, and water quality impacts in agricultural systems.



Chris Wente is an Agricultural Research Technician at the North Central Soil Conservation Research Lab in Morris, MN. He started his career with ARS as a student worker in 1991. He is currently involved with the LTAR project and is responsible for operating there eddy covariance systems. During his free time, he enjoys fishing with friends and family.



Christopher M. Sacchetti joined USDA ARS in January 2020 as an Equal Employment Specialist. Christopher was previously an Equal Employment Specialist with the Office of Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI) at Fort Meade, Maryland. His duties included developing Employee Resource Groups (ERGs). Christopher looks forward to working for USDA ARS in Peoria, Illinois.

EEO Observations and Discussions at the USDA-ARS National Soil Erosion Research Lab

Submitted by Dr. Chi-hua Huang

Dr. Huang has implemented a ‘Civil Rights Moment’ as an agenda item at the Unit’s monthly staff meeting. He has asked the staff to voluntarily choose a CR/EEO topic and either make a presentation or lead a discussion. Dr. Huang has seen the benefits of these staff initiated and led discussions from the meeting the Unit has had. Simply, people are more open to talk as compared to having an invited speaker or watching videos.

Here are the list of topics that have been presented and discussed: History of Affirmative Action in Education; MLK Day: A Day on Not a Day Off; Cultural Stereotyping; Irish Immigration to the United States and Irish-Americans; Western New York American Indian Reservations (November is National American Indian Heritage Month); Unconscious Bias.

USDA-ARS FY 2020 Diversity/Special Emphasis Observances Calendar

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday (January 20, 2020)
National African American History Month (February)
Women’s History Month (March)
Days of Remembrance & Holocaust Remembrance Day (April)
Take our Daughters/Sons to Work Day (April 23, 2020)
Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month (May)
Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual & Transgender Pride Month (June)
Women’s Equality Day (August 26, 2020)
Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15th to October 15th)
National Disability Employment Awareness Month (October)
Veterans Day (November 11, 2020)
Native American Indian Heritage Month (November)

We’d love to highlight your Outreach event or share your story.

Contributions can be sent to your location ODEO representative listed on the front page below the vision statement.

Days of Remembrance and Holocaust Remembrance Day

Submitted by: Christopher M. Sacchetti

“Let us not forget, after all, there is always a moment when moral choice is made.. And so we must know these good people who helped Jews during the Holocaust. We must learn from them, and in gratitude and hope, we must remember them.” - Elie Wiesel (Survivor of the Auschwitz, Bina, Buchenwald, and Gleiwitz concentration camps)

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) leads the nation in commemorating Days of Remembrance and Holocaust Remembrance Day. Days of Remembrance was established by the U.S. Congress to memorialize six million Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust as well as millions of non-Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

The internationally recognized date for Holocaust Remembrance Day corresponds to the 27th day of Nisan on the Hebrew calendar and marks the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. In Hebrew, Holocaust Remembrance Day is called Yom Hashoah. When the actual date of Yom Hashoah falls on Friday, the state of Israel observes Yom Hashoah on the preceding Thursday. When it falls on a Sunday, Yom Hashoah is observed on the following Monday. In the United States, Days of Remembrance runs from the Sunday before Yom Hashoah through the following Sunday.

Holocaust is a Greek word meaning “sacrifice by fire”. In January 1933, the Nazis came to power in Germany and believed that the Germans were “racially superior” and that the Jews, who were deemed “inferior”, were an alien threat to the German racial community. Millions of ordinary people witnessed the crimes of the Holocaust as Nazis found countless allies across Europe who willingly collaborated with and were complicit to crimes through inaction.

German authorities also targeted Slavic people (the Polish, the Russians, and others), people with disabilities, and Roma (also known as Gypsies) due to perceived racial and biological inferiorities. In turn, other groups, such as Communists, Socialists, Jehovah’s witnesses, African-Americans, and homosexuals were persecuted on political, ideological, and behavioral grounds. The week of Remembrance honors and remembers the victims of the Holocaust and their liberators.

To anti-Semitic Nazi leader Adolf Hitler, the Jews were an inferior race as well as an alien threat to German racial purity and community. The Holocaust was a persecution and murder of six million European Jews and millions of non-Jewish victims of Nazi persecution.

Between 1933 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its allies established more than 42,000 camps and incarceration sites (including ghettos). Within Nazi camps, millions were abused and imprisoned. A small percentage of those imprisoned in Nazi camps survived.

Within Concentration prison camps, common criminals wore green. Asocials (which included Roma (Gypsies), vagrants, and nonconformists) wore black triangles. Roma (Gypsies) in some camps wore brown triangles. Homosexuals wore pink triangles while Jehovah’s Witnesses wore purple triangles. The two triangles forming the Jewish star badge would be yellow unless Jewish prisoners were included in one of the other prison categories. A Jewish political prisoner was identified with a yellow triangle beneath a red triangle.

Days of Remembrance, as well as the Holocaust itself, raises awareness to the fact that democratic institutions are not merely sustained but ought to be appreciated, protected, and nurtured. Racism, prejudice, and stereotyping can still be found throughout the world including within the United States. The goal of observing Holocaust Memorial Day is to recognize that apathy and silence to human suffering and the infringement of civil rights in any society can perpetuate systemic societal atrocities and problems.



Sexual Assault Awareness & Prevention (SAAPM) Month Statement

Submitted by: Christopher M. Sacchetti



The United States Department of Agriculture's goal is to achieve a culture free of sexual assault, through an environment of prevention, education and training, response capability, victim support, reporting procedures, and appropriate accountability that enhances the safety and well-being of all persons covered by the directive. The month of April has been designated as Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month (SAAPM) and is recognized across the country by both civilian and military communities. SAAPM offers an opportunity to build on existing momentum to fight sexual assault and ensure all federal civilian employees, contractors, and service members are treated with dignity and respect.

Sexual assault is defined as intentional sexual conduct characterized by force, threats, intimidation, or abuse of authority, or when the victim does not or cannot consent. Sexual assault can occur without regard to age, relationship, or gender of the victim. There is a strong connection between sexual harassment, gender discrimination, and sexual assault.

Core professional values, which include integrity, trust, dignity, respect, fidelity, and courage, are all necessary to eliminate sexual assault. In preventing and responding to sexual assault, it is important to remain vigilant for situations at risk, understand how to safely intervene, and understand how to safely stop risky situations. It is on us, as federal civil servants, coworkers, mentors, and leaders to stop sexual assault. It is important to consider the many ways we can intervene. Sometimes an indirect approach is the best recourse. If something looks like it might be a bad situation, it probably is a bad situation.

USDA-ARS employees should promote a healthy environment by committing to actions that prevent inappropriate behavior and sexual assault. A challenge in eliminating sexual assault is the underreporting of the crime. This affects the ability to provide victim care as well as hinders the prosecution of offenders. Research indicates that as sexual assault victims receive care, a confidence in a system builds, which increases the likelihood that victims of sexual assault will contact law enforcement.

While rates of unwanted sexual contact are higher for women than men, surveys indicate that thousands of men are victimized every year. Sexual assault is indeed a gender-neutral crime.

June Is Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month

Submitted by: Christopher M. Sacchetti

"All I Can Say Is From the Long View, 50 years, we have moved ahead in a way that would have been absolutely unimaginable back then." (Doctor Frank E. Kameny)

The struggles, sacrifices, and successes among the LGBT community continue to shape our history and remind us to uphold tolerance and justice for all. During June of 1969, patrons and supporters of the Stonewall Inn in New York City staged an uprising to resist the police harassment and persecution to which LGBT Americans were commonly subjected. This uprising prompted the beginning of a movement to outlaw discriminatory laws and practice against the LGBT community. Yet, the struggle for civil rights within the LGBT community for many began a decade before the Stonewall riots as both Private Donald Hallman and Doctor Frank E. Kameny fought for gay rights.

Private Hallman became a clerk for Army intelligence in Frankfurt, West Germany after joining the United States Army. He had been rated excellent in reviews and was recommended for a good-conduct medal. Subsequently, however, Private Hallman was propositioned by a young man and caught in a military sting. In 1955, the Army discharged him for being a "Class II homosexual". It was not until 2016, after an application process to the DoD, that his decades-old discharge would be upgraded to "honorable" by the United States Army.

In July 1957, Doctor Kameny, after teaching briefly at Georgetown University, obtained a civil service job as an astronomer with the U.S. Army Map Service. It was soon afterward that an investigator from the United States Civil Service Commission began questioning him about reports that he was a homosexual. Kameny was promptly terminated from federal employment.

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Doctor Kameny was not the only one. Tens of thousands of employees were forced out of their jobs throughout the 1950s and 1960s. Kameny decided to sue and lost. He appealed and lost again. He brought the first civil rights action regarding sexual orientation to the Supreme Court of the United States, contending that the United States government's actions toward homosexuals was "an affront to human dignity". The United States Supreme Court denied his petition. He persevered and fought for civil rights for another eighteen years. The United States Civil Service Commission finally reversed its policies excluding homosexuals from government employment.

In 1995, President William Jefferson Clinton signed Executive Order 12968 allowed gay federal employees to obtain security clearances. In 1998, President Clinton signed Executive Order 13087 which prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation in the competitive service of the federal civilian workforce. On June 02, 2000, President Clinton issued Proclamation Np. 7316 for the first Gay and Lesbian Pride Month.

In turn, technical Sergeant Leonard P. Matlovich was a Vietnam War veteran who voluntarily served three combat tours and later worked as a military race relations instruction. Matlovich, who earned a both a Purple Heart and the Bronze Star, was the first service member to purposely out himself to challenge the ban on homosexuals within the military. Colonel Margarethe "Gretehe" Cammermeyer, PhD/RN, on the other hand, combated unfair and unequal treatment of gays, lesbians and women within the military, military nursing divisions, and the United States Armed Forces. In 1989, responding to a question during a routine security clearance interview, Cammermeyer disclosed to her background investigator that she was a lesbian. The United States military began discharge proceedings against her. On June 11, 1992, Cammermeyer was honorably discharged. She filed a lawsuit against the decision in civil court.

On December 22, 2010, "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" was repealed and the policy officially ended on September 20, 2011. On August 28, 2014, the United States Pentagon released an update to the DoD Human Goals Charter that included language pertaining to the sexual orientation of military members. The definition of "spouse" under Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) was defined by the state law where an employee resided until February 2015 when the United States Department of Labor issued a final rule to revise the definition of spouse under the Family Medical Leave Act (FMLA) to include legally married same-sex couples regardless of where said employees lived and/or resided. In June 2015, the DoD updated its Military Equal Opportunity policy to protect Service Members against discrimination because of sexual orientation. In June 2016, the DoD announced that transgender service members can openly service and cannot be discharged or separated from the military solely on the basis of gender identity.

LGBT Pride month recognizes Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Americans and is historically conducted each year in June. This observance runs through the month of June and calls upon United States citizens to eliminate prejudice and celebrate the great diversity of the American people.



Asian-American Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month

Submitted by: Christopher M. Sacchetti

The observance of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) Heritage Month is an occasion to remember the patriotism of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who have served, or are currently serving, as federal civil servants within the United States Department of Agriculture. The U.S. Congress recognized the significance of May 7th and May 10th in the history of Asian-American Pacific Islanders. May 7, 1843 is the date the first Japanese immigrants arrived in the United States. May 10, 1843 marks the anniversary of the transcontinental railroad completion. The majority of the workers who laid the tracks of the transcontinental railroad were Chinese immigrants.

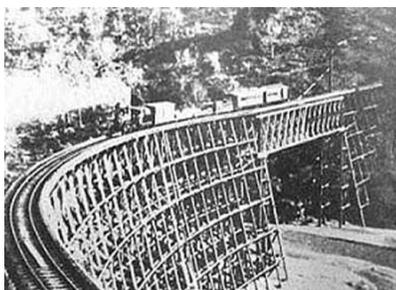
In 1977, Representatives Frank Horton and Norman Y. Mineta introduced a resolution that called upon the president to proclaim the first ten days of May as Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage week. Senators Daniel Inouye and Spark Matsunaga introduced a similar bill in the Senate the following month. On October 05, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a joint resolution designating the annual celebration of AAPI Heritage week. Since 1978, the month of May has been designated to recognize the achievements and contributions to the American story by Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. On May 07, 1990, President George H.W. Bush issued Presidential Proclamation 6130 designating May 1990 as the first “Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month”.

Thus, we take time during May each year to celebrate the cultural traditions, ancestry, native languages, and unique experiences represented among more than fifty-six ethnic groups (speaking over one-hundred languages) from Asia and the Pacific Islands who live in the United States.

M. Pei, the renowned Chinese-American architect, summarizes the diversity of Asian American Pacific Islanders very well. According to Pei, “People must realize that there are so many different cultures and experiences. We need to understand the differences and complexities of Asian-Americans and their successes and failures. The first priority for Americans is to learn more about Asia.” Thus, the Asian-Pacific Islander category is not a homogenous category. Each of the groups within it has its own distinct values. Emigrants from each nation bring with them a unique and deeply ingrained culture.

In 2012, firms owned by Asian-Americans generated \$707.6 billion in total receipts and sales, the highest total of any minority group in the United States. AAPI business owners also employed more than 3.6 million U.S. workers that year, once again a higher figure than other comparable groups. More than one on six working AAPI immigrants hold jobs in science, technology, engineering, or math (STEM) fields. Presently, thirty-three Asian American Pacific Islanders have been awarded the Medal of Honor.

The rich heritage of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders spans the world and the depths of America’s history. Generation after generation, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders have forged a proud legacy that reflects the spirit of Our Nation – a country that values the contributions of everyone who calls America home. in a system builds, which increases the likelihood that victims of sexual assault will contact law enforcement.



Women's Equality

Submitted by: Christopher M. Sacchetti

"Achieving this milestone required a lengthy and difficult struggle; victory took decades of agitation and protest. Beginning in the mid-19th century, several generations of woman suffrage supporters lectured, wrote, marched, lobbied, and practiced civil disobedience to achieve what many Americans considered a radical change of the Constitution. Few early supporters lived to see final victory in 1920." - National Archives

Each year, Women's Equality Day celebrates the passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution which guarantees all American women the right to vote 100 years ago. The Amendment changed Federal law and the face of the American electorate forever. Women won legal recognition as equal citizens under the 19th Amendment. While women in some states could already vote before 1920, women in some states - particularly those of color - were blocked from voting after ratification.

In this nation, the road toward equality for women has continued for centuries and continues today. In 1920, the Women's Bureau was established under the United States Department of Labor. The Bureau was given the power to promote the welfare of wage-earning women, improve working conditions, increase efficiency, and advance the opportunities for women to obtain profitable employment. Following many years of negotiations spearheaded by Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, the first female cabinet member in United States history, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, in 1938, signed the Fair Labor Standards Act into law which guaranteed men and women a minimum wage and overtime pay, extending basic workplace protections to all – an important step forward for the labor movement and women's equality.

In 1961, President John F. Kennedy established the President's Commission on the Status of Women to explore women's issues by appointing Eleanor Roosevelt to chair the commission. In 1963, the Equal Pay Act was passed which required all employers to pay employees equally for work regardless of sex. In 1967, President Lyndon B. Johnson's affirmative action policy to address discrimination based on sex was expanded through Executive Order 11375. In 1968, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) revised its guidelines on sex discrimination, making it very clear that the widespread practice of publishing help wanted advertisement that used male and female column headings violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

In 1971, at the request of Representative Bella Abzug, the U.S. Congress designated August 26 as "Women's Equality Day." The date was selected to celebrate the Women's Suffrage Movement's greatest victory – women achieving full voting rights following the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920. In 1972, Title IX of the Education Amendment banned sex discrimination in schools. In 1974, the Equal Credit Opportunity Act prohibited discrimination based on sex or marital status in the granting of consumer credit prompting the Federal Reserve to publish regulations to ensure enforcement.

In 1978, the Pregnancy Discrimination Act amended Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and banned employment discrimination against pregnant women. According to the Act, women cannot be forced or denied a job or promotion because she is or may become pregnant, nor can she be forced to take pregnancy leave if she is able and willing to work.

Women's Equality Day observance not only commemorates the passage of the 19th Amendment but also represents women's continuing efforts toward full equality. The August 26th date was selected to celebrate the Women's Suffrage Movement's greatest victory - women achieving full voting rights following the ratification of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution in 1920.



Special Emphasis Programs/Observances/Resources and Information

Special Emphasis Programs (SEPs) are an integral part of the overall civil rights, human resources and program delivery functions. The purpose of the SEPs is to provide oversight, guidance, direction, enforcement and assistance to enhance opportunities for women, minorities, and people with disabilities in all employment and program delivery activities.

Employment activities: Recruitment, hiring, promotions, separations, awards, training, or any other employment action which impacts on the inclusion of and equal opportunity for women, minorities, and people with disabilities.

Program delivery activities: These activities include outreach, training, public notification, program accessibility or any system, practice or procedure or other activity which increases the knowledge of and participation by women, minorities, and people with disabilities.



May: Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month

National Theme: Forthcoming

Resources & Information:

- Library of Congress [Exhibits and Collections](#)
[Audio and Video](#)
[Images](#)
- [Asian Pacific Cultural Exhibits](#)
- [Asian Pacific American Network in Agriculture \(APANA\) USDA](#)
- [Federal Asian Pacific American Heritage Council \(FAPAC\)](#)



June: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Pride Month

National Theme: Forthcoming

Resources & Information:

- [Straight for Equality](#)
- [Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays \(PFLAG\)](#)
- [The Library of Congress](#)
- [Pride Flag](#)
- Smithsonian Latino Center
[LGBTQ Latinx Arts Activism: Creating Change and Sustaining Community](#)
[National Association of Genders and Sexualities Alliance \(GSA\) Network Research and Reports](#)



August 26th: Women's Equality Day

National Theme: Forthcoming

Resources & Information:

- Equal Means Equal
[Topics](#)
[Resources](#)
- [Women's Videos and DVDs](#)
- [Ms. Foundation for Women](#)
- [National Women's History Project](#)
Phone: 707-636-2888



Additional resources for diversity awareness material and ideas for special observances (catalog, pins, videos, etc.) are available from the following resources:

ARS EEO Video Library: <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/files/ARS%20Video%20Library%20Catalog1.pdf>

Diversity Store: www.diversitystore.com; Phone: 800-200-5964; Email – hmsdc@aol.com

Smithsonian: <http://www.si.edu/>; Phone: 202-633-1000; Email: info@si.edu

USDA Department-wide Monthly Observances – Links for Websites: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.html>

Observance events/activities should be conducted in a most cost-efficient manner.



You can earn credit for diversity training when you participate in a Special Emphasis Observance event (i.e., Women's Equality Day, Veterans Day, etc.)?

- ◆ How? There are two options, as applicable:
 1. Record your own learning in AgLearn if the learning item allows users to do so upon completion of the learning item. Access AgLearn and go to Record Learning.
 2. Contact your Designated Location AgLearn Administrator or Christopher Sacchetti, MWA Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity Program, at christopher.sacchetti@usda.gov or 309-681-6604.

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REE Mission Area EEO Counseling: 202-720-6161, 800-340-4289, TDD: 202-720-3303

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/AboutUs/docs.htm?docid=23089>; Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Cooperative Resolution Program: Jeff Schmitt; 301-504-1352, jeff.schmitt@ars.usda.gov or coopres@ars.usda.gov

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/odeo/coopres>; Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Reasonable Accommodation Program: Tonya B. Morris, 301-504-4339, tonya.b.morris@ars.usda.gov

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/AboutUs/docs.htm?docid=23085>; Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Outreach and Recruitment Branch Area Contact: Christopher Sacchetti, 309-681-6604, christopher.sacchetti@usda.gov.

<https://www.ars.usda.gov/AboutUs/docs.htm?docid=23072>; Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>

Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Home Page:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/ODEO> Axon: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/Pages/Home.aspx>