



Western Region



Spring 2011 Edition

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Director's Corner

By: Vickie Nadolski

NWS Western Region Director

Each February, we commemorate the rich and varied contributions of African-Americans to our nation's culture and history. Since 1926, Americans have recognized the need to celebrate the achievements by black Americans and the central role of African Americans in U.S. history. Since 1976, every U.S. president has officially designated the month of February as Black History Month. Other countries around the world, including Canada and the United Kingdom, also devote a month to celebrating the too-often neglected accomplishments of their black citizens.

In March, we will observe and celebrate National Women's History Month to recognize notable and ordinary women who have achieved much for our country. This commemoration grew from a grassroots educational initiative in the 1970's when women's history was virtually an unknown topic in the K-12 school curriculum. Even more so, general public awareness and appreciation for women's history was low. In 1978, the Education Task Force of Sonoma County, California initiated a local week long celebration, "Women's History Week" to coincide with International Women's Day, March 8, which was first celebrated in 1911 in Europe.

Let's all take a moment to celebrate our nation's diversity, and pay tribute to the contributions made by African-Americans and women. Together, we can all keep our nation strong and reaffirm our commitment to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens.



NWS Western Region Director Vickie Nadolski

June Bacon-Bercey: Pioneering Woman in Meteorology

Courtesy of: John Blank

Diversity Focal Point

Great Falls, Montana

June Bacon-Bercey is a pioneering woman and African-American in the field of meteorology. She was the only African-American woman to earn a degree in meteorology in the 1950s and was the first female television meteorologist in the country.

Bacon-Bercey was born October 23, 1932, in Wichita, Kansas. Her father was a lawyer and her mother was a music teacher. June was an only child who enjoyed bike riding, hik-

A Look At Hispanic Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor

By: Carol Ciliberti

Hispanic Special Emphasis Program Manager
Western Region Diversity Action Committee

Sonia Sotomayor is the first Latina and third female United States Supreme Court Justice. Her election has sparked enormous pride in Latino communities and among Latino-serving media outlets. Many leading political analysts and politicians supported her election and touted it as being a strongly positive change for the court as well as for the nation. Vermont Senator Patrick Leahy said of Sotomayor “Hers is a truly American story, and what a story, and what a model this is going to be for others in America.”

Prior to her nomination, Tom Goldstein, attorney and advocate before the Supreme Court, made the compelling statement “to Hispanics, the nomination would be an absolutely historic landmark. It really is impossible to overstate its significance. The achievement of a lifetime appointment at the absolute highest levels of the government is a profound event for that community, which in turn is a vital electoral group now and in the future.”



President Obama nominates Sotomayor for Supreme Court Justice

Sotomayor was raised by Puerto Rican parents in the South Bronx of New York City. (The Bronx contains the poorest congressional district in the United States). Her father, who worked as a laborer and attended school only through third grade, died when she was nine years old, a year after she was diagnosed with diabetes. Despite problems with her health, and coming from a lower income home, Sotomayor went on to attend Princeton and Yale Law School. After graduation, she worked as an assistant district attorney for the State of New York and as a commercial litigator. A former clerk stated that while Sotomayor was a demanding boss, her background made her committed to pragmatism and fairness in her work. “She sees the law as an instrument that can accomplish (fairness) for other people, a system that, if administered fairly, can give everyone the break they deserve, regardless of who they are.”

If Sotomayor brings these qualities to bear in her work on the Supreme Court, she will be a champion of diversity, seeking fairness in the law regardless of a person’s sex, race, or economic background. She exemplifies

modern diversity in that she is both female and Latino; grew up at an economic disadvantage and has contended with a disabling disease for most of her life. While she has widespread support in the political community, detractors have expressed doubts about her temperament, judicial craftsmanship and intellectual caliber. However, it cannot be denied that her appointment is an unprecedented step forward for the United States, in a direction that honors a diverse and open society where each individual has an equal opportunity to succeed. Sonia Sotomayor has said that as a child she was first inspired by the strong-willed book character Nancy Drew. She will provide inspiration herself in the coming years for children throughout the United States and the world.



Sonia Sotomayor at the Senate confirmation hearing

Remembering Fallen Heroes From The Past

By: Charles Shell

African-American Special Emphasis Program Manager
Western Region Diversity Action Committee

There are many memorable persons throughout history that have made contributions, statements, and standing for what they believe was right. Today, we are living the dream and reaping the benefits from these contributions. Unfortunately, in many cases these people have given their lives, and one of these is Crispus Attucks.

And to honor Crispus Attucks who was the leader and voice that day: The first to defy, and the first to die, with Maverick, Carr, and Gray. Call it riot or revolution, or mob or crowd as you may, such deaths have been seeds of nations, such lives shall be honored for aye... ~ John Boyle O'Reilly (1888)

Born in 1723 to an African father and Native American mother, Crispus Attucks was killed in the Boston Massacre on March 5, 1770. Later, Attucks would be known as the first martyr of the American Revolution which was motivated by the Massacre.

Attucks came from a diverse background, yet he didn't forget that he was an American. Fighting for freedom through oppression and social injustice for what was right, even at the cost of his life. Even his death overcame injustice by being buried with the other patriots of the "Massacre" in Granary Burying Ground. At the time, white and black people were not buried together.

Crispus Attucks is indeed an inspiration to not only Black History, but American History.



Illustration of the Boston Massacre featuring Crispus Attucks

He is one of the most important figures in African-American history, not for what he did for his own race but for what he did for all oppressed people everywhere. He is a reminder that the African-American heritage is not only African but American and it is a heritage that begins with the beginning of America ~ James Neyland, Crispus Attucks, Patriot (H.H, 1995)

- 1858, Boston-area abolitionists establish Crispus Attucks Day
- 1886, The site at which Crispus Attucks and Samuel Gray fell were marked
- 1888, A 25ft tall monument was erected honoring Attucks
- 1964, MLK referred to Attucks in a speech entitled "Why we can't wait" which was about moral courage
- 1967, "Crispus Attucks and the Minutemen", a comic from Fitzgerald Publishing
- 1998, U.S Treasury released "The Black Revolutionary War Patriots Silver Dollar" featuring Attucks' image
- Attucks Theater in Norfolk, Virginia along with many schools and centers are named after him
- The first line in the Stevie Wonder song, "Black Man" is about Crispus Attucks

African-American History Quiz

Courtesy of: John Blank

Diversity Focal Point

Great Falls, Montana

1. When did the foreign slave trade end in the United States?
 - a. The foreign slave trade was abolished in 1808.
 - b. The foreign slave trade ended with the Emancipation Proclamation of 1863.
 - c. The Missouri Compromise of 1820 abolished the foreign slave trade.
2. What did the Dred Scott case decide?
 - a. Slaves were not citizens and Congress did not have the right to ban slavery on the state level.
 - b. A slave who escaped to a free state could no longer be returned to slavery.
 - c. Slavery was illegal in states admitted to the Union after 1820.
3. What was the significance of June 19, 1865, known as Juneteenth?
 - a. The Freedmen's Bureau was established.
 - b. The remaining slaves in the United States learned the Civil War had been won by the North and that they were now free.
 - c. The Fifteenth Amendment was passed, giving African-American men the right to vote.
4. During Reconstruction, who became the first African-American senator, ironically completing the term vacated ten years earlier by Jefferson Davis?
 - a. P.B.S. Pinchback
 - b. Frederick Douglass
 - c. Hiram Revels
5. Around the turn of the last century, a debate raged between two major black leaders; one calling for blacks to strive for economic betterment that would eventually win them wider acceptance in white society; the other calling for immediate social and political equality. Who were the two framers of this debate?
 - a. W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington
 - b. George Washington Carver and Booker T. Washington
 - c. W.E.B. DuBois and Carter Woodson
6. Which of the following was NOT a black nationalist movement?
 - a. Malcolm X's Nation of Islam
 - b. Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association
 - c. A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters
7. Rosa Park's heroic refusal to give up her seat to a white man on a Birmingham bus is an iconic moment in the civil rights movement. But what were the actual circumstances of her refusal?
 - a. Parks, having just finished a long day of work, told the bus driver she was simply too tired to get up and move to the back of the bus.
 - b. Parks, sitting in the "whites only" section of the bus, refused to move to the back of the bus.
 - c. Parks, sitting in the "colored section" of the bus, was expected to give up her seat to a white man because all the "whites only" seats in the front of the bus were filled.
8. When were the last Jim Crow laws, which institutionalized segregation in the south, abolished?
 - a. 1963: The March on Washington led to the overturning of the last Jim Crow law.
 - b. 1954: The Supreme Court case, Brown v. Board of Education
 - c. 1968: The passage of the Fair Housing Act.

Answers on Page 8

Reaching out to the Future of the NWS

By: Chris Outler
Diversity Focal Point
Flagstaff, Arizona

Every year, thousands of college graduates with degrees in meteorology enter the real world seeking jobs in the field. However, finding a job is not always easy, and competition in the field is fierce. I recently had the opportunity to share my experience with the NWS at the National AMS student conference in Seattle, Washington. I shared my own personal experience with the NWS; how I landed my current position, and gave advice on how to seek professional careers in meteorology following graduation.

The one hour panel, called the ‘Panel of Young Professionals’, included a broadcast meteorologist, a professor from Texas Tech, a meteorologist for the private sector, and a meteorologist intern for the NWS which I represented. It provided a great opportunity to discuss the many avenues available to minority and underrepresented students interested in working for the government including the SCEP program, student mentoring program, and the importance of volunteering at a local WFO.

Between 400 and 500 students attended the student conference this year. It was a wonderful experience assisting the NWS in its efforts to recruit a more diverse workforce, while helping future graduates gain insight into possible careers in NOAA and the NWS.



National AMS Student Conference in Seattle

Diversity Focal Point Spotlight

By: Todd Hall
Diversity Action Committee Chair
Western Region Diversity Action Committee

The Diversity Action Committee is constantly striving to improve the flow of ideas between diversity focal points. One method that we are testing involves interviewing a diversity focal point to gain some insight into what makes their program tick. For this edition, I selected Katie LaBelle, a general forecaster at WFO Reno.

Todd: What does diversity mean to you?

Katie: Diversity is the celebration of different characteristics that make up each unique individual. It is an overall respect for differences and similarities between people. Hopefully, those differences or similarities can be embraced to help make everyone more understanding and knowledgeable of different cultures, backgrounds and experiences that are unfamiliar to his or her own.

Todd: What is the most rewarding thing about being a Diversity Focal Point?

Katie: The variety of topics to choose from when managing a diversity program and the people who take the time to learn about them are most rewarding. I like how the program is what you make of it – the freedom to be creative and entertaining while also positive and educational with so many interesting subjects to investi-

gate. My favorite thing would be the group discussions, active learning, sharing and overall participation from my office. We always have a lot of fun with diversity events here at WFO Reno which strengthens friendships and working relationships.

Todd: How important is diversity in your job?

Katie: Many facets of diversity play a large and important role in my job; whether it be improving communication to all our customers, recruiting new students to the field or promoting positive workplace collaboration for all current employees. As a forecaster, our warnings and advisories know no boundaries and are meant for all recipients which is why we try to get our message out in a variety of ways in order to reach the greatest amount of people.

Additionally, the cohesiveness and morale of the staff is incredibly important at our office and fundamentally part of our local diversity. By continuing to strengthen the already positive and good friendships within our office, we are all able to embrace our differences and get the job done, and done well.

Todd: How are you implementing the concepts of diversity in your job?

Katie: As focal point of the diversity program here at WFO Reno, I have been given the opportunity to help guide this office towards embracing diversity in a fun, creative and outgoing way. My goal is to make all the events I plan interactive; whether it is prompting discussion, taking a quiz or hosting a challenge of some kind. I believe the best way to learn about an abstract topic like diversity is to listen and also share opinions and experiences with fellow workers. This helps foster closer bonds within the staff and also helps us all to discover our local internal differences while learning about the broader issues. With the assistance of several diversity team members in my office, our diversity program has been able to present a variety of diversity related events and learning opportunities for our staff.

Local LIFT: Dawn Fishler heads up the local LIFT program here at WFO Reno and puts together quarterly brown bag seminars for the staff to discuss the many qualities of good leadership.

Additionally, management has implemented a local mentoring program as part of our LIFT program where Lead forecasters take new Journey forecasters under their wing and help them to learn about the area, forecasting and help them face any other challenge presented by moving to a new forecast office.

Local Diversity Events: Each event I have hosted has had some sort of interactive task, whether it be a quiz, pot luck or team challenges. I try to keep each event uniquely educational and entertaining. Edan Lindaman has played a pivotal role in assisting me with brainstorming, planning and hosting local diversity events.

Office Morale: Diana Simpson has taken on the challenge of being the main morale officer by organizing and executing out of office celebrations and events. All gatherings she has organized have run smoothly and been a lot of fun!



Katie LaBelle demonstrates her positive attitude while visiting June Lake, CA

Outreach: The entire Reno staff supports the outreach program here and have really made a difference in our community regarding NWS awareness; supporting local charities and community events.

The Reno diversity program could not have achieved all that we have in the past year without the help of these fellow workers.

Todd: How are you implementing diversity in your life?

Katie: "You must be the change you wish to see in the world." – Ghandi. The best way to implement the positive concepts of diversity is to lead by example. Since a young age, I have been aware of various issues regarding culture, age and gender differences, having grown up in the rather diverse Washington D.C. area. With this experience, and with several personal heroes to look up to along the way, I have strived to adopt a judgement-free attitude when it comes to others and handling these type of issues. A fundamental respect and appreciation for others is the name of the game.

WFO Billings Participates in Believe In Girls Girl Scouts Expo

By: Julie Arthur

Diversity Focal Point

Billings, Montana

On November 13, 2010, Vickie Stephenson (HMT), Carolyn Willis (OPL), and Julie Arthur (General Forecaster), staffed a booth for the Believe In Girls (B.I.G.), Girl Scouts Expo. There were about 300 girls who stopped by the booth. Counting parents, leaders, and siblings there was a total of about 450 people.

The booth had several tables. One table was an "experiment table" with a static electricity experiment, a pet tornado in a jar, 2 liter bottles connected with a tube to make a tornado with water, and a tornado machine. Another table had a weather memory matching game, handouts including Owlie Skywarn books, winter weather word search, cloud matching game book and a touch-screen monitor running a PowerPoint presentation of hazardous weather in a loop.

The "Weather Memory Matching Game" was a big hit with everyone who stopped by the booth. We thought of a bunch of weather terms including weather instruments, various cloud types, and precipitation types. We typed up the name of the term on one card, with the matching photo on another card. We had maybe 20-30 terms/photos in all, so we could switch them out when one person already saw the cards that were on the table after they were played by someone else. We lay the cards face down with the word cards separated from the photo cards. You do not need to use all the cards at once, as it would take too long to play the game. The children would flip over a word card and try to flip over the matching photo. If they did not match, they flipped both cards back over and started again. The game continued until all matching words and photos were found. As the children would flip over a card, we would explain what the term meant or what the instrument measured. That way, we were teaching them about weather while they were having fun. We used less cards for younger children, and more for the older ones. One teenager said, "This is harder than I thought!"



Girl Scout plays a weather memory matching game

ing, playing the piano, and participating in Girl Scout activities. She was excluded from many other activities because her parents were very strict and also because of the racism of the 1940s and 1950s. This exclusion actually helped her later in life as the isolation allowed her to develop discipline and good study habits.

Bacon-Bercey became interested in science in high school. She spent a brief period in Florida where she attended a segregated high school. In that school, blacks were not encouraged in math, physics, and chemistry. As a result, Bacon-Bercey lost some of her passion for science. When she returned to a racially mixed school in Kansas, those subjects were taught vigorously and her enthusiasm returned. After a physics teacher noticed her interest in water displacement and buoyancy, the teacher encouraged her to consider meteorology.

Her parents supported her career choice and encouraged her to continue her education. She attended UCLA; majoring in math and meteorology. These were fields where women were traditionally looked down upon. One of her teachers even suggested she take sewing instead of meteorology. However, when she earned an "A" in thermodynamics and a "B" in home economics, she knew she had chosen the right career path. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree, graduating with honors, in 1954. She went on to earn a Master of Science degree in meteorology in 1955.

She started off her career in meteorology in 1956 working at the National Meteorological Center in the Washington, D.C. area. She started off processing records of tides and currents and eventually worked her way up to become the principal forecaster for a five-state area.

In 1962, she went to work for the Sperry Rand Corporation as a consultant and was involved in various projects. In 1970, she began working for a television station in Buffalo. She started working there as a correspondent on scientific news. When the station's weathercaster was fired after being arrested for robbery, Bacon-Bercey found herself as the new weathercaster. In 1972, she became the first African-American and the first woman to earn the AMS's Seal of Approval. From 1974 to 1979, she worked as professional lecturer in meteorology, as a meteorologist with the NWS, and in various positions with NOAA.

While working with NOAA, she was involved in a project to teach meteorology at traditionally black colleges to introduce minorities to the subject and to encourage them to pursue careers in the field. In 1977, NOAA began a program at Jackson State University in Jackson, Mississippi. Eventually, an accredited degree program in meteorology was established.

Bacon-Bercey was well aware of the significance of being the first African-American woman to gain professional recognition and public acceptance in her field. She used her status to encourage other women and minorities to follow her footsteps. In 1975, she helped start the AMS's Board on Women and Minorities in order to increase their representation in the atmospheric sciences. She was a program leader for the AMS's involvement in science and engineering fairs. She saw these fairs as a vehicle for increasing young people's interest in science and encouraging them through public recognition of their accomplishments. In 1977, she won \$64,000 on a game show and used her winnings to establish a scholarship fund for women studying atmospheric sciences.

Bacon-Bercey retired from government service in 1990, but continues to do consulting and educational work. The American Association for the Advancement of Science wrote of her, "The respect of her peers; respect that supersedes age, race, sex and prejudice, provides her with opportunities to develop ideas and the resources to make them a reality."

The 32nd Annual AISES Conference

By: Delyne Kirkham

Persons with Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager
Western Region Diversity Action Committee

On November 11th, 2010 in the “Land of Enchantment” Albuquerque, New Mexico, the 32nd annual National American Indian Science & Engineering Society (AISES) conference began.

AISES is a national nonprofit organization that provides educational opportunities for American Indians. The conference was filled with amazing opportunities, networking and workshops.

One workshop focused on the differing traditions with various tribes and their customs. For example, it is disrespectful to look directly into someone’s eyes or shake their hand with vigor. This can even be considered as a confrontation in some cultures. I learned that in Native cultures, it is courteous for one to defer to the eldest person of the group, respectfully introduce yourself and explain why you are there, even if your appointment is with someone else in the group. The elder will determine how, in what order, or who will speak and must not feel rushed.

The official “Opening Ceremony” featured the amazingly talented Zuni Twin Eagle Drum Group. They used ancient drumming techniques that trace back 60,000 years with messages of pride, harmony, and reverence following the traditions and beliefs of the Native Zuni people.

Talking Circles provided a traditional Native American venue for listening, sharing, and learning. There were separate Talking Circles according to gender. The Women’s Talking Circle discussed many issues related to challenges in their culture, their tribe and the United States, which varied greatly from tribe to tribe. Maintaining Native cultural influence on youth while utilizing the gifts of current technology were common issues encountered by all.



A young girl explains her project at the AISES conference

Another workshop focused on scientists who had varying Native groups articulate their ideas in picture form. Recurrent themes and challenges were identified and quantified. The final results showed the importance of each subject. Among the subjects deemed as important, recognition and protection of Native culture, traditional Native skills, education and communication.

There was an activity in which the elders discussed the significance of a group of sacred objects. Each item was displayed, then passed to each participant with the significance and history told. There were spontaneous moments of prayer, laughter and tears.

Among the many lessons that I learned at the conference, two key things stood out. First, Native American’s have a higher chance for academic and career success working in systems that embrace their traditional cultures. The second lesson was that many of the youth are not driven by the same goals that drive others in a society that is generally based on capitalism. I heard expressed over and over by the youth at the conference that they wanted a career that “made a difference.” The youth want to contribute to the good of their culture and the good of all of society in general. They want to make a positive environmental difference and be respectful of the Earth. Also, they want to feel that they helped create a world with more spiritual focus, respect and balance overall.

Diversity Training Unveiled on the Commerce Learning Center

By: Todd Hall

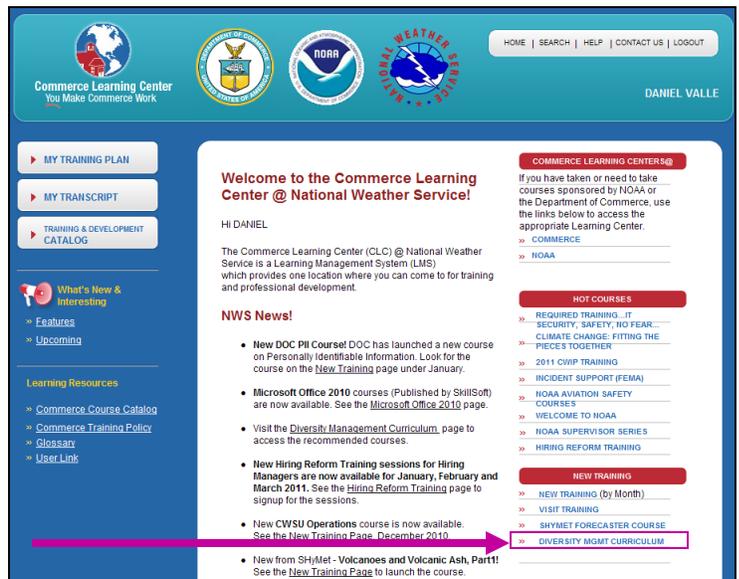
Diversity Action Committee Chair

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

Over the last several years, the Western Region Diversity Action Committee (DAC) has strived to define the differences between diversity, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), and Affirmative Action (AA). To accomplish this goal, the DAC sought to explain differences by educating Western Region’s Diversity Focal Points and WR Managers and Supervisors. EEO and AA are components of diversity, but no conclusions can be drawn about the conjugate. Utilizing the [Commerce Learning Center \(CLC\) website](#), the DAC previewed over 170 courses and arrived at a list of courses that encompassed the true meanings of what diversity is and what it represents for NWS employees. Last year, the WR DAC rolled out sets of recommended training courses for all WR Employees, Focal Points and Managers.

Following the WR DAC review of the courses, the NWS Diversity Council in cooperation with the NWSEO chartered a team of employees across all regions and in different locations across NOAA and the NWS to provide a full review of the course on the CLC. The WR DAC’s former Person with Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager, Connie Clarstrom, and I were part of this team along with Carolyn Willis, the NWS Diversity Council NWSEO Representative, providing oversight. A voluntary NWS Diversity Management Training Curriculum came to fruition after a period of approximately 18 months. Launched on the CLC website on January 12th, the curriculum offers all employees a chance to learn about what diversity is and how to incorporate diversity into the workplace. Communication, emotional intelligence and leadership techniques are common themes within the concepts of diversity and the training curriculum strives to support these themes.

Workplace diversity is about incorporating the concepts of diversity by including all people’s thoughts, views, and ideas into the process for determining how the office will operate. Each office’s employees will benefit much by having discussion sections immediately following each of the course’s completion. This interaction will increase the workplace’s understanding of one another and encourage camaraderie throughout the workplace. While the results of workplace diversity may take time, the NWS Diversity Management Training Curriculum seeks to build a solid foundation for a starting point.



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