



# Western Region

Fall 2010 Edition



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## Director's Corner

Vickie Nadolski

### NWS Western Region Director

I am pleased to be back in Western Region as your Director and I look forward to enhancing Diversity Awareness across the Region. First, let me take this opportunity to thank the outgoing DAC members for their service and dedication: Leslie Wanek, Johnnie Powell, and Connie Clarstrom. I would like to welcome Karrie Schmidt, Charles Shell, and Delyne Kirkham to our committee and thanks for volunteering. I would also like to take this opportunity to recognize Erik Pytlak for his years of service as our Gay/Lesbian/Bisexual/Transgender Program Manager. During my previous tenure as the Western Region Director, I established that DAC position, recognizing the importance of inclusion of our GLBT employees. Erik has done a great job and will be leaving NWS in November for a promotion and great opportunity with Bonneville Power in Portland, OR. Please join me in thanking Erik and wishing him well.



NWS Western Region Director Vickie Nadolski

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month. People with disabilities are the nation's largest minority. Americans observe this month by paying tribute to the accomplishments of the men and women with disabilities whose work helps keep the nation's economy strong and by reaffirming their commitment to ensure equal opportunity for all citizens. We should acknowledge those who have overcome their handicaps to contribute their valuable resources to labor, business and commerce. Let us build upon our past successes and increase opportunities for all people with disabilities to ensure full integration within the National Weather Service.

I wish all a safe and enjoyable Fall Season!

## 20th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act

Connie Clarstrom

Persons With Disabilities Special Emphasis Program Manager

### Diversity Action Committee

This year marks 20 years since the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) on July 26, 1990. The signing of the ADA marked the world's first comprehensive civil rights law for people with disabilities. The ADA represents far more than a legal document. It shows America's commitment to providing full and equal opportunity for all people. During the 20th anniversary celebration of the Americans with Disabilities Act, President Obama

summarized that, at its core, the ADA is about “Equal access – to the classroom, the workplace, and the transportation required to get there. Equal opportunity – to live full and independent lives the way we choose. Not dependence – but independence.” It is about ensuring that Americans with disabilities have “full participation in our society.”

Since the ADA was enacted, there have been many changes in our society to improve access for people with disabilities to public areas, public services, transportation, telecommunications and employment (<http://ADAanniversary.org>). Recent amendments in 2008, have strengthened these protections by broadening the coverage to more people with disabilities through encompassing a wider spectrum of physical and mental disabilities.

Still, the ADA is only a beginning. Barriers persist, especially in the areas of employment as well as in societal attitudes towards people with disabilities. It has been estimated that approximately one in six Americans have a disability. Yet the percentage of people with disabilities that are employed remains low. Ensuring people with disabilities have equal access and equal opportunities is accepted by many. Still, some people continue to view this as “Not my problem” or “It doesn’t affect me”. In addition, some employers and businesses worry that the ADA is too expensive for compliance. However, most modifications required to comply with the ADA cost very little. The average accommodation is estimated to cost less than \$500 (US Department of Justice ADA Fact Sheet). Also, modifications under the ADA that require larger expenses often qualify for grants, tax credits, or other incentives, according to John Hinten, an advocate for disability rights.



The improvements in societal attitudes and strides towards lowering barriers for people with disabilities are ongoing. Companies that have embraced the concept of hiring a diverse group of people that include those with disabilities have discovered significant benefits, including improved company performance. Hiring people with disabilities has also allowed them to tap into a larger pool of potential talent. Furthermore, advances in technology have increased the potential for people with disabilities to have full access in society. The Tri-care Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program has examples of these technologies at <http://www.tricare.mil>.

In the federal workforce, changes have occurred as well. Recently, President Obama has initiated measures to boost recruitment, hiring and retention of people with disabilities in the workforce. Specifically each agency will now have a senior official “who’s accountable for achieving the goals we’ve set”, stated President Obama during the ADA anniversary celebration. Furthermore, President Obama declared, “And I expect regular reports. And we’re going to post our progress online so that you can hold us accountable, too.” NOAA recently announced the appointment of Linda J. Tarlow as NOAA’s Reasonable Accommodation Coordinator/Interpreter Program Coordinator. Ms. Tarlow will be able to provide access to accommodations more easily through this central process. She will be able to assist employees and supervisors with requests for accommodation services as well as interpretive services for deaf and hard of hearing employees. (Additional information available at <http://www.wfm.noaa.gov/RAC.html>).

Improvements in providing access to hiring, training and technology to people with disabilities are helpful. What can make an even larger difference is the realization that people with disabilities are people who should have equal rights and equal access. Attitudes make a difference; they can create barriers or break them down.

## Workplace Wars: Generational Differences in the Workplace

Katie LaBelle

Diversity Focal Point

Reno, Nevada

In many careers, one can expect to encounter a variety of generations represented at work. As such, workers must all learn to interact and work with each other in order to achieve their workplace's mission. This is especially true within the National Weather Service.

There are three defined generations that make up the majority of NWS employees, the oldest of which represent 36% of today's workforce. They are known as the Baby Boomer generation. This generation is considered to be those born between 1946 and 1964. Those from this generation can identify with some events and societal revolutions such as the Vietnam War, the Civil Rights Movement, Rock Music and even the beginning of human space travel. These defining moments are what have helped to shape those from this generation into who they are today. Social science research has defined some common positive traits from this generation including general wisdom and experience, good achievement orientation and a very strong work ethic. However, some Boomers may reject change and be slow to adapt to new technology.



The second and "middle" generation in today's workforce is commonly known as Generation X and is generally represented by those born between 1965 and 1977. Those born within this time frame, which is about 37% of today's workforce, experienced Watergate, the Energy Crisis, the birth of MTV, the Women's Liberation Movement and the fall of the Berlin Wall. These experiences have helped define this generation as one that is self-reliant, innovative and rejecting of the status quo. However, this also has helped to foster a dislike of bureaucratic rules, procedure and hierarchy.

The current youngest generation and 25% of today's workforce is known as Generation Y and was born between 1978 and 1998. This tech savvy generation has been influenced by events like 9-11, the Oklahoma City bombing, unprecedented economic success and the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal, while having grown up in a world of constantly evolving technology including the invention of the Internet and cell phones. This generation has grown to celebrate diversity and change, be inventive and assertive, technologically advanced and multi-taskers, but has also harbored traits of impatience, weak self-management skills, total reliance on technology.



While these generalizations may seem true or false to you, it is important to remember that generalizations do not define the individual but merely paint an overall picture of the time. With such different generational traits, it is very important that we in one generation understand where those of other generations are coming from in order to function well in the workplace. Between the Baby Boomers and the Generation Ys, the workplace outlook may be hierarchy versus familiarity. Generation Xs may see a lack of work ethic in Generation Y performance, while the Ys see it as "work smarter not harder" type of situation. Both the Boomers and Xs may also see tech driven communications as abrupt, impersonal and easily misunderstood, where Ys see them as quick and efficient.

However, with all these differences, are we really that different? Generation Xs and Ys may think they have brought about huge social change, but the Baby Boomers were the ones who started it. Each generation came into the workforce as the “young generation” and brought a new and different way of thinking. What we can learn from this is that it is important to respect the individual and embrace the positive traits that each person has to offer. No single person fits perfectly into a generational description. Therefore, can someone be too young or too old for a particular job? Does respect or wisdom come with age, authority or credibility? Ultimately it’s up to you to decide how you’d like to represent your generation and move the NWS forward to achieve our mission.

\*Special thanks to Dawn Fishler for presenting “Workplace Wars” presentation to WFO Reno’s Local LIFT chapter.

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## Diabetes in the National Weather Service

Todd Hall

Diversity Action Committee Chair

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

The person sitting next to you may have diabetes and you may not know it. Diabetes is a metabolic condition in which a person has high blood sugar, either because the body does not produce enough insulin in the pancreas, or because pancreatic cells do not respond to the insulin that is already being produced. Persons with diabetes can live a healthy life with proper diet, exercise, and frequent testing of blood glucose levels. Unless each diabetic shares their condition freely, most people will never know that the individual has diabetes. In the Federal Workforce, diabetes is considered a form of disability or impairment and is tracked by OPM Form 256.

When each new employee enters the Federal Workforce, OPM Form 256 is issued for each individual to complete. Disabilities filled in on this form are completely voluntary. Thus in tracking the data collected on this form, large discrepancies may occur due to underreported conditions. Persons with disabilities may not be comfortable in sharing their disability. Recently, the National Weather Service Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management posted the latest MD-715 Status Report. The MD-715 Status Report is mostly viewed for the statistics on race or ethnicity in the NWS, but the data collected also considers current OPM Form 256s.

After receiving statistics on the number of people affected with diabetes in the National Weather Service from the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity Management, it was not surprising that only 0.6% of the National Weather Service workforce was listed with having diabetes. Nationally, the Centers for Disease Control estimate that about 8% of the population has either Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes. With between 90-95% of diabetes diagnoses being Type 2 after 45 years of age, it is not surprising that the National Weather Service statistics are underreported. It is likely that most individuals after being diagnosed do not complete OPM Form 256 again, either due to lack of knowledge, stigma of being labeled, or denial of the condition.



Without knowledge of one’s impairment, it can be difficult to tell when a person with diabetes is having an onset of hypoglycemia, or a state of lower than normal blood sugar level. Symptoms of hypoglycemia can include shaking, sweating, beligerency, fatigue, hunger, or decreased motor skills. Symptoms of more severe hypoglycemic reactions may include unconsciousness, paralysis, slurred speech, blurred vision, or seizures. With more severe reactions where a person with diabetes may not be responding, one must call 911 to get the proper care; however,

weak or moderate hypoglycemic reactions can be treated with sweets, dairy products, fruits, or sugary drinks. All of these products will give a boost to blood glucose levels.

The American Diabetes Association, the largest and most recognized organization in providing education and support of persons with diabetes has designated November as American Diabetes Month. American Diabetes Month is utilized to raise awareness of the disease, educate America on how serious the disease is, and build hope for a cure. Those with Type 1 or Type 2 diabetes in their family genetics can take action now. Help eliminate the onset of Type 2 diabetes by watching your diet and exercising regularly. If you are over the age of 45, get screened regularly for Type 2 diabetes.

If you are diabetic and have not already done so, share your condition and stories with your co-workers. Your co-workers can be your best advocate with the knowledge you have given them. Make sure you are counted and heard...update OPM Form 256. Most importantly, do not let the disease limit you. Diabetes will not stop you from living a healthy and happy life.



## Working at a Weather Forecast Office

Johnnie Powell

African American Special Emphasis Program Manager

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

Every year, NOAA awards scholarships to approximately 150 students. These awards provide selected undergraduate applicants an academic award of up to \$8,000 for two years of study and two full-time 10-week internships during the summer at a NOAA facility. The awards also give a housing subsidy and travel funds to attend an EPP/USP Scholarship Program conference and one professional conference to present their projects.

These internships provide students with “hands-on” training involving NOAA-related science, research, technology, and policy. As part of their internship pledge, every NOAA scholar must attend an orientation during the first year of their award. This orientation, given at NOAA Headquarters in Silver Spring, MD, acquaints students with NOAA administration, informs them about current activities in the various subsidiary offices, and introduces them to our policies and procedures.

While giving students access to state-of-the-art technology and facilities, they also provide many students their first “professional” jobs. Recently I gave a presentation at this orientation for the National Weather Service about "Working at a Weather Forecast Office." These future employees learned about the daily workings of a diverse WFO environment. Every office is a mixture of individuals with different backgrounds, training, lifestyles, religions, and ethnicities. To ensure a smooth transition into NOAA and NWS, our future workforce must understand and appreciate these differences. Thanks to these internships and orientations, the NOAA scholars are well-poised to do just that.



*Scholars Learn About Working For The NWS*

## In Remembrance of Our Veterans

Karrie Schmidt

Diversity Focal Point

Pocatello, Idaho

Susan Jolliff, the former diversity focal point at WFO-Boise, and I worked together on the development and creation of an interactive Veteran's exhibition project. The exhibition chronicles the lives of men and women who served from WWI through Iraq and Afghanistan to today. The purpose of the project is to honor those that have served and to offer a "snapshot" of their life and military service experience. This will illustrate a better understanding of the human condition for all of us.



The idea began following my visit to a Titanic exhibition at the Natural History Museum in Idaho Falls where names of passengers became more than names by the method of display and follow-through of the exhibit. We are continually looking for projects of interest. Loosely based on this particular Titanic exhibit, we put our heads together to create the Veteran's exhibition. We split up the project and worked on it from our individual offices and when it came time to put it all together, we did so in Boise. A BBQ followed the unveiling of the diversity project and I traveled to WFO-Boise along with two visiting Australian Fire Weather Meteorologists. Some WFO-Boise family members attended the debut of the exhibition and the BBQ. Just before the BBQ, some staff viewed the exhibition and then shared with everyone during the lunch the military member's experiences and what became of them after their service. The exhibit is currently on display at the Pocatello WFO and is available for other WR offices to borrow. Please contact Susan Jolliff (208-334-9860) or myself (208-232-9306).

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## Addendum To The Email List-Serv Designed Especially For Women In Science

Dan Valle

Managing Editor - Diversity Newsletter

Western Region Diversity Action Committee

There has been additional information regarding the email listserver article found in the recent summer newsletter.

For those people wishing to join one of the listserver lists, please go to: [http://infolist.nws.noaa.gov/read/all\\_forums](http://infolist.nws.noaa.gov/read/all_forums). Click on the word "subscribe" beside the list you wish to join.

The listserver URL for those who are already a member is: <http://infolist.nws.noaa.gov/read/login>

**And The Award Goes To...**

**Pam Szatanek**

**Forecaster**

**Elko, Nevada**

This past spring, the NWS Diversity Management Marketing Team sponsored a competition to design a NWS diversity management poster. This contest was open to all NWS employees. The poster design contest was an initiative under the Marketing Team's Diversity Management Marketing Implementation Plan. Congratulations are in order for meteorologist Ben Deubelbeiss of the Chicago Field Office and HMT Bill Ash of the Elko field Office for their successful collaboration during the 2010 Diversity Poster contest taking the top honor.

Bill made the original design and he sketched it on paper. Ben used Microsoft Publisher to try to recreate Bill's idea on the PC. After their design was selected, they coordinated with Charly Wells and Byron Kunisawa to refine the poster. Ben and Bill also spent time on their diversity website to try to stay consistent with the official message. There were probably close to 20 redesigns of the poster before the poster was considered complete.

Ben and Bill were recognized and received their award on October 21st at NWS Headquarters.



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