



ARNG DIVERSITY INITIATIVES NEWSLETTER



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*A Message From
Brigadier General
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Special Assistant to
the Director, Army
National Guard*

Building and Maintaining a Diverse Workforce

Greetings,

I hope that you find this first Diversity Newsletter as well as future issues inspiring and informative. Ultimately people must change before the goals of a Diverse Workforce are realized. But meanwhile, numerous tools and strategies are required to build diverse teams and this is a tool which may be used by the National Guard family to share information that will help us to better understand, accept and value the differences of others. As the Director, Army National Guard, LTG Schultz so often states, "the more we value diversity, the more productive we become. The more we value diversity the more soldiers we retain."

Senior leaders must instill in their subordinates through education, the value of creating and maintaining a trained, qualified and diverse force. The focus should be on designing and implementing diversity initiatives and sustaining commitment. The key to successfully building a diverse, highly qualified and high quality workforce for the future begins today with strong leadership commitment that must be communicated from the top down to personnel at all levels. One of my goals is to use this tool as a resource to do just that...communicate diversity at all levels of the Army National Guard and with our Air Guard family as well. I encourage you to distribute this publication throughout your command and to invite all to submit articles of interest to be published. Remember "Together We Can!"

Nebraska Holds Diversity Conference for Leaders

**CW3 John Regan
State Equal Employment Manager
Nebraska National Guard**

On 20 September 2003 the Nebraska Army National Guard held a Diversity Conference for leaders. State Adjutant General, MG Roger Lempke, addressed the group about the importance of diversity initiatives and his goal of making the Nebraska Army National Guard a more diverse organization. He challenged the leaders in the room to identify and implement action oriented steps to improve diversity and position the Nebraska National Guard for future success. The conference included a detailed briefing by the State Recruiting and Retention Manager, LTC Dan Kenkel. LTC Kenkel outlined in detail the demographic realities across the state and the implications of these changes for the future of the NE ARNG. Many communities across the state have had dramatic demographic changes and LTC Kenkel emphasized the importance of addressing these realities now so that Nebraska can continue to be successful and mission ready. CW3 John Regan introduced and explained the diversity training initiative that will be delivered across the state beginning in TY04. "The Demographic Realities Impacting the Mission of the ARNG", one of the four training modules featuring Dr. Samuel Betances, was presented and very favorably received by the over 50 officers in attendance. The day was capped off by a brainstorming session led by COL Gary Jones, Nebraska Army National Guard Chief of Staff, which was designed to capture action oriented ideas that could be utilized to further expand and enhance diversity initiatives in the Nebraska National Guard. The response of conference attendees to the training was very positive and results of the brainstorming session will be addressed by the State Diversity Council.

Religious Diversity: The Next Horizon

MAJ Eurydice Stanley
EO Officer, ARNG Directorate

When one speaks of Diversity, religion does not often come to mind, rather issues of race and gender. However, religious diversity is a critical topic which shapes the intrinsic values, attitudes, beliefs and, most importantly, the actions of our personnel. The topic of religion often sparks volatile debates as previously unidentified lines of comfort are inadvertently crossed in casual workplace conversation.

Most believe their religion (or choice not to believe) is "the right way," thus, a tension point can be experienced when juxtaposing views are presented or discussed. As EO/Diversity practitioners, we must constantly ask ourselves "Are members of my organization asked to hide personal beliefs to deter conflict in the workplace? Are soldiers free to practice their religious beliefs as they wish, IAW military good order and discipline?" If the answer is no, leadership must become actively involved!

The need for leadership support became blatantly apparent at the 2003 Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) Conference, where I served as a discussant on a panel of educators whose research was specifically designed to address issues related to the interface between religion and the United States Armed Services. Dr. Judith Johnson encouraged practitioners in the field to explain the "why" behind religious accommodations to senior leadership. She recommends efforts be directed to military personnel and commanders to educate them on Islam and its variants and encourages a training curriculum that makes the distinction between terms such as "Sunni, Shia, Political Islam, Islamist, Wahhabism and Sufism." She noted education and communication reduces conflict and misinformation in organizations.

The proceedings from the panel can be retrieved from the ARNG Directorate EO Webpage – I highly recommend you review the papers written by Dr. Judith Johnson, Associate Professor of Psychology, School of Psychology & Counseling, Regent University, Dr. Robert McIntyre, Associate Professor of Psychology, Old Dominion University, Dr. Olenda Johnson, Associate Professor of Management, School of Business & Economics, North Carolina A & T State University, and Dr. William Hathaway, Associate Professor of Psychology, School of Psychology & Counseling, Regent University. The panel's research focused on various topics such as the training of religious tolerance within the military, religious pluralism and its implications, and issues encountered by the chaplaincy subsequent to the September 11 attacks on the World Trade Center. Of key concern for panel members were issues of inclusion, education, and integration of varied belief systems within a military environment.

Religious diversity was defined in the SSSR keynote address as encompassing interpersonal (i.e. hate crimes), organizational (impact of requests for religious holidays, etc.) and societal (social order, stability and conflict) issues. As such, religious diversity is of importance to the military as a micro-chasm of society that addresses each of these issues either interpersonally

within the scope of daily work responsibilities or as we participate in global engagements around the globe. Our Armed Services are comprised of persons from differing faith systems who have come together for a common mission – to protect and defend the United States of America. This common purpose must be the ultimate unifier – as such, we must not allow any difference, religion, race or any other issue to divide.

At the SSSR military panel Dr. Olenda Johnson discussed the concept of religious pluralism and the challenge it poses for military chaplains. Chaplains are essentially forced to be "religious chameleons," often tasked to provide support for faiths that vary from their personal beliefs. Essentially, they must attend to the spiritual needs of others that may not share a similar faith, which can cause interdenominational discord or internal dissonance for the Chaplain in a religiously diverse environment. She notes that one approach is to close prayer by saying "In the Name of Our Lord," which can mean differing interpretations from Allah to Yahweh dependent upon one's religious beliefs.

Dr. Robert Mc Intyre discussed the use of the Clarification group to explore group identification within religious education training provided to Equal Opportunity Advisors at the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute (DEOMI). He noted that although there is usually "visual evidence" of one's ethnic heritage or gender, religion is a "covert" socio-cultural group membership, self-identified and only disclosed if the participant so chooses. He discussed training strategies and encouraged more focus on the issue of religious diversity at DEOMI.

Dr. William Hathaway shared personal case studies as an Air Force psychologist in his research and noted the importance of knowledgeable personnel needed to address issues of spiritual dissonance. Currently, the Army National Guard has committed to address such issues by increasing participation in programs such as ASSIST, suicide intervention training and CISM, Critical Incident Stress Management in concert with the Chaplaincy. Dr. Hathaway used his experience to assist in his non-secular counseling strategies, thus better addressing the spiritual needs of his clients.

Faith based acts such as prayer has been routine within the military since its inception, not surprising given the nature of our potential duties and responsibilities. By accommodating divergent faith groups, we reinforce our inherent right as Americans to worship (or not) as we choose. Organizationally, we must strive to ensure that each member of the team is recognized for their contributions, rather than ostracized due to differing religious beliefs by ensuring policy is in place with the proper leadership support to protect the rights many lost their lives to protect.

New citizen: 'I love the U.S.'

By Bret Hayworth
Journal staff writer

Hiliana Suarez-Chancey, 185th Air Refueling Wing senior airman, excitedly shows her citizenship papers to her husband and other friends before proceeding with the naturalization ceremony Friday in the federal court building in Sioux City. Before she could legally vote, Hiliana Suarez-Chancey already was serving her country, drawing a paycheck from the military. Highly regarded at the 185th Air Refueling Wing of the Iowa Air National Guard, Colombia native Suarez-Chancey became an American citizen on Friday when 28 people took their naturalization oath in Sioux City.

It would be nigh impossible for any of the other 27 to take their citizenship as seriously as Suarez-Chancey. She said naturalized Americans are privileged, since they "get to choose" America, unlike citizens born here who may take it for granted.

"I love the United States, because this is my home," Suarez-Chancey said. "I love my country Colombia, I was born there. But this is the country that has given me what my own country never gave me -- friends, family, a husband, the possibility of work, the possibility of having a car. If you do right, I don't see a reason why not to love it."

The ability of Suarez-Chancey to become a U.S. citizen is a testimony to the persistence she has in spades. The final step in her winding road to naturalization -- the oral test on history and civics, given this summer -- was the easiest, she contends.

The initial step to naturalization is to first be designated a resident, an aspect Suarez-Chancey said was more difficult than the citizenship part. In 1998 she got her residency/green card, which gives a Social Security card and eligibility to work, including serving in the military. One other struggle -- twice being denied a visa to get out of Colombia in the first place.

"To get a visa to come to the U.S. is almost impossible," she said, citing that officials need proof of assets and a job. Through all the visa tribulations, a friend told her to recall three things she liked about America. Suarez-Chancey quickly snapped, "I already did that --- I like (singer) Amy Grant, mashed potatoes and gravy."

Suarez-Chancey's boss at the 185th, Command Sgt. Merlin Thompson, said she demonstrates a great deal of love for the U.S. and the military. "She was willing to go through the rigors of becoming a citizen," he said. "It is an investment of time and money, as well as exposure to an FBI investigation."

Suarez, chosen 2002 Airman of the Year at the flight/squadron level for the 185th Mission Support Group, "is a supervisor's definition of the ideal employee," Thompson said. "Her life outside the 185th is as much a model of hard work and dedication." Born in Bogota to a middle-class family, Suarez-Chancey was schooled at a Catholic institution and then finished college. In her early 20s in the late 1980s, "I became a Christian and that totally changed my life," she said. With the five-year visa obtained, in 1994 she began her journey toward Americanization by joining the California-based Covenant Players religious troupe, journeying to schools and prisons in places like Nova Scotia and Alaska. At first she spoke not one word of English, but memorized her lines in the



(Staff photo by Jerry Mennenga)

(con't)
language.

In two years, her commitment with Covenant was fulfilled and she was in Canada mulling what to do next. In a dream she had one morning "God was telling me that I was going to work in a summer camp. I had no idea what was a summer camp." That same day she got a call from Mary and Joe Wiltgen of South Sioux City, whom she calls her American "Mom and Dad," informing her about an opening in the Salvation Army Summer Camp outside Omaha.

She took the unpaid Salvation Army job, which provided lodging. Without money but a promise to pay in the future, she hired a lawyer who finally helped get the residency designation from the Immigration and Naturalization Service. "I believe it was a miracle of God," Suarez-Chancey said. "As a resident, I was able to work for the first time, to get a salary, that was pretty good."

But "to just become a resident was not good enough for me," so she began thinking about citizenship. She joined the 185th as a part-timer three years ago. (Activated in April 2003, Suarez-Chancey is on leave from her full-time job at Pech Optical in Sioux City.) She described the thrill "to be able to wear the American uniform." In fall 2001, she married Brian Chancey, who is also a senior airman at the 185th.

Those who have residency status have to wait five years before they can become a citizen, three years if they are in the military. She undertook the massive paperwork for citizenship, which has fees throughout, like a \$50 fee for fingerprinting. The FBI does a background check on all applicants and the one-on-one oral test brought steps to a conclusion. Suarez-Chancey didn't miss a single question and said the subject matter was important to know for new citizens.

"New Citizen "I Love the US" continued from Page 3

"Once you learn what Vietnam was all about, what Pearl Harbor was all about, how many people died there and all the sacrifices, then you understand the basis and foundation of our country," she said.

Before Judge Don O'Brien Friday in the U.S. Federal Courthouse were several Mexicans, as well as four Vietnamese, two Guatemalans and "only one South American girl, me," Suarez-Chancey said of her compatriots.

She had by far the largest contingent of the new Americans, including 15 personnel from the 185th and one of her two brothers.

Suarez-Chancey noted "a weird feeling" following the oath, that "I don't know why, but I just feel more free." Having gone through the process the right way, she can't imagine how those choosing the illegal alien route, skulking throughout America afraid to be found out.

She has two recommendations for the naturalization process. First, make the oral test more difficult. "It is not really that hard," she said. And when the oath is given, make the new Americans say it all, instead of having an official read off the oath and then the participants responding with a brief, "I do." Said Suarez-Chancey,

"I believe that I should be able to say that I, Hilitiana Suarez, want to be a part of this country and it is an honor, and I will defend the Constitution of the U.S. and I will serve this country. We should have the right to confess it."

Given the chance when none of the other 27 wanted to make a statement about their new status, she stepped up, saying "this is our promised land ... let's do our best to make this nation very proud of us."

The response? Said Suarez-Chancey, "They clapped and told me I can run for office."

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Multi-Cultural Event in IA

SMSgt Russell Schuck

On Wednesday, 19 November 03, The Iowa National Guard co-sponsored a local Des Moines Multi-Cultural Event at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Des Moines. This event was the 5th event that the Greater Des Moines Partnership (Chamber of Commerce) has hosted. The event is designed to create an atmosphere for young business people of all cultures to network with local business people.

Major General Ron Dardis spoke to approximately 200 young people for about 10 minutes about the Iowa National Guard and its diversity program. After the program, the standing room only crowd spent time networking with each other and members of the Iowa National Guard while enjoying hors d'oeuvres. This was a very well received and successful event.

Coming Soon

- Facilitator/Trainer Workshop, 2nd/3rd quarter FY04
- Senior Leader Diversity Training, 2nd/3rd quarter FY04
- FY03 Update to State/Territory Demographics Folders on GKO

ABOUT FACE PROGRAM IN THE KENTUCKY NATIONAL GUARD

Mr. Tony Mattingly

Site Manager, About Face/KY Program

Kentucky National Guard

The Kentucky National Guard and the PAXEN Group have teamed up and started an About Face Program for youth residing in Richmond, KY. About Face seeks to assist low-income youth and students with reading or math skill problems. The focus group is youth aged 16-18 years old; however, 15-year-old youth are accepted on a space availability basis. The first class of approximately 40 students started the first week of November 2003 and will end in mid December. Students receive incentive pay of \$10.00 per two-hour session and \$15.00 for three-hour sessions. During the fall cycle each student will also be involved in a work-shadowing program that starts the third week of class. Students will participate in the program one-day a week for four weeks and in two Saturday sessions that last 6 hours; they are paid \$5.15 an hour for their participation. Participants are also provided a backpack, school planner, and two tee shirts and receive a snack. Classes include "Functional Life Skills: Interpersonal Relationships and Groups" and "Business Perspectives", and life skills including budgeting check and saving books, bill payment, meal planning, transportation issues, understanding insurance and housing arrangements are taught. For information on the spring and summer sessions, please call (859) 623-6101.

A Note From the Chief, Diversity Initiatives MAJ Thomas E. Languirand

The Guard has made many milestones in "firsts": first female TAG, first Black female Line General, first Black CNGB, first Hispanic CNGB; we must move to a point where the "firsts" becomes commonplace. Our organization is America; be a leader and do what is right.

Happy Holidays!