



STEM: Building bridges to bright futures



Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh looks on during Great Minds in STEM's Viva Technology Day at Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles Jan. 18. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than half of the 30 fastest-growing occupations through 2018 are STEM-related. Environmental engineers are leading the way at an expected 31 percent job growth. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)

By Dave Palmer

LOS ANGELES — During Great Minds in STEM's Viva Technology Day at Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles Jan. 18, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick delivered last minute instructions to science, technology, engineering and mathematics students during the beam bridge challenge.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than half of the 30 fastest-growing occupations through 2018 are STEM-related. Environmental engineers are leading the way at an expected 31 percent job growth.

"We cannot do this without great partners," said Chair and

CEO of Great Minds in STEM Ray Mellado. "The Army Corps of Engineers is the largest civil engineering organization in the world. Here in Los Angeles, we have a leader who has not only embraced this problem, but he's made it a priority for him and his people. Col. Toy [Los Angeles District commander] has been a great leader and a great partner."

In his remarks, Toy said that it is no coincidence the Corps is so dedicated to STEM and under the leadership of Lt. Gen. Bostick, that passion will continue.

"My wife is the principal of an elementary school," said Bostick. "To the principals, the educators, those who enforce

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discipline and education, you're really what makes this all work and we're happy to be partners. Out of 100 9th-graders, only six will go on to pursue STEM. That's our challenge. By the year 2020, we will need a million more engineers, so we have to start early."

GMiS is USACE's partner organization for STEM. Established in 1989 as HENAAC, Great Minds in STEM is a non-profit organization that focuses on STEM educational awareness programs for students from kindergarten to career, according to their charter.

"In China, they will graduate 700,000 engineers a year," said Bostick. "We do about 70,000 in America. And, many of those engineers go back to their home countries."

Bostick and Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, South Pacific Division Commander Brig. Gen. Michael C. Wehr and his district commanders from Albuquerque, Los Angeles, Sacramento and San Francisco, visited the school and interacted with the students.

"Dream big," said Bostick. "Our job is to mentor, to reach out to make you believe you can do anything and just reach for the stars. There is a lady, Frances Hesselbein, who earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom. President Clinton put it around her neck in the White House. She often says that, 'there are two institutions, that since the beginning of our country, have sustained our democracy, our freedom, and that's public education and the United States Army.'"

During Viva Technology Day students participated in hands-on competitive, educational challenges. They worked in teams led by college students and District interns who major in STEM. USACE has three career internship opportunities: Pathways Internship Program for current students, Recent Graduates Program [2 years] and Presidential Management Fellows (PMF) Program. For information about careers with the Corps and the Department of Defense, visit <http://www.opm.gov/hiringreform/pathways>.



U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick, delivers last minute instructions to science, technology, engineering and mathematics students at Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles Jan. 18. Bostick and Deputy Commanding General for Civil and Emergency Operations Maj. Gen. Michael J. Walsh, South Pacific Division Commander Brig. Gen. Michael C. Wehr and his district commanders visited the school during Great Minds in STEM's Viva Technology Day. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)



During Viva Technology Day at Roosevelt High School in Los Angeles Jan. 18, students participated in hands-on competitive, educational challenges. They worked in teams led by college students (red shirts) and District interns who major in STEM. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)

COMMANDER'S MESSAGE

Dear District Teammates,

As you likely know, while the Federal government avoided going over the fiscal cliff in January, tough budget decisions remain to be made that directly affect each and every one of us.

Sequestration - the mandatory 10 percent cut to Department of Defense spending that goes into effect in March, unless legislation is passed to avert it - and operating under a continuing resolution for another year are both still real possibilities. In truth, we don't yet know exactly what the consequences would be in either scenario.

But, there are some immediate changes we must make in order to responsibly prepare for them. As we work to reduce and mitigate the potential impacts, we will continue to be as candid and forthright as possible.

To preserve flexibility amid the budget uncertainty, the Department of the Army has directed us to immediately and significantly reduce all non-essential expenditures. Accordingly, non-mission critical travel and training is suspended, and a minimum 60-day Army hiring pause is now in effect.

Division has prudently directed that we put a hold on all performance awards (cash and Quality Step Increases) that have not already been issued, until we receive further guidance from HQ USACE.

The District's leadership is also validating the mission criticality of our term and temporary employees. DA guidance directs that we release non-mission essential temporary employees (to include rehired annuitants) and retain term employees only until the end of their assignment, consistent with mission requirements. The majority of our term and temporary employees are doing mission critical work and there is a USACE-wide procedure to retain these employees.

Workforce Managers within the Region are focused on ensuring timely workforce staffing and that mission critical

positions are submitted forward for review by the Chief of Engineers related to our hiring needs. Corps leadership is working hard to ensure temporary students under the Pathways Program be exempt from this directive.

I know many of you must also be concerned that the potential budget cuts will result in furloughs. We have not received specific guidance directing us to prepare for furloughs. But, the Department of the Army directives we have received make clear that furloughs are the absolute, last-resort measure we will take. Should we hear anything at all about that possibility, we will share it immediately.

We will provide supervisors with more specific guidance on implementing all of these measures shortly. We are standing up a Budget Team, comprised of representatives from each division, to help us chart our way forward. We also rely on division chiefs to oversee cost-saving measures within their organizations.

Should you have questions about any of these measures, please direct them through your supervisory chain of command.

These will not be easy changes and, if a continuing resolution or sequestration happens, we may see even tougher ones. Still, we are in this together. As we refocus even more tightly on mission execution, ***TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE*** is still our top priority, and we will do everything we can to make sure whatever changes may come are managed fairly, professionally and with every possible effort to reduce their impact on our most valuable asset - our highly skilled and dedicated workforce.

I want to keep the dialogue between us constant, open and transparent. If you have any questions, please inform your chain of command and have them forward it to me.

BUILDING STRONG® and Taking Care of People!

Warm Regards,

Col. Toy



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District commander addresses LA River Committee about Sepulveda clearing



Col. Mark Toy, commander of the Army Corps' Los Angeles District, receives a Jan. 7 briefing and inspects the area in Sepulveda Basin where vegetation removal in early December 2012 led to concerns from environmentalists and local residents. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)

By Greg Fuderer

LOS ANGELES — Col. Mark Toy, commander of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District, addressed the LA City Council Ad Hoc River Committee Jan. 28, telling members that despite not adhering to the District's best management practices to properly communicate vegetation management activities in the Sepulveda Basin, his focus is to identify and work with the right people to develop a consensus on ways to move forward with flood risk reduction, ecosystem management and recreation in the basin.

Included in the meeting were public comments by a variety of group representatives and individuals. Most expressed dismay at the extent and variety of vegetation removed from a section of the basin in early December 2012 and in the notification process to inform the public about the upcoming work.

"The EA was on a public website for a two week period," Toy said about the environmental assessment for removing the vegetation, "but what we didn't do was follow our best practice of notifying those individuals [stakeholders] of the work we were going to do in that area."

Toy said he talked to nearly two dozen people in early January, including U.S. Rep. Brad Sherman, several state senators and representatives, city council members, environmental groups, residents and recreationists, to hear their concerns and to implement their suggestions in future phases of vegetative management in the basin.

The Phase I vegetative removal was part of the basin's master plan to safely maintain the dam's flood risk reduction capabilities. The Corps must remove the downed material before the March 15 environmental window precludes work in the area.

"I don't want debris that might inhibit our ability to operate in our flood control operations," Toy said.

Toy said the input from stakeholders will be incorporated into determining the future vegetation regimen in the area, and that despite the impression given by some media reports, re-vegetation was always part of the vegetation management plan for the area.

"I do want to make the point, though," Toy said, "that the intent of this process was always to re-vegetate the area."

Toy will conduct an on-site walking tour of the area Feb. 12 with the stakeholders to further that effort.

Arizona/Nevada Area Office hosts Business Opportunities Open House

By Daniel J. Calderón

PHOENIX — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Arizona/Nevada Area Office hosted its first Business Opportunities Open House at its downtown office Jan. 29.

The event consisted of a morning session and an afternoon session. The event was an open forum designed to let business owners learn about contract opportunities and to learn how to do business with the Corps. Senior leadership from each division in the District was on hand to discuss aspects of the Corps' work throughout Arizona and Nevada.

"Many times people just don't understand what we, in the Army Corps of Engineers, do, so this really provides a forum for them to understand the Corps," said Col. Mark Toy, the LA District commander. "It allows them to do it in a very efficient way, because they can meet everybody in the Corps of Engineers in a two-hour period."

There were no formal presentations, no poring over mountains of computer slide shows, and no speeches during the event. Instead, the Corps laid out the room with tables around the perimeter and representatives from the various divisions to speak with businesses owners and representatives who attended. Toy said the idea for the open forum came from discussions he had with members of the Society of American Military Engineers in Los Angeles who let him know they had difficulty meeting and understanding how the Corps works.

"It really is in the idea that we're trying to be good partners, because in the Army Corps of Engineers, we actually don't build anything," he explained. "We do programs and project management. We do design. We do construction. We do quality assurance. But, we actually don't build anything. The people who actually build things are the people who are in this room, so we need to establish that good relationship with them at the very beginning."

The businesses, which were both large and small, attended the event to meet with District representatives in



Jonathan Stratton (left) and Joe Derungs, both with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District's Arizona/Nevada Area Office, speak with business representatives during the first Business Opportunities Open House held Jan. 29 at the District's downtown Phoenix office. Nearly 300 business owners and operators spoke with District representatives during the event designed to let business people learn about contract opportunities and gain insight on how to do business with the Corps. (USACE photo by Daniel J. Calderon)

each area of the Corps' business lines. Members of the business community said they appreciated the chance to have such a relaxed event at which they could really take time to get to know Corps team members.

"It's relaxed and you can let everyone here know just what it is you do and how you can help," said Maria Dadgar, vice president for Marketing and Strategic Growth for PACE Pacific. "It's very important to hold more of these kinds of open houses, especially now. With the economy the way it is now, we, as business owners, really appreciate the opportunity to meet with organizations like the Corps in a local setting."

The District's sheer size, with its area of responsibility extending into four states, has attracted businesses from as far away as San Diego and Las Vegas, in addition to businesses in Phoenix and across Arizona. Local Corps employees said the chance to interact with business owners was equally beneficial.

"I found that there were a lot of people thanking Angela and I for doing all of the work; but, they also said they found the interactions with

Corps employees to be very valuable," said Quana Higgins, a lead planner in the Arizona/Nevada Area Office. "It seemed like there were quite a few small businesses which have not had the opportunity to work with the Corps yet that were able to get that important 'what we do' information."

In the end, nearly 300 business owners and operators attended the day's event. Each of them came away with new information and insight into how the Corps operates and how they can better leverage their own abilities into the Corps' mission. The small business owners said they feel better about their chances to work with the Corps of Engineers.

"I think it's good. We've been able to talk to some small business people to help us get some support in terms of small business set asides," said Kristin Fangmeier, principal investigator for Archaeological Consulting Services, Ltd. "I think it would be useful [for the Corps to host another event like this in the future] because there's always new faces and making that kind of contact is very valuable."

District observes MLK holiday with day of service

By Brooks Hubbard IV

LOS ANGELES — The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Black Employment Program honored Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday with a day of service by delivering more than 100 pounds of collected toiletries and toys to local shelters in the downtown Los Angeles community Jan. 22.

The BEP began collecting toiletries and toys at the end of the Christmas break and District employees dropped off toiletry items and toys in a collection box that was located in the District's EEO office.

"Our team wanted to do something different this year in observation of the King holiday," said Arnecia Williams, District Black Employment Program manager. "I am extremely happy with the large donations of toiletries and toys by our District employees and our BEP team members' support in getting them out."

Williams and BEP program team members Matthews Turner, Lashawn Richardson, Brooks Hubbard and Debra McCree delivered the items to the Downtown Women's Center, located one block away from "Los Angeles' skid row." Team members handed out about 70 toiletry kits to residents of that center.

The DWC is a nonprofit organization providing permanent housing and other services for homeless women.

"We are happy to have received your donations," said Carla Guirriero, DWC communications coordinator. "Our center provides about 150 hot lunches per day and offers shower facilities for homeless women and residents of this



The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Los Angeles District Black Employment Program honored Martin Luther King Jr. Day with a day of service by delivering more than 100 pounds of collected toiletries and toys to local shelters in the downtown Los Angeles community. Lashawn Richardson, Debra McCree, Matthews Turner and Arnecia Williams, offload donated items at the Downtown Women's Center. (USACE photo by Brooks O. Hubbard)

center who need them."

After the distribution of the toiletries, Guirriero provided team members with a tour of the 71 apartment facility, one of two facilities that provide a total of 119 apartments. The tour also included a visit to the center's retail store, named "MADE by DWC." The store features items made by women at the center with 100 percent of the proceeds going directly to the DWC.

"I actually enjoyed giving our packages to the women at the center," said Richardson. "It surely made me feel like I fulfilled my day of service."

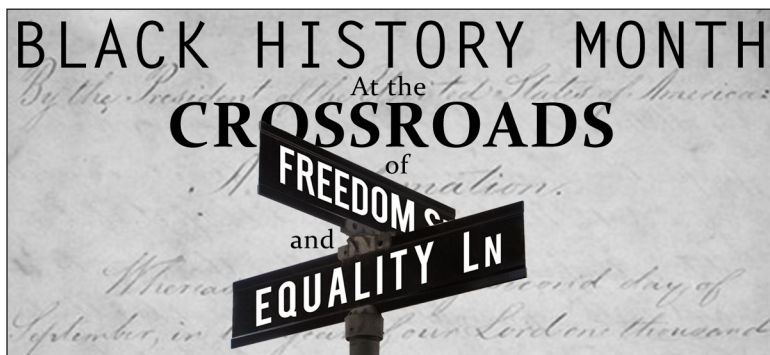
The team then proceeded to the Union Rescue Mission in the heart of

downtown Los Angeles' skid row where they distributed toy gifts donated by District employees.

"I enjoyed the opportunity to distribute our District's gifts," said McCree. "I will surely look into returning and volunteering."

The DWC opened its doors in 1986 as "the first permanent supportive housing program for women in the U.S." Jill Halverson founded the center providing homeless women an alternative to homelessness and giving them a foundation to rebuild their lives.

For more information about the DWC, please visit their website at: <http://www.DWCWEB.org>.



African-American History Month Focuses on Achievements

By Terri Moon Cronk
American Forces Press Service

WASHINGTON — African-Americans have made and continue to make major contributions to the nation's defense, the director of the Defense Department's office of diversity management and equal opportunity said in a recent interview.

As National African-American History Month commences today, this year's theme -- "At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington" -- is important for two reasons, Clarence A. Johnson told the Pentagon Channel and American Forces Press Service.

"The Emancipation Proclamation is 150 years old, and the March on Washington is 50 years old," he said. "The Emancipation Proclamation freed the slaves, but it also enhanced America's freedom."

Because 1963's March on Washington precipitated the Civil Rights Act, DOD components worldwide will celebrate with those events in mind because of their contributions to diversity and freedom, Johnson said.

National African-American History Month gives people an opportunity to recognize African-Americans who have contributed to the nation's defense, and that recognition is important, he said.

"It gives us the time to appreciate the strides we've made," he added. "I think we pride ourselves in ... [making] sure all our individuals are treated with equality, dignity and respect."

As the military services observe National African-American History Month, Johnson said, there are two things to keep in mind: service and commitment. Greatness is achieved by serving others, he said, while commitment to diversity is critical to the nation and to DOD. African-Americans have long since left their mark on defending the nation since the Revolutionary War, he added.

In the American Revolution, Johnson said, 51 African-Americans served, and in the Civil War, 180,000 served. Some 35,000 African-Americans died in the Civil War, he added.

"African-Americans continue to serve and distinguish themselves in war and peacetime," said Johnson, adding that 90 African-Americans have received the Medal of Honor. And African-Americans continue to be well represented in DOD, he added.

"Almost 18 percent of our enlisted corps is African-American," he said. "More than 9 percent of officers are African-American. In our civilian workforce, African-Americans [make up] about 15 percent."

Since President Harry S. Truman signed an executive order in 1948 to desegregate the services, DOD has made significant achievements, Johnson said.

"We have led the nation in maintaining and achieving an



The Director of the Defense Department's office of Diversity Management and Equal Opportunity Clarence A. Johnson said that this year's theme, "At the Crossroads of Freedom and Equality: The Emancipation Proclamation and the March on Washington" -- is important for two reasons. "The Emancipation Proclamation is 150 years old, and the March on Washington is 50 years old," he said. Johnson is responsible for the development and coordination of diversity management and equal opportunities policies and programs affecting all DOD civilian employees and military personnel within DOD worldwide.

integrated workforce," he said. "We've made great strides in making sure we select folks with the highest potential [and] talent to serve, and we continue to find that programs and policies DOD put in place helped us maintain our equal opportunity program to make sure that [people] achieve their maximum [capabilities]."

Defense Secretary Leon E. Panetta has said that diversity is a force of the military's strength and a key to maintaining readiness, Johnson said.

"So as we celebrate and commemorate diversity," he added, "we are celebrating the contributions of all men and women who have contributed to the DOD mission."

Gluten-Free: Should we be?

By Cecy Ordonez

LOS ANGELES — Have you noticed an increased number of gluten-free options now available at the grocery store and on restaurant menus? Have you ever wondered if gluten-free is another fad diet or if gluten intolerance is really increasing along with gluten related health problems? It seems like only a decade ago no one seemed to have a problem with eating gluten in bread and other foods and now, millions do. Awareness of the gluten allergy epidemic is increasing now, but scientific studies have barely begun. The following are only theories or possibilities that will be researched further.

Gluten is a protein that is made up of two proteins, gliadin and glutenin, that are bound together by a carbohydrate. Gluten plays a key role in determining the unique baking quality of wheat, barley and rye. For example, it makes pizza dough stretchy, makes pasta strong but not elastic and gives bread a

spongy, light and texture. Due to modern food



processing, it is also found in other commonly used products such as: cereals, candies, salad dressing, french fries, processed luncheon meat, soups and soup bases, gravies, beer and many more.

One theory looks at the amount of gluten being eaten. Gluten consumption has significantly increased in the last 50 years. It rose in the 1960s when wheat was labeled as healthy and was advertised as being cheaper to consume than dairy or meat. Then rose again in the 70s and 80s when fast food eating significantly increased. In the 1990s it rose once again in response to the government releasing the food pyramid which promoted more whole grain consumption. By the end of the 1990s, the American diet was full of gluten: a bagel or cereal for breakfast, crackers for a snack, sandwich for lunch, pasta with garlic bread and beer for dinner, and cake or cookies for dessert!

A second theory involves the hybridization of wheat. In the 1950s, the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center and other wheat research centers decided to tackle world hunger. The focus was to dramatically increase wheat

yields that were resistant to fungus and more pliable for industrial bread baking. According to World Wheat Facts and Trends, the world's largest producer of wheat, China, increased from eight to sixty-five bushels per acres. With decades of cross-breeding and hybridization, the wheat we eat today is a two-and-a-half-foot dwarf transformed from the four-and-a-half-foot tall "amber waves of grain" our grandparents ate. In fact, some experts are now calling it "frankenwheat" because it has been modified so many times that it no longer resembles the parent wheat; it has higher amounts of starch and gluten and many more chromosomes coding for all sorts of new odd proteins.

Lastly, a controversial book, "Wheat Belly" written by a cardiologist William Davis, argues that the hybridized wheat of today has an adverse effect on health. One fact he argues is that wheat has higher levels of what he refers to as a "super starch" called amylopectin A. This "super starch" has the highest glycemic index of all foods, such that two slices of whole wheat bread raises the blood sugar higher than six teaspoons of table sugar. In addition, he argues the wheat we eat today contains a form of "super gluten." Wheat 50 years ago contained 14 chromosomes for the small number of gluten proteins found in wheat, now, that number has doubled to twenty eight chromosomes that now produce a large variety of gluten proteins. Although the "super gluten" makes bread big and fluffy, he argues that it is also creating inflammation in the body. Lastly, he argues the new wheat contains a "super drug" that causes an addiction to food. The addiction comes when one of the proteins found in gluten, gliadin, binds with the opiate receptors of the brain that in turn stimulate appetite, where it triggers one to eat more. Of course, the desire to eat more does not come from healthier foods, instead we are triggered to eat more junk food. In fact, he argues we eat 440 calories more per day times 365 days per year.

With the increased consumption of the hybridized wheat today, studies are beginning to link gluten to many chronic diseases (i.e. autoimmune disease, irritable bowel, reflux, cancer, depression, osteoporosis, Celiac, diabetes, heart disease, obesity etc.). Going gluten-free has historically been used as a disease management therapy. There are different degrees of gluten reactions: gluten sensitive (mild stomach upset, gas, diarrhea), gluten intolerance (an immediate negative response to eating any type of wheat), wheat allergy (an allergic response to the presence of any kind of wheat), and celiac disease (a severe genetic immune response to the presence of any kind of wheat. Although people with gluten reactions are avoiding wheat, for the remainder of the population, it is best to consult with a physician before attempting a gluten free diet. Despite what certain fad diets would have you believe, we all need a balance of carbohydrates, protein, fat, fiber, vitamins, and minerals to sustain a healthy body. A healthier and happier you begins with being mindful of eating a balanced diet that keeps everything in moderation.

Performance Triad: Simple truth



Army Surgeon General Lt. Gen. Patricia D. Horoho said, “The ‘Performance Triad’ summarizes a simple truth about human performance and well-being: that all of us--no matter who we are, how old we are, or what we do--need a balance of three things to build and sustain health. The three are sleep, activity and nutrition. This is something I am absolutely passionate about; I believe we are going to make great changes in health care and in health. We’re creating something different than anything we have in the past. We [Army medicine] do health care better than anyone else in the world; now we are going to be the model for delivering health. We need to get people to think about what they are doing. We all mean well, but we all want instant results. It (improving and maintaining health) isn’t that easy--it really takes how we, individually, look at activity, nutrition and sleep.”

What is it?

- The Army Surgeon General has championed the new Performance Triad of Activity, Nutrition and Sleep, to build resilience, improve readiness and enhance the health of the Army family.
- During the last 20 years, there has been a dramatic increase in obesity among adults, children and adolescents in the U.S. According to the 2012 National Examination Survey (for 2009-2010,) approximately 41 million women, 37 million men, five million girls and seven million boys were obese.
- The U.S. Army and the armed forces are not immune to this health crisis. Between 1998 and 2010, the number of active-duty overweight or obese military personnel more than tripled. Approximately nine million young adults in the prime recruitment ages of 17-24 are “too fat to fight” and serve as a member of our nation’s fighting force. Nationally, only about 25 percent of young adults are eligible to serve. The remaining adults are not eligible to enlist due to obesity or other preventable health conditions.

What has the Army done?

- As the Army seeks to attract and retain quality Soldiers and civilians, it must also find ways to influence lifestyle behaviors to support the readiness and health

of the force. Army Move! is a standardized weight management program that provides useful nutrition and physical activity strategies to help the Army family achieve weight management success.

Why is this important to the Army?

- A healthy and fit force is critical to the Army and national security. The Army has no greater mission than to help our Soldiers, retirees, family members and civilians, prevent disease and live healthier lives. Obesity increases risks for diabetes, cardio-vascular and heart disease, hypertension, cancer and many other related health conditions. However, these health risks can be prevented and controlled by making positive lifestyle choices. Maintaining a healthy body weight through good nutrition with a proper balance of sleep and activity is the key to disease prevention and a healthier life.

What continued efforts does the Army have planned for the future?

- As Army Medicine moves from a healthcare system to a system of health, our focus is on prevention of disease. The Army and Army Medicine will continue to encourage members of the Army family to make healthier choices to enhance the health, resiliency and readiness of the force.

This should annoy you too!

By Steve McCombs

LOS ANGELES — We all have our pet peeves. Yes? One of my biggest is, when having my groceries checked at the supermarket, somebody walks up and interrupts the cashier with some sort of issue like, “I need to return this thing I bought last week.” Last week??? Grrr. Yes, by the way, I shop, cook, do laundry and other household chores along with taking care of the more traditional “man stuff” like home repairs and the ever-present “honey-do list.” But let’s get back to the peeves.

My very biggest is, in spite of everything that’s been on the news, new traffic laws and multiple studies about the dangers of driving while using a cell phone, I still see folks driving along with their cell in their ear and totally oblivious to everything around them. Or worse, they are texting. Some folks are doing everything, except paying attention to their vehicle operation! It’s all called “Distracted Driving” and you should never, ever, do it.

Think of driving this way....you are moving at a high rate of speed in a large chunk of metal, plastic, explosive and toxic chemicals. Think of it this way - you are essentially driving a bomb. There are multiple other folks doing the very same thing in close proximity to you. One little mistake, physics takes over, and, BOOM! There is little or no room for error.

Those of you who know me and/or read my monthly column should have figured out that I do have a mischievous sense of humor. Well, it appears that so does someone else at the Army Safety Center. So stop reading and click the following link: <https://safety.army.mil/multimedia/VIDEOLIBRARY/VideoPlayer/TabId/421/VideoId/444/Drive-Safe--Multitasking-Test.aspx>.

Now that you’ve had a chuckle, here’s a link to information very worth your time. Share it with your co-workers, family and friends: <http://www.distraction.gov/content/get-the-facts/facts-and-statistics.html>.

Do you recognize any of those behaviors in yourself? Others? If so, it’s time to take action. In spite of the many improvements in motor vehicle safety, we are still killing well over 30,000 people every year in the U.S., not to mention the injuries and billions of dollars in damage. Any of you who have been in a serious accident know what I mean. It can take years to get through all the legal red tape. If you’ve never been in a serious accident, do everything you can to avoid it.

I know you’ve heard me rant about this before, but it is worth repeating.

As always, drive safe, drive sober and buckle up!

Safety Steve



(There is no cheesy slogan to prevent reckless driving.)

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There is no spokesperson with a catchy phrase to remind the driver to slow down, stop eating, quit messing with the radio or pay attention to the road. **There's Only You. Speak Up.**

Historic Los Alamitos base now home to state-of-the-art Army Reserve headquarters

By Dave Palmer

LOS ALAMITOS, Calif. — The 79th Sustainment Support Command officially opened its new 53,000 square-foot headquarters facility on Joint Forces Training Base Los Alamitos Jan. 12.

Hosting fellow Soldiers, civic leaders and community members was Maj. Gen. William D. Frink, Jr., 79th SSC commander.

“The structure behind me... is proof positive of U.S. Army commitment to our Army Reserve Soldiers,” said Frink. “Our new home represents \$29 million worth of construction in Southern California. This is tangible recognition of the Army Reserve as an indispensable force to our Nation.”

For a sustainable future, Corps projects like this one are designed using the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Program. LEED is how the U.S. Green Building Council rates a project for its design and achievement in categories like sustainability, water efficiency, energy conservation and design innovation.

“We demonstrate care for our community by ensuring we are good stewards of our environment,” said Frink. “The building behind me is LEED Gold. It optimizes energy performance and was built with regional material to cut down on our carbon footprint. It has low water consumption and uses both renewable energy and recycled material.”

Even the covered parking lots are an energy feature. Covered in a photo voltaic system that, according to Edward Desmond of Cox Construction of Vista, Calif., will produce 375 KVA [kilovolt-amps], generating enough power to offset the building’s



Maj. Gen. William D. Frink, Jr., 79th Sustainment Support Command commander addresses fellow Soldiers, community members and civic leaders at the opening of the Army Reserve Center at Joint Forces Training Base, Los Alamitos, Calif., Jan. 12. The facility is certified LEED Gold under guidelines established by the U.S. Green Building Council who rates a project for its design and achievement in categories like sustainability, water efficiency, energy conservation and design innovation. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)

consumption on the Los Alamitos power grid.

The 79th SSC commands approximately 20,000 Army Reserve Soldiers and civilians across 19 states located west of the Mississippi River. By all accounts, this state-of-the-art facility is well equipped to enhance mission readiness and family well-being for such a geographically dispersed unit.

“I think it helps to build camaraderie,” said Ann Nacino, Youth Services specialist. “It helps to build

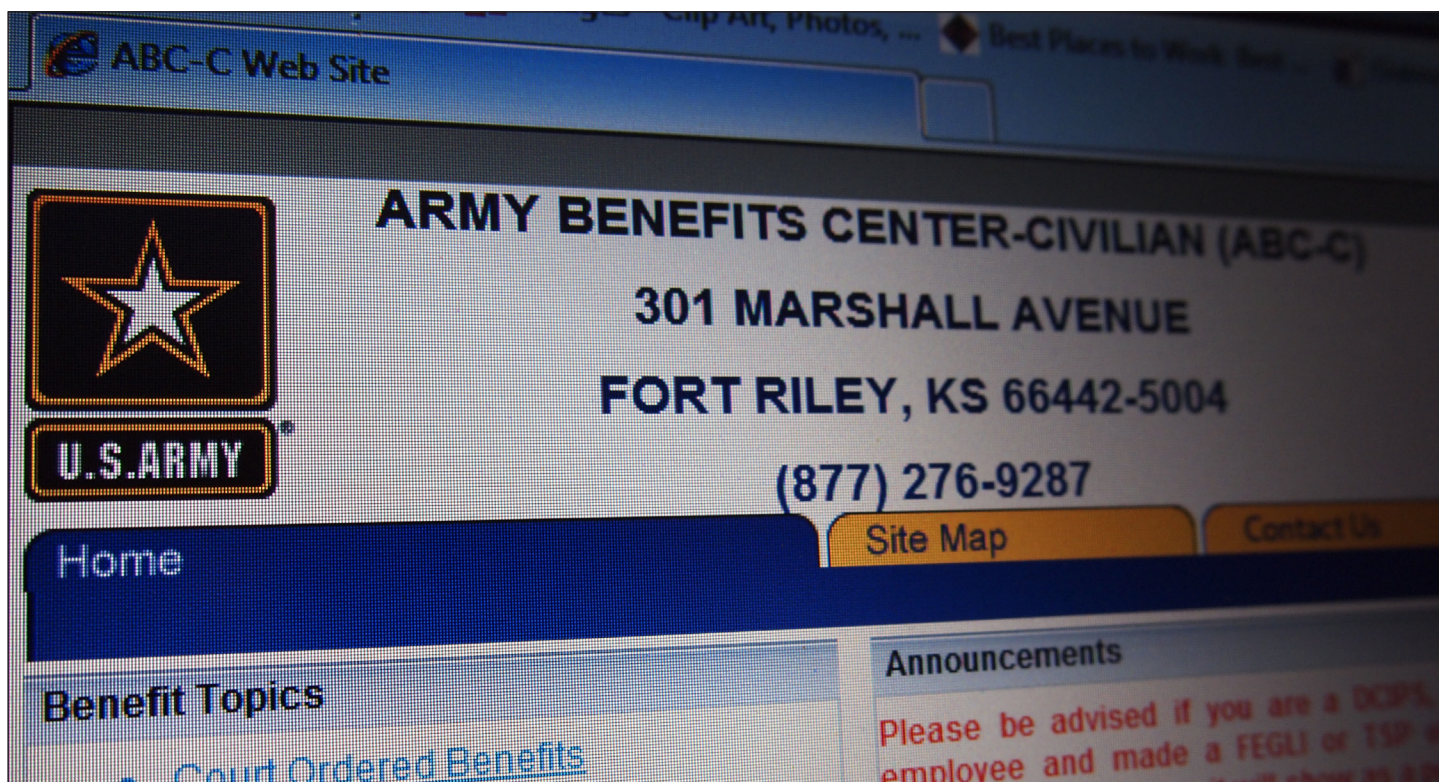
that connection with the Soldiers and civilians that support the command full time.”

“This building tends to be a beacon for family members of all different services,” said Sherry Rallis, Family Readiness community outreach assistant. “We really enjoy, as staff, collaborating with each other and welcoming family members and Soldiers that now have direct access to us, all in the same building.”

Hope you “Like” us on Facebook

www.facebook.com/ladistrict

Manage your benefits: Easy as ABC



By Liza A. Rosa
Human Resources Specialist

LOS ANGELES — Need assistance? Help is as easy as ABC...

The Employee Benefits Information System is accessible through the Army Benefits Center website using a government or personal computer with a common access card reader installed and configured.

EBIS is a web application that enables you to access general and personal benefits information and

conduct electronic transactions using a computer. The first time accessing the EBIS system a unique username and password must be created. Select "New User" to begin.

Benefit transactions can still be managed through the Interactive Voice Response System which is an automated self-service program accessible from a touch-tone telephone system. IVRS is available 24 hours a day. The toll-free number is 877-276-9287. Benefits counselors are available Monday through Friday from 6:00 a.m.

to 6:00 p.m. central time. Some changes to benefit plans are restricted to an "Open Season."

The following program information is available; Social Security, Civil Service Retirement, Thrift Savings Plan, Federal Employees Health Benefits, Federal Employees Group Life Insurance, and Survivor Benefits.

To install a CAC reader on a personal computer, information and installation instructions are available on the Army Knowledge Online website, <https://www.us.army.mil>.

A Message from the TSP's Executive Director

As we await legislation on raising the Federal debt limit, I would like to address your concerns about the suspension of issued securities to the Government Securities Investment (G) Fund. In an effort to avoid breaching the statutory debt limit, the Federal Government will temporarily be unable to issue new securities to the G Fund because to do so would exceed the present debt limit. However, G Fund investors are always fully protected and G Fund earnings are fully guaranteed by the Federal Government due to statutory protections in the Thrift Savings Plan Investment Act of 1987. This protection, known as the "make-whole" provision, will work to ensure that G Fund investors are completely unaffected by the limitation on securities issued by the U.S.

Treasury. G Fund account balances will continue to accrue earnings and be updated each business day, and loans and withdrawals will be unaffected.

The Government Accountability Office has published a report which explains the full protection provided to G Fund investors when the U.S. Government reaches the statutory Federal debt limit. The report can be found here: <http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-12-701>

If you have any additional questions, please call the toll-free ThriftLine at 1-877-968-3778 and speak to a Participant Service Representative.

Greg T. Long
Executive Director

Army Engineer Spouses' Club announces scholarship opportunities

The Army Engineer Spouses' Club announces the availability of the 2013 Army Engineer Memorial Awards and the 2013 Geraldine K. Morris Award.

The Army Engineer Memorial Awards were established in 1973 as a living memorial to Engineer Officers killed in Vietnam and are given annually to honor all Engineer Officers who died in the line of duty. To qualify for an award, you must be a graduating high school senior who is a citizen of the United States and whose sponsor, parent, or legal guardian is a U.S. Army Engineer (active duty, retired or deceased) or current Department of the Army employee of the United States Army Corps of Engineers. The scholarships are open to students in all fields of study and are based on academic and extracurricular achievement during high school. All monies awarded must be applied toward tuition or scholastic expenses at a college, university, technical or vocational school.

The Geraldine K. Morris Award was established in 2006. Mrs. Morris served as an Army nurse, was Honorary President of the Army Engineer Spouses' Club and wife of the 44th Chief of Engineers, LTG (Ret) John Morris. The award designed to honor her service and memory is available to a graduating high school senior who intends to enroll in a program leading to a nursing degree or certification, and is a citizen of the United States whose sponsor, parent, or legal guardian is a U.S. Army Engineer (active duty, retired or deceased) or current Department of the Army employee of the United States Army



Corps of Engineers. This award will be renewable based on the student's GPA and their maintaining full-time enrollment in a nursing program.

The Army Engineer Spouses' Club, through efforts of its membership and outside contributors, has established a permanent fund for the perpetuation of the Army Engineer Memorial Award. Individuals may make a tax-deductible contribution to this fund, either as a gift or as a memorial.

The AESC 2013 Application now available here <http://www.armyengineerspouses.com/scholarships.html>.

Scholarship Information

Many organizations provide scholarships or support reduced tuition for military personnel, veterans and their family members. Below is a list of associations, educational institutions and corporations offering education assistance to the military community. We have also included links to some helpful guides to aid in applying for scholarships as well as links to online scholarship search engines, which provide an easy way to find scholarship programs across the country.

American Legion Scholarships

- The American Legion provides several different scholarships, including one for children who have lost a parent in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Veterans of Foreign Wars

- The VFW offers two scholarship programs for children and youth: The Voice of Democracy Scholarship and the Patriot's Pen award.

American Military University

- AMU offers a wide variety of undergraduate and graduate-level degree and certificate programs to

students through on-line programs designed to advance the careers of military personnel serving in a variety of professions and assignments.

Army Emergency Relief Education Programs

- AER provides grants for education to military spouses and children.

AUSA Chapters

- Many AUSA chapters provide scholarships to Soldiers and family members. You can locate your closest chapter using the online locator.

Council of College and Military Educators

- The Council of College and Military Educators (CCME) is the only National Organization for professional military educators. It offers several scholarships to Servicemembers and spouses.

Defense Commissary Agency/Fisher House Scholarships

- Information on eligibility requirements and application materials for Scholarships for Military Children Program.

Military.com Education

- Military.com's guide to schools, financial aid and scholarships for military personnel and family members.

LA District welcomes new employees



Carolyn Barkey - CD



Damon Durham - CD



Doryce Garcia - CT



Capt. Eli McMahan - CD



Eric Lauritsen - RM



Jared Rowley - CD



Juanita Mack - RG



Klaire Desamparo - ED



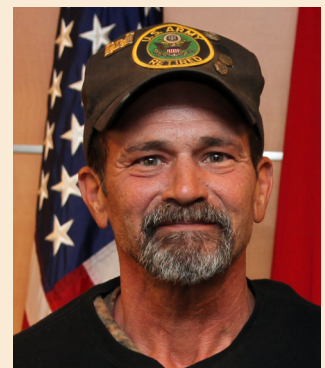
Mary Whited - RG



Matthew Gonzalez - PM



Norman Boeman - CD



Pablo Ulloa - CD



Shari Johnson - RG



Sonya Olbrantz - EOC

Los Angeles District Commander Colonel Mark Toy shared his thoughts on leadership during the New Employee Orientation Jan 15.

According to the commander leaders must be passionate about their jobs and what they do. They should mentor their employees to help them reach their personal and professional goals. They must continue learning through self-development and training. Leaders must take care of people and work to build and strengthen relationships because those relationships can help carry them through and lastly, leaders must be thankful and humble. (USACE photos by Richard Rivera)

Around the District

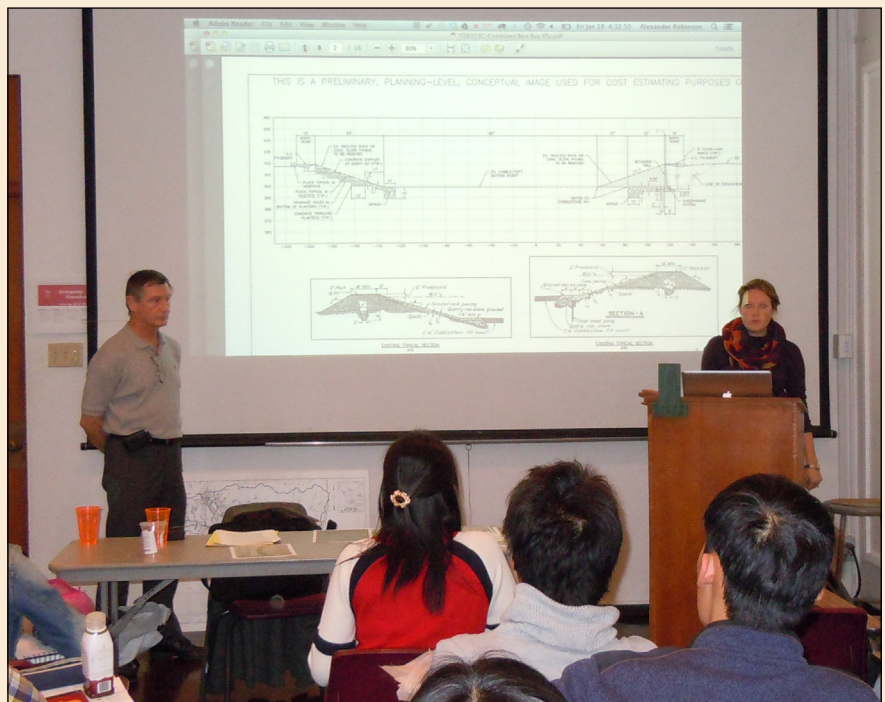


on retirement

Col. Mark Toy (right), the Los Angeles District commander, and David Van Dorpe, the LA District's Deputy District Engineer for Programs and Project Management, presented Mary J. Clausell, a budget analyst with the Programs and Project Management Division her retirement certificate Jan. 28. (USACE photo by Richard Rivera)

professional pride

Corps employees Alison Lind and Charles Dwyer (left) visited the University of Southern California's School of Architecture Jan. 18 to speak to graduate landscape students working on a project involving the Los Angeles River. The employees discussed the students' project in relation to the Corps' Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study. The students prepared simple sketches for Lind and Dwyer to critique and have asked them to return for their mid-term and final reviews.



BUILDING STRONG® and Taking Care of People!

Lessons learned show the way ahead



The Society of American Military Engineers featured U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick as their keynote speaker at Quiet Canon Country Club in Montebello, Calif., Jan. 18. Bostick addressed more than 100 SAME members and guests during their 27th annual joint breakfast meeting. (USACE photo by Dave Palmer)

By Dave Palmer

MONTEBELLO, Calif. — U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Commanding General Lt. Gen. Thomas P. Bostick addressed members and guests from the Los Angeles, Orange County and Inland Empire posts of the Society of American Military Engineers during their 27th annual joint breakfast meeting at Quiet Canon Country Club here Jan. 18.

USACE South Pacific Division Commander Brig. Gen. Michael C. Wehr introduced Bostick as the keynote speaker to an audience of more than 100. In his introduction, Wehr spoke about the aftermath of Hurricane Sandy and how, as the USACE commanding general, Bostick brought people together, connecting people and [mission] execution.

"I think, at the Corps of Engineers, we engineer the solutions to the nation's toughest challenges," said Bostick. "It really is a team effort. It happens at the local level. That's where the work is done."

As an example of that local effort, Bostick mentioned two Los Angeles District civil works projects; Seven Oaks and Prado dams. Together, they provide approximately \$140 million in flood risk reduction each year and protect 2 million people.

Using the damage sustained during Hurricane Katrina as an example, Bostick said, "As a nation, roughly \$135 billion was spent on recovery; of that, only \$14.5 billion was spent on the protection system. I always think that there is a silver lining,

something we can learn. If we'd had that, we'll say \$15 billion, early on, we'd have saved roughly \$120 billion for the nation."

Part of the struggle, according to Bostick, is conveying that message to Congress and those who can help appropriate the funds. After Hurricane Sandy, Bostick said New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, spent a great deal of time checking the damage along the coastline.

"Gov. Christie was very concerned about the coastlines," said Bostick. "He saw that where there were Corps projects, on the coastline, the homes behind them were in pretty good shape, where they were not, they were flat."

According to Bostick, \$60 billion has been authorized for Corps civil works projects nationwide, but only \$2 billion has been funded by Congress. During Bostick's first seven months in command, natural disasters, like hurricanes Sandy and Isaac and the Midwest drought's impact on Mississippi River traffic, have racked up over \$60 billion in damages to date.

As part of its core mission, USACE is prepared for disaster response, with hundreds of employees responding to worldwide contingencies each year. During Hurricane Sandy relief efforts, Wehr deployed from the South Pacific Division and the Los Angeles District deployed 13 employees, including District Commander Col. Mark Toy. The Corps remains dedicated to the construction, maintenance and operation of key infrastructure that contributes to the economy, environment, safety and quality of life of the Nation.

On perspective, perception and ponderous pulpit pounding.

By Daniel J. Calderón

Alliteration is not really my favorite thing; but, sometimes it's fun to see if I can do it. It's an exercise to see if I can find words to link possibly disconnected possibilities into a unified whole. I'll leave it to you to determine whether I was successful since you really won't be able to tell until you get to the end of this.

A lot of what we do during our normal days is determined by our perspective. Some people have no problem with changing lanes on a whim with no signals given to the rest of the motoring public. I have to assume their perspective is that there is no need to give a signal since they feel they know exactly where they are going and they think there is plenty of space to get there safely. Of course, my perception is that they are simply too dumb to know where the little toggle for the signal is located or the actual working of the mechanism is beyond their feeble comprehension. That's just my thought, though.

I've also seen (read about it, mostly, since I don't take in as much broadcast news as I do the written variety. Ask me why sometime and we can chat about it) stories about the whole gun control issue. I've seen various and sundry municipalities and state agencies threaten to simply ignore any federal laws they feel may violate the Second Amendment. I have read meme after meme on social media likening the current debate and debaters to notions of Hitler and his ilk. I have seen stories about posturing politicians, die-hard gun enthusiasts and "liberal" fact slingers on both sides of the debates. It's almost as if the issue of gun control had an easy one-size-fits-all solution that could be captured in a simple slogan.

It seems to me that any solution has to be more complex than "take all the guns in the name of" (insert your cause here – it could be safety or maybe it's the greater good) or "you can have my gun when you pry it from my cold, dead fingers." In this land hewn from, and designed for, compromise, adhering so strongly to one side or another with such rigidity seems counterproductive to progress. If people had been so set in their ways on the First Amendment, there may have been no progress in libel laws since arguments could have been made about freedom of speech and freedom of the press.

If all people do is pound on their chests and yell at the top of their lungs to try and prove how right they are, they lose any possibility of seeing or hearing a valid point from the other side of a debate. In any debate, there are always at least two sides. If those who are debating refuse to listen to any side except their own, it's not a true debate. It degenerates into two rockheads simply staring each other down from their respective vantage point. It's pretty useless.

People who cling so strongly to one point or another often lose perspective on other issues of importance in the world. In my previous example, the folks who are either so

adamantly opposed to any sort of "imposition" on the Second Amendment may lose sight of the fact that there are others who feel they are being either repressed or overlooked entirely.

As an example, take a look at same-sex couples. Personally, I have no real need to see two men kiss each other in public. However, I don't think it's wrong. I don't think it's my place to impose my own sensibilities on everyone. I figure as long as they aren't hurting anyone, they should be free to find their own way to happiness. But, because there are those who feel the need to legislate the definition of a married couple, those people who want to be happy with their same-sex husband or wife (I'm using those terms because I don't know if there are any other ones being used) and share in all the same rights, with the same responsibilities, as male-female married couples are allowed to do.

Of course, points like that are missed when one is so focused on one issue. I do my best to try and keep an open mind and an open eye so I can see as many facets of as many debates as possible. To be sure, I do have my opinions, my prejudices (yes, I have prejudices and I have my own set of preconceived notions of things) and my own way of viewing the world and the people and issues in it. I do my best to overcome these; but, there are times they get in the way of expanding my horizons. I am fortunate to have people I trust try and talk me through those times, though.

If you're one of those who is totally set in your ways, I recommend asking yourself why that is so. What is it about looking at another possibility that either scares or concerns you? Are there absolutely no points other than the ones you hold close to you that could possibly be valid? Is there no way to find common ground or compromise with anyone who doesn't see the world your way? If you're that set on things, I kind of pity you.

I pity you because it could be that your world is so closed off that you don't allow for new information, new insight or new possibilities. I pity you because that aspect of your world will never be the light of inspiration that only new perspective can bring.

Granted, convictions are not bad to have. My pity is meant for those who have forgotten that there are other ways of doing things than those that are summed up by, "we've always done it this way." With every generation, there are fresh ideas. With every breath, there is the possibility of a new perspective, a shift in perception and a chance to step down from your pulpit and truly experience the world around you. Just a thought...



LA District's Black Employment Program
hosts kick-off ceremonies Feb. 4 at 10:30

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

At the
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of

FREEDOM
and
EQUALITY LN

The Emancipation Proclamation 1863

and the MARCH ON WASHINGTON 1963

sunlit path of racial justice.

Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the

Designed by Peter Hemmer for the Defense Equal Opportunity Management Institute