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On behalf of the Federally Employed Women (FEW), I want to take this opportunity to wish you a Merry Christmas, a joyous Holiday Season and a Happy New Year. THANK YOU to our members and volunteers for being a part of our family.

FEW continues to be a leader in strengthening the foundation of our community in federal service and among our network. We are cause-driven, unifying our membership by “Soaring to New Heights.” This year our focus has embodied all of our work and delivered on our Mission: To remain a grassroots employee organization that works to improve the status of women employed in the federal government with a strong charitable arm that promotes healthy living, compliance with the laws, philanthropy and volunteerism.

FEW had an exciting year in 2021 and much success. At this time of the year, the smile and laughter of our membership are infectious, and it brings out the best in holiday cheer. Fortunately for the FEW, we enjoyed that laughter all year long in programs like our Virtual Leadership Summit II and our very first Science, Technology, Engineer and Math (STEM) Program for women and girls. Another historic year for this organization, and I am so glad we could reach and help so many people. FEW won the unsung heroes of federal service award early in the year and was featured on the Alex Tremble Show.

This summer, FEW committed to breaking the poverty cycle and improving women’s health and wellness by participating in the GEHA “Coast to Coast” Challenge. Our members were so committed to health and wellness that we had the most members participate, and we won second place overall. The value of connecting with people and organizations from across the world was phenomenal. Participants shared many dietary and exercise tips; it was a fun way to network and learn helpful tips to take care of your inner self and your outside appearance.

We expanded our partnership agreements with many new agencies and companies like George Washington and Veterans Administration. Then FEW strengthen our collaborations for the benefit of our members and current partnerships. Legislatively, FEW had several advocacies writing campaigns to focus on the Equal Rights Amendment, equity in pay, paid family medical leave and voting rights. FEW’s training emphasized applying leadership technics and decision-making choices to reduce barriers for women.

And this was a fantastic year for chapters and regions activities. FEW upgraded our website, our awards system and our membership content to better support members using technology. We continue to use our network to explore options for a better future.

These are just a handful of accomplishments and partnerships created in 2021.

In 2022, FEW will renew our commitment to make sure all members have the opportunity to reach their full potential- for better service and greater opportunities. We will prove once again that we are your number one organization of choice in federal service and a major resource of information.

I urge you to stay in contact and communicate with us in person, online and via social media.

THANK YOU for being a member of our FEW family, and may God continue to bless you and your family during this holiday season.

Happy Holidays,

Karen Rainey
President of Federally Employed Women
Veterans Day Honoring All Men and Women Who Have Served

By: Cathy Haines

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has centered its 2021 Veterans Day national theme around the centennial commemoration of the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Dedicated in 1921, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier is Arlington National Cemetery’s most iconic memorial. Over the past century, the site has become a people’s memorial that inspires reflection on service, courage, sacrifice, and mourning. Since 1937, the Army has maintained a 24-hour guard over the tomb in shifts. For 84 years, Army soldiers have performed a changing of the guard ceremony. This past October marked the first time three women carried it out.

Women were not allowed to volunteer for the Tomb Guard Platoon until 1994. This all-female changing of the guard was the final one for Sgt. First Class Chelsea Porterfield who completed 20 months of service as the first female Sergeant of the Guard.

Women have served either officially or unofficially in every war this country has ever waged and have never been subjected to a draft. The image of the three female soldiers was a moving visual reminder of the often-unrecognized sacrifices that women have made for the military because they wanted to, not because they had to serve. It also underscores how visible women have become in the military as they make up more than 16 percent of the enlisted forces and 19 percent of the officer corps.

Veterans Day is a great time to thank one of the approximately 19 million male and female veterans in our country.
There are many euphemisms to describe it, selfless leaders, torchbearers (casting shadows on themselves to shine a light on others), etc., but being a contributing member of society requires us to put others before ourselves. Selfless giving is no more prevalent than in Indigenous Nations. Thousands of years before colonization, Native American giving traditions were culturally centric to community responsibilities, maintaining balance and connecting to all things.

To Indigenous People, giving is more than transactional; it is honored, an honor to receive, and equally an honor to give. This cyclical concept reflects the essence of connection with all things and serves to strengthen community ties. As Mindy Berry and Rebecca Adamson of First Nations Development Institute note, “the circle is a bonding experience; giving bonds one to the group and within the group because the individual provides gifts that allow the group to prosper, and the group provides gifts that allow the individual to prosper.”

This idea of reciprocal giving in Native communities illustrates an intrinsic, spiritual investment in the protection and interest of future generations. (Berry and Adamson, 2000) To receive a gift invokes an obligation to give, with interest and intent to another. A perspective that expands the circle of giving, much like the ripple effect of a stone cast to water, continuing with an ever-increasing spirit of giving and appreciation. Thus, reinforcing the Indigenous essence of working today for the 7th Generation tomorrow.

The Indigenous way of giving deconstructs the Western ideologies of hierarchies and balances wealth. The Indigenous way of giving will restore order to any nation and connection to all things. Native American giving practices are respected as cultural traditions and considered obligations for all. In stark contrast, Western giving ideology implies giving demonstrates elevated society rank and reinforces social segregations via socio-economic class structure.

Be intentional with your giving. Don’t give for the sake of receiving accolades and social status; give because it is your obligation! Give to advocate for those in our communities that are victims of systemic oppression! Be honored to give, as this will be your legacy; impact on the world is far more cherished than any promotion or awards received. Who do future generations cherish, whose stories stand the test of time? Those that gave to the world, not those that took. Honor Native American Heritage Month and Indigenous Nations throughout the year by incorporating the Indigenous way into your philanthropy and sharing this perspective with others.
It’s essential to make everyone feel accepted, respected and included regardless of the person’s culture, religion, disabilities, gender or race. I must model the kind of acceptance I want for myself.

I know acceptance is not always easy. The biggest hurdle in being open and accepting is an unconscious bias. So, it is crucial as a leader (and everyone is a leader) to be aware of personal biases and work to enhance one’s awareness through learning and working with people outside of one’s own “circle.” This is a great way to gain diverse perspectives and achieve inclusion and equity. Remember that unconscious bias and prejudice are a natural part of human behavior and there should be no shame in having them, as long you are willing to challenge them.

Keep in mind the positive impact this awareness can have on individuals and the organization’s mission. As I contemplate resolutions for the coming new year, I will start with listening to and appreciating the ideas and contributions of others.
Gifts of the Season

By: Dr Mallary Tytel, FEW Member since 2017, Diversity Committee

“Anything that has real and lasting value is always a gift from within.” – Franz Kafka

Typically, we are thinking about gifts at this time of year: buying, getting, wrapping, mailing, giving, returning, exchanging and re-gifting. Our socio-economic systems are based upon the exchange or giving of gifts and, in turn, we receive. It’s said, what is given returns in a different form to the giver; those who have the most attain status.

Another perspective is giving away things of value for the shared benefit of all. Those who give the most to others also attain status. Each of us has something of value to contribute, which allows the community to grow and attain status. For example, scientists with the highest status are not those who have the most knowledge; they are the ones who have contributed the most to their fields.

Defining success by what one gives is rooted in history, human nature, mentorship and servant leadership. In that spirit and these atypical times, consider adding these three unique gifts to your own giving.

- Gifts from your head: Share those things you are curious about, committed to, have expertise in and will stand up for.
- Gifts from your hands: Share those skills, talents and experiences you have that build, create, teach and give support.
- Gifts from your heart: Share those things you care deeply about. You are not alone. Do one simple thing to make a difference in the lives of others.

It’s as simple as that.

This atypical season, share your gifts generously with your colleagues, friends, organizations and communities. Let’s celebrate the gifts of all.
Compliance: Did You Know?
By: Debra White Johnson, National Compliance Team
Compliance Chair for Great Lakes Region and Equalitarian Chapter

This article is a part of the 2021 “Did You Know?” series, providing insight on compliance and Federally Employed Women (FEW). A few compliance highlights are covered in each release. This entry continues a review of the MD-715 basics and their use in identifying and eliminating barriers. More information can be found at the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) website: Instructions to Federal Agencies for EEO MD-715 | U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (eeoc.gov)

So, what is a BARRIER? According to the EEOC, a barrier is an agency policy, principle or practice that limits or tends to limit employment opportunities for members of a particular EEO group based on their sex, race, ethnic background or disability status.

Did You Know?
Barriers fall within one of three broad categories: Institutional/Structural, Attitudinal and Physical.

1. Institutional/Structural Barriers: Relate to rules, restrictions, requirements, routines, traditions or habits within the agency. Examples include:
   - Selecting SES candidates from only one office in the agency
   - Requiring a college degree for clerical positions
   - Limiting recruiting to the hiring manager’s alma mater

2. Attitudinal Barriers: Involve actions or beliefs that inhibit equitable progress for one or more protected groups in the agency’s workforce. This can be stereotypes, false assumptions, etc. Examples include:
   - The belief that women do not return to work after having a child
   - Certain EEO groups do not have strong leadership skills
   - Individuals with disabilities always require expensive accommodations

3. Physical Barriers: Result from the inaccessibility of agency facilities or programs to one or more protected groups of employees or applicants. Examples include:
   - A building has steps but lacks a ramp
   - Bathrooms with stalls that are too narrow to fit a wheelchair
   - Computer hardware or software that does not work with screen reading of other accommodative technology

Did You Know?
There is a prescribed process to analyzing and identifying barriers to equal employment?

✔ Step 1: Identify Triggers Using a Variety of Sources
  o Collect data from a variety of sources using benchmarks to include participation rates, inclusion rates, etc.

✔ Step 2: Investigate to Pinpoint Actual Barriers
  o Conduct root cause analysis

✔ Step 3: Develop a Plan to Eliminate the Barriers
  o Establish clear objectives, with accompanying action items, completion dates and accountable officers

✔ Step 4: Assess the Effectiveness of the Elimination Plan
  o Monitor the situation and data to determine if the identified issue has improved and make adjustments to the plan as needed

All of these steps are inextricably linked to one another. Part of maintaining a model EEO Program is to have an effective system in place that proactively identifies and makes plans to eliminate barriers to equal employment opportunity in the federal workplace.
As we begin to embark upon the holiday season, many City of Oaks Chapter members will gather with their families and friends to give thanks unto God for another year. He has allowed them to celebrate Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings.

For those who come together during this holiday season, let us not forget the reason for the season and the importance of sharing by giving a meal, a dinner or a gift to a single citizen or single parent with children during the holidays. The smile on their face will make them happy as well as yourself. Giving is such a joy and is appreciated by everyone who receives a gift regardless of how much it costs or where it comes from.

The holidays can be a time of depression and sadness for so many people because they think about their loved ones who are no longer with them, and their seat is empty at the family table. So, in this season of giving let us remember those who are less fortunate.

Giving is for the Benefit of Others, Not Our Own

By: Sandra Strayhorn, President, City of Oaks Chapter
Great Lakes Chapter Supports The Old Newsboy’s Goodfellow Dolls Program

By: Leslie Wilson-Smith, Great Lakes Chapter

Who wouldn’t want to lighten the heart of a child? This past year COVID-19 has caused many families in the Metro Detroit area financial hardships. FEW’s Great Lakes Chapter knows many families will have a great need during the upcoming 2021 Christmas season. To ensure little girls can have a precious gift under the Christmas tree, the Great Lakes Chapter is holding firm to its community services outreach commitment. This year, the chapter is supporting the Old Newsboy’s Goodfellow Doll Program. The chapter members and local U.S. Army Tank-Automotive & Armaments Command (TACOM) associates like Kim James and other community friends have dressed and donated 75 Goodfellow dolls to support economically challenged families this Christmas. Currently being led by Esther Brewer-Jones, a retired FEW life-time member, the Great Lakes Chapter has supported this worthwhile cause since 1990.

FEW members and friends who dress these dolls spend their own funds and time searching for the right outfit to make their doll stand out. Each supporter has hope that the little girl receiving a doll will get a sparkle in her eye and her face will light up with a big smile on Christmas morning. As reflected in the photos, the dolls are dressed in various glamorous fashion styles complete with sparkle and pizzazz.

Wow, these beautiful 13-inch dolls will go a long way in making local families’ holidays a little merrier this year. Many thanks go to Esther Brewer Jones, FEW’s community outreach coordinator, the Goodfellow Dolls Zone coordinator, FEW members, TACOM associates and our family and friends. They did a splendid job in making our community outreach successful.
Fall Webinars are Available!

By: Denise Mason

Learn more about the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), plus explore related topics such as making the most of your benefits and the importance of dental and vision health. Register today at BENEFEDS.com for a live webcast that includes a Q&A session with presenters. Each webinar will be available on-demand after the live presentation is over.

**FEDVIP: Shop, Enroll and Manage Your Dental and Vision Insurance**
November 9, 2021

Join us as we review FEDVIP options and online comparison tools. Review how to access FEDVIP information and chat with plan representatives for the FEHB Program, the Federal Long-Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP), the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program and BENEFEDS through our Virtual Benefits Fair.

**You See, Your Diet Can Affect Your Vision**
November 15, 2021

You’ve heard the old adage, “you are what you eat,” but did you know your diet can impact your vision? Learn how consuming higher glycemic diets (such as the typical American diet) causes accelerated rates of vision impairments and how dietary management can reduce damage as we age.

**Good Dental Health Improves Overall Health**
December 2, 2021

Did you know our mouths can tell us about our nutritional deficiencies or give early warning signs of heart disease and stroke? Learn about the link between our mouths and health problems, as well as proven preventative dental strategies to help achieve your best oral and overall health starting from an early age.
In Honor of Veteran’s Day: Honoring All Who Served!

Join us for a special Veteran’s Day webinar featuring Dan Ringo.

Dan Ringo joined the Air Force in 1993 and served honorably until discharged in 1997. A member of the inaugural class of Michigan Chronicle’s 40 Under 40 in 2013 and Who’s Who in Black Detroit, he currently serves as principal of OPIS LLC and general manager of Air Doctors Heating and Cooling. He is a trusted subject matter expert on business operations and operational improvement.

Date: November 9, 2021
Time: Noon ET

REGISTER IN ADVANCE AT:
https://us06web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZckcumtpjMiG9G1fYa_Kt1wkR_d5zkHVunq
After registering you will receive a confirmation email with details on how to join the meeting.
Veteran’s Day: Honoring All Who Served!
November 9, 2021 - 12:00 pm
Join FEW for the prestigious webinar to honor those of us who served our nation's military forces. Our nation is great because of those who serve and today we honor them. We have with us the honorable Mr. Dan Ringo joined the Air Force in 1993 and served honorably until discharged in 1997. He is now a CEO and awards his service in the military to becoming a man of strength and morale character to withstand any circumstance. He is a member of the inaugural class of Michigan Chronicle’s 40 Under 40 in 2013 and Who’s Who in Black Detroit, he currently serves as principal of OPIS LLC and general manager of Air Doctors Heating and Cooling. He is a trusted subject matter expert on business operations and operational improvement.
How to Register: Click on the Registration link

Great Lakes RTP
Date: November 13, 2021
Theme: “Embracing Change and Emerging Stronger Women”
Location: Virtual Training
Point of Contact: LaShana Sims
Email: Shana.Sims@yahoo.com
How to Register: Click on the Registration link

Pacific Northwest RTP
Date: November 19, 2021
Theme: “Empowering Women for Success”

Location: Virtual Training
Point of Contact: Connie Coleman-Lacadie
Email: policyplanningvp@few.org
How to Register: Click on the Registration link

Aetna: Open Season is here! - Understanding your health insurance benefits in retirement.
December 2, 2021 - 11:30 am
Host: Federal Employed Women
Location: Virtual Training
Guest speaker: Aetna®
This webinar is to ensure you understand your health insurance benefits in retirement. Let us help you make sense of your benefit options through the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) Program.
Note: If you do not receive a confirmation email after you register, please email FedsWebsite@Aetna.com with the date, time, and title of the webinar and we’ll send you a separate email with the information.
How to Register: Click on the Registration link

Affinity Group Holiday Party
December 16, 2021 – 6:00 pm EST
Location: Virtual Training
Access link: Be sure to follow us on Social Media and check your email for link in near future
JOIN US AT THE FEW'S AFFINITY ORGANIZATIONS HOLIDAY PARTY!

DECEMBER 16TH
6:00-8:00 PM EST
Open Season is Almost Here, FEW Members!

By: Taylor Davis, Sponsorship Activation Manager, GEHA

At GEHA, our goal is to provide federal employees, retirees and their families medical coverage that’s designed to fit their needs and lifestyle. Whether you are at the start of your career and could benefit from a high deductible health plan or you are looking for robust prescription drug coverage—we are dedicated to offering you the right services for the right price.

And now that Open Season is upon us, it’s your chance to see why GEHA is the choice of more than 2 million members nationwide.

At GEHA, we’re simplifying health benefits with these flexible plans:

**Elevate:** Make wellness your primary focus with our lowest premiums and up to $1,000 in rewards for healthy living.

**HDHP:** As the most popular high-deductible health plan (HDHP) among federal employees, pay low premiums and deductibles on services, with health savings account (HSA) contributions from GEHA.

**Standard:** Keep your coverage traditional with affordable premiums and health rewards, along with vision and maternity benefits.

**Elevate Plus:** Upgrade your health care experience with predictable cost coverage, no in-network deductible and up to $1,000 in wellness rewards for healthy behaviors.

**High:** Low copays, $800 Part B Medicare reimbursement and coverage for specialty drugs. Learn more, here.
Disciplinary Actions for the Unvaccinated

By: Tully Rinckey PLLC

The United States Office of Personnel Management (OPM) announced that Tuesday, November 9, 2021, is the first day federal employees are subject to disciplinary actions for not receiving their first dose of the COVID-19 vaccination. Disciplinary actions can be up to and including removal or termination from federal service. The Safer Federal Workforce Task Force has issued guidance for agencies implementing the vaccine requirement per Executive Order (EO) 14043, which requires federal employees to be fully vaccinated by November 22, 2021.

An employee can submit a reasonable accommodation request to their agency if they cannot take the vaccine based on a medical condition or because of a sincerely held belief based on a traditional religion or held in the same regard as a traditional religious belief or practice. The Task Force provided templates for medical and religious accommodation requests which employees can complete and submit to their agencies. Employees should be prepared to provide supporting documentation and/or details regarding the request if required during a review of the accommodation request from their agency. Those granted accommodations will be required to follow testing protocols from their agency, applicable masking requirements, physical distancing, and applicable travel guidance.

FEW Members seeking advice with their accommodation process or who find themselves facing a proposed disciplinary action can reach out to Tully Rinckey PLLC by calling (888) 529-4543 and requesting a consultation with one of their attorneys.

Tully Rinckey PLLC is one of the nation’s largest federal sector labor and employment, security clearance, and military law firms, serving clients across the U.S. FEW and Tully Rinckey have a Memo of Understanding, and with this agreement, FEW members are entitled to one free half-hour telephone consultation each year with one of Tully Rinckey’s experienced attorneys concerning federal employment, military and security clearance matters including discrimination claims, adverse action appeals, and veterans’ benefits, to name a few. In addition to the attorney consultations, members who pursue their legal claims with Tully Rinckey will be entitled to a 10 percent discount in legal fees. For more information or to schedule a consultation with a Tully Rinckey attorney, please call (888) 529-4543, or visit www.tullylegal.com.