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OF WOMEN IN THE GOVERNMENT

NEWS & VIEWS

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2023



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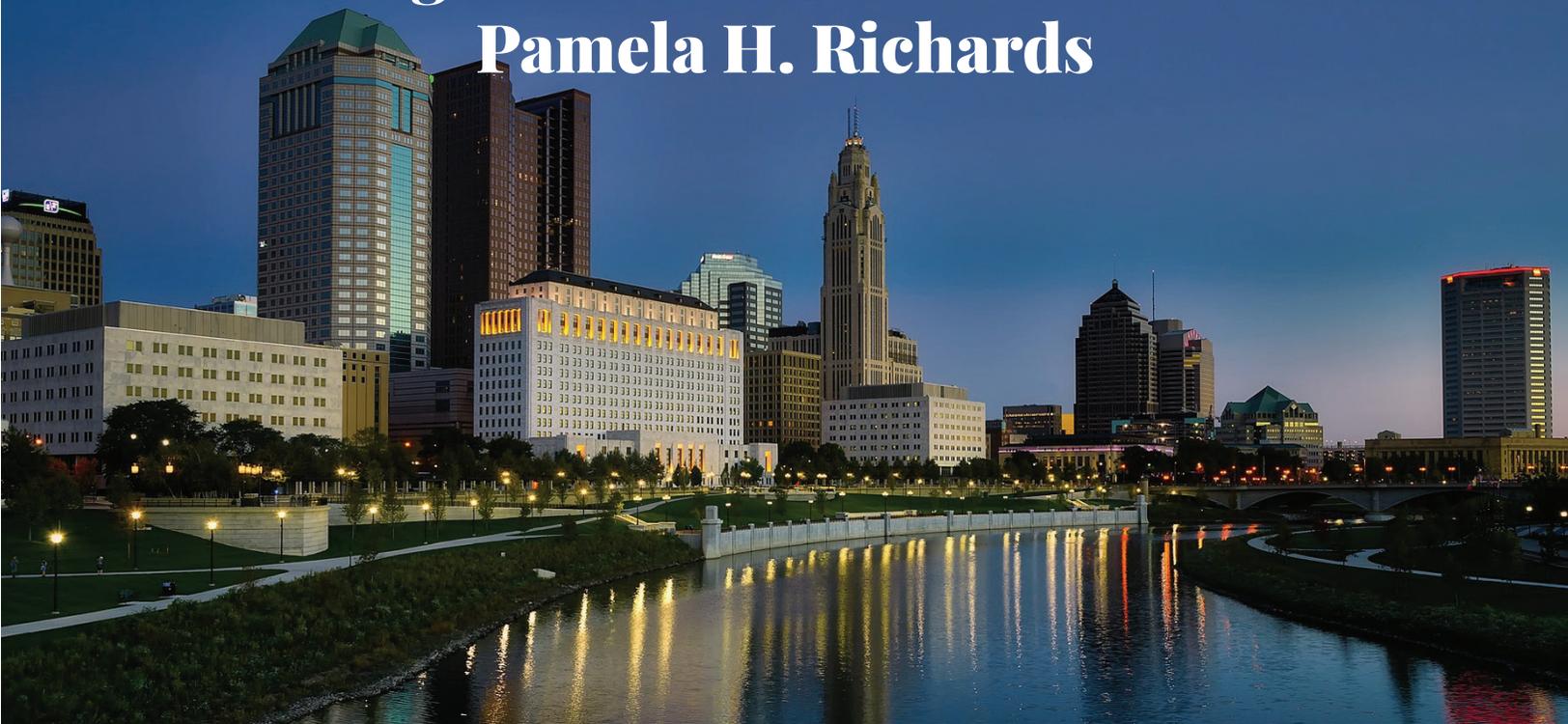
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A Message from FEW National President Pamela H. Richards



Happy New Year, Federally Employed Women and associates! Get ready to Level Up For Success, as we plan our 54th National Training Program (NTP). All roads lead to Ohio; we will see you at the Hilton Downtown Columbus Hotel from July 10–14, 2023. Early bird registration for members begins in February and runs through March 14. Registration opens to the general public in April. We plan to shower the Great Lakes Region with our presence in NTP colors of black, white, and accents of fuchsia or hot pink. Our theme for NTP is, “Leveling Up for Success: Ready, Set, Grow!”

We are working closely with our friends at “Experience Columbus” to bring you the best Ohio has to offer. We cannot wait for you to experience a taste of the “Discovery City,” which is known for its vibrant and youthful arts scene, its rich technology industry, a firm commitment to social justice causes including socio-economic advancement for underrepresented groups, and a visible plan to establish equity. Columbus has a strong Women’s Commission and LGBTQ Pride Office within its Office of Diversity and Inclusion. The Ohio Civil Rights Commission is housed in Columbus with the Equal Employment Opportunity

Commission in Cleveland. The city of Columbus has rolled out the red carpet for FEW and we want to cultivate this budding partnership by being their best guests to date.

Mark your calendars and request training funds now. Many agencies are concerned about a lack of physical interaction in this semi-post pandemic reality; include this point in your training justification requests, along with a firm commitment to sharing what you learned with your business unit once the training is complete. In addition, your agency and bureau executives are invited to our Agency Forums, where leaders will come together to discuss equity, compliance, hiring and recruiting, and training during our Agency Forums. If your agency or bureau considers itself ground-breaking and trendsetting, invite them to the 2023 Agency Forums during July 10–14, 2023, in Columbus, Ohio. Contact ntpchair@few.org for more information.

Key EARLY registration dates for the National Training Program:

- February 28, 2023 – Diamond Lifetime Members
- March 7, 2023 – Lifetime Members
- March 14, 2023 – All Members

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FEW's Weekend of Service: Honoring Martin Luther King, Jr.

In honor of Martin Luther King Jr., let's come together and practice acts of service to make our communities better from January 14-16, 2023. Whether you volunteer at a local food pantry, pick up trash in your neighborhood, or help a friend in need, we can all make a difference. Regions and Chapters may use this as a time to connect with your members in-person, if you are able. Let's remember Dr. King's words of wisdom, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is: 'What are you doing for others?'" I hope each of you will do something to participate in this great occasion.

Send in photos from your service activities with a description to communications@few.org. FEW will compile them into a special feature in honor of Martin Luther King, Jr. and our "Weekend of Service". If you post pics and videos on social media, tag Federally Employed Women, so we can all share in the joy of your efforts.

Black History Month Flagship Program

Be on the lookout for information regarding our flagship program for Black History Month. The 2023 theme, "Black Resistance," seeks to chronicle ways African Americans have countered hundreds of years of racial oppression in American communities. While hatred and suffering continue, our program will shed positive light on the many ways the Black community has overcome trying and traumatic circumstances.

Women's History Month

FEW is "Celebrating Women Who Tell Our Stories," along with diverse voices throughout the world during Women's History Month (WHM) in March. Regions and Chapters, coordinate with your leaders and send in your flyers or announcements early. We all want to support one another's programs together. Look for a "Save-the-Date" email from FEW about our special celebration and featured keynote speaker.

The FEW Mentoring Program

January is National Mentoring Month. FEW offers mentoring opportunities to advance professional development and senior-level leadership skills through the year. The new 2023 cohort for FEW's Mentoring Program will open in April. Stay tuned for more information. Also, check out our new blog stories about recent mentees and their program experiences.

Welcome and Thanks

I want to offer a warm welcome to our newly installed *News & Views Editor, Grace Bridges*, and our new *Vice President for Compliance and Special Assistant to the President for Federal Women's Program, Georgette Hagans*. I also want to say a special word of thanks to each of you who contributed to making this edition memorable.

Yours in Service,

Pamela H. Richards

National President

Federally Employed Women



Black Resistance

By Jennifer Mateo, Vice President for Diversity and Special Assistant to the President for People with Disabilities

Each year we honor and celebrate Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy in January. Then in February, we observe Black History Month which highlights the contributions and accomplishments of African Americans. The theme for Black History Month in 2023 is "Black Resistance." This theme highlights the ways in which African Americans have resisted oppression, injustice, and discrimination throughout history, and the ways in which they continue to do so today. Some examples of Black resistance include the abolitionist movement, the civil rights movement, and more recent movements like Black Lives Matter.

There are many ways in which FEW members can celebrate and honor this theme. Some ideas might include:

- 1. Educate yourself and others:** Take time to learn about the history of Black resistance in the United States and around the world. Share this knowledge with others and encourage them to do the same.
- 2. Support Black-owned businesses:** Consider making a point to shop at Black-owned businesses and encourage others to do the same.
- 3. Advocate for change:** This could involve participating

in protests, writing letters to elected officials, or volunteering with organizations that are working to promote social justice.

- 4. Celebrate and honor Black leaders:** This could involve hosting events or discussions, creating educational materials, or simply sharing information about these leaders with others.

Join FEW in honoring the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. by participating in FEW's "Weekend of Service" from January 14-16, 2023, where FEW members will come together to perform acts of services through volunteering, donating, or engaging in other forms of services. By taking action and making a difference, we can continue to honor the work and vision of Martin Luther King Jr. and work toward creating a more just and equitable society. Remember Dr. King's words of Wisdom.

The theme of Black resistance is particularly relevant today, as many African Americans continue to face discrimination and injustices in various aspects of their lives. By honoring this theme, we can recognize and celebrate the ways in which African Americans have stood up for their rights and fought for change, and we can also work to continue this tradition of resistance in the present and future.



Let's Talk!

By Ivana Miranda, National Communications Chair

Many of us joined FEW to have a voice. And yet, some of us still feel unheard and unseen. Together, we can change that.

Several years ago, I found myself in a seemingly hopeless work situation. I was disillusioned, despondent, and disengaged; negative energy bled into everything I did. After seeking counsel from a variety of sources and coming up empty, I reached out to a career coach I met through FEW. I had allowed too many malignant people and situations to dictate my personal narrative, which made me feel stuck. I thought I had no options. When I considered applying for new jobs, I felt completely hopeless. Can any of you relate to this story?

The irony here is that I had been offering workshops for years on the subject of positivity and bringing your best self to work. The tips and tricks I offered in the workshop were sound advice, but I needed someone else to help me jump over the hurdles. My coach encouraged me to take charge of my own story and decide how I wanted to be perceived in the world. She helped me rediscover my own creativity, the things that excite me, and places I want to contribute. We also talked about how to eliminate the energy-drainers and reclaim my own time. In the span of 18 months, after rebranding and retooling myself, I received two promotions. It seemed to happen very quickly, but all my previous experiences laid the foundation for these moves. Most of my transferrable skills came from working with volunteer organizations such as FEW.

For me, FEW has become a haven of sharp, educated colleagues huddling together to accomplish something bigger than ourselves. I am inspired by all of you and it is lifegiving for me to hear and share your stories.

So, let's talk...

Off the record...

Blog writer Ken Hitchner and I are on a mission to research all types of workplace situations—good, bad, and unusual. We realize you may not want to be exposed as a source for some of these stories, but your experiences are still valuable. Let's talk “off-the-record” and we can compile aggregated data to tell these stories, which may deal with topics varying from hiring decisions, promotions, performance reviews, ethics, disciplinary actions, harassment, gaslighting and other toxic workplace behaviors, surprise accolades or kudos, etc. If there's a story, we will tell it. And we'll leave your name out of it, at your request.

On the record...

Who couldn't use a little positive branding attention? Let us shout your professional capabilities and accomplishments across the nation with a feature story in the blog section of our website. Revitalize your professional networking and marketing efforts with a spotlight on our social media pages. We all know employers search for our names on the internet when considering us for new positions. Let's use that to our advantage, work together, and post positive stories about how you are making an impact at work and in the community. Just don't forget to save a copy in an electronic file for your next mid-year and end of year performance reviews. Start stacking the deck in your favor—share your story, your way.

Let's Talk!

For more information or to share your story, email communications@few.org.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: KICK OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH NEW HABITS!

**BY KHADEJAH M. BROWN
FEW NATIONAL VICE PRESIDENT FOR TRAINING**

Giving up on old habits is so much more modern than making new ones. Making a resolution isn't enough to see it through; rather, one needs to turn that resolution into a habit, like waking up 10 minutes earlier each day to meditate or starting the day with a brisk walk or run before heading into the office.

Forming some new routines will help you become more efficient, move up the corporate ladder, and enjoy your time there more. Here are some habits that will help you kick off the new year with your professional development.



1. Set aside time on your calendar for your professional development.
2. Set aside some time each week for introspection and planning.
3. Determine your big three for the day each day.
4. Find out what's distracting you and reduce the amount of time spent on those distractions.
5. Remove yourself from your screen every so often.
6. Process routine tasks in a batch, including email.
7. Approach meetings with greater deliberation and thought.

Leveling Up for Success: Ready, Set, Grow!

By Patrice Dogbatse, 2023 National Training Program Chair



I am so excited to start the new year off with such a motivating focus as “Leveling Up for Success: Ready, Set, Grow!” That’s the theme for the 2023 National Training Program (NTP) and we hope that you are as excited as we are to see you there. In case you didn’t know, FEW will be hosting their 54th NTP July 10-14, 2023, in Columbus, Ohio. You do not want to miss the completely new catalog of training, dynamic speakers, and motivating networking events. We are saying goodbye to Zoom and saying hello to the first in-person NTP in three years. If you think NTP was great before, you do not want to miss the 2023 NTP!

The January 2023 issue of *News & Views* is focusing on

reflecting on our past year, setting personal and professional goals, learning better ways to balance work and life in a virtual environment, and most of all, getting out of our comfort zone and daring to grow beyond our expectations. There is no better place than the FEW NTP for a week of specialized training, leadership preparation, self-care, coaching, mentoring, and skill development. Join the vast network of experienced government and private sector professionals, carefully selected to make your NTP experience one that will propel you to the next Level...Success. Are you Ready? Get Set. Now Grow!!! Look for the registration announcement in your email and prepare to reach your fullest potential at FEW NTP. For more information, click [HERE](#).

Launch into Your New Year with the Elements of Wellbeing



Each year as the countdown to midnight begins, many of us think of ways we will improve throughout the next year. Research shows that only about 25% of those who make resolutions stick with them. One main reason for this is that resolutions often do not address our overall wellbeing. Wellbeing refers to your complete health. It involves being free of illness or stress as well as having a purpose in life, being emotionally well and having positive relationships. Resolutions like “losing 15 pounds,” “quit smoking” or “learn a new language” are all positive and reasonable goals. However, they each address only a small part of our overall wellbeing. Each of the elements continually affects one another.

Take some time to consider each of the elements and which aspects of your own life might need your attention in the coming year.

Environmental

Environmental wellness is the ability to live and work in a clean and safe environment that inspires personal wellbeing. Ways to foster environmental wellness can include: unplugging from technology, rearranging furniture, cleaning out clutter or spending time outdoors.

Financial

Financial wellness is understanding how your financial situation affects your stress levels and overall mental and physical health. It includes

understanding financial processes related to savings, income, and debt, while utilizing resources to achieve long-term goals toward future financial objectives. Ways to foster financial wellness can include: set budgeting goals, track your spending, using a shopping list (and sticking to it!) or understand your loans/bank accounts/insurance plans.

Intellectual

Intellectual wellness encourages you to engage in creative and mentally stimulating activities, fostering lifelong learning and curiosity. It can be developed through academics, cultural involvement, community involvement and personal hobbies that expand your knowledge and skills while allowing you to share your knowledge and skills with others. Ways to foster intellectual wellness can include: practice active listening, picking up a hobby, reading for pleasure or learning a new language.

Mental

Mental wellness involves our emotional, psychological, and social wellbeing; affecting how we think, feel and act. It includes the ability to recognize, understand, manage, and express the range of human emotions that you experience. Ways to foster mental wellness can include: take time for yourself, meditation, seeking and accepting help from others or accepting mistakes and learning from them.

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Occupational

Occupational wellness allows you to explore various career options and encourages you to pursue the opportunities you enjoy while recognizing the importance of satisfaction, enrichment and meaning through work. Ways to foster occupational wellness can include: exploring career & volunteer opportunities, keep an open mind, practice honest communication with colleagues or set career goals.

Physical

Physical wellness consists of recognizing the need for physical activity, healthy foods, and sleep, as well as avoiding harmful habits, preventing illness and injury or managing chronic health conditions. Ways to foster physical wellness can include: find time for physical activity—move your body!, eat healthy foods, get 7-9 hours of sleep, learn to listen to your body or see your physician for regular check-ups.

Social

Social wellness focuses on building positive and supportive relationships with individuals, groups and communities. Ways to foster social wellness can include: keep in touch with friends & family, join a club or organization, volunteering or participate in community group activities & discussions.

Spiritual

Spiritual wellness stems from beliefs, faith, values, ethics or moral principles that let us find meaning

and direction in life events and define our individual purpose. Ways to foster spiritual wellness can include: be curious and accepting, practice a religious faith, practice meditation & mindful relaxation or experience other cultures.

As you move into the new year, remember that improving overall wellbeing often requires only slight shifts in our behavior. Think about documenting the changes you make and see how they might affect the other elements in a positive way. And don't forget to give yourself permission to slip sometimes! Achieving wellbeing requires practice, patience, compassion and a commitment to keep going forward. Take those small steps and choose to invest in yourself. You might be surprised at what you discover!

“The information contained herein is for informational and educational purposes only. This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice and if you have questions regarding a medical condition, regimen, or treatment you should always seek the advice of a qualified health care provider. Never disregard or delay seeking medical advice from a qualified medical professional because of information you have read herein.”

Resources:

Gallup
National Institutes of Health
National Wellness Institute
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Wellness Council of America



Healthy should feel this rewarding

We want to help you reach your health goals, whether that's managing chronic conditions or saving more on the brands you count on.

Discounts

- **Blue365® Discounts**
Get weekly offers on fitness gear, family products, travel, healthy eating and more.
- **Gym Discounts**
Get active and save at thousands of fitness locations across the country.
- **Vision Care Affinity Program**
Enjoy substantial savings on eye exams, frames, laser vision correction and more.

Incentive Programs

- **Wellness Incentive Program**
Earn rewards and up to \$170 by taking the Blue Health Assessment (BHA) and meeting your goals.
- **Routine Annual Physical**
FEP Blue Focus members can get rewarded for having their routine annual physical.
- **Pregnancy Care**
Providing special offers and support for expectant mothers throughout their pregnancy.
- **Hypertension Management**
Get a blood pressure monitor at no cost to use at home.
- **Diabetes Management**
Earn rewards and improve your health by taking steps to manage your diabetes.
- **Tobacco Cessation**
Get tools and support to help you quit, including tobacco cessation drugs.

Get started with the Blue Health Assessment

Answer a few questions about your health and get a personalized health action plan. Eligible Standard and Basic Option members can earn \$50 the first time you take it in 2023.

FEW Mentoring Program Ready to Advance in Your Career!



The 2023-2024 Mentoring Program “Cohort 3” announcement for applications will unveil in January!

Now is the time to “Level Up for Success.” Mentoring opportunities have the potential to influence women’s advancement in organizations. Selected FEW members will develop enhancing capabilities and skills, learn from senior leaders, and work with a mentor. Check out the full details of the FEW Mentoring Program at www.few.org.

While there, be sure to register for this year’s 54th FEW NTP in July as we announce the auspicious participants for “Cohort 3” and celebrate the charismatic “Cohort 2” at the FEW Mentoring Program Graduation Ceremony. The Mentoring Program works toward supporting the mission of FEW: “Federally Employed Women works to end sex and gender discrimination, to encourage diversity for the inclusion and equity in the workplace, and for the advancement and professional growth of women in the federal service.”



Reaching Farther Than I Knew

By Marcia McDaniels

I arrived off the plane from a thousand miles away with three suitcases and a box of tapes. I had no contacts at all in my new federal life as my assigned mentor demurred two days before my flight. It was August and the Michigan sun beat hard on my first day as an intern. I tried to memorize the names and faces in the bay of metal desks that stretched across the building. I was the new girl among an older generation. I looked for connection and saw a flyer among the mix on the bulletin board for a meeting for women.

My first feeling in the meeting room was a mix of shy excitement. The FEW Chapter President stood proud at the front in a crisp linen suit and bright blond hair that added three inches to her five-foot frame. She was stylish, black and impressive. Afterward, she noted I was new, and convinced me I was needed for a project. I was flattered and before long I donated many hours. Then, the day before the training program, she made sure I registered. She told me about a discount for training if I joined.

I was committed. I was included. I had comrades more accepting and inclusive than my coworkers. We had purpose, providing opportunities for women in the government, at a time when there were more secretaries than interns. Call it sisterhood. I learned leadership and organization skills that I could put in my evaluations. I proved value.

I have in the years since made contacts and turned these into friends across 50 states. My network in FEW has led me to training in far places and the halls of government in Washington D.C. Seventeen NTPs. I had backup in compliance when needed against opposition at work. I now see people on Zoom from committees I served on 10 years ago. I have friends I can call and text. While my retired life is sheltered, my network in FEW is strong. I am grateful to this organization for expanding my reach so very far. Farther than I dreamed.

Giving Back and Reaching Goals

By Reneé Murdock

Unpaid volunteering connects you to your community. Federally Employed Women's Bright Knight's Chapter believes in serving their community. One of the Chapter goals was to partner with a girl's Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)/Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) camp by volunteering and providing sponsorship for camp fees. The Chapter was able to do just that in the summer of 2022. Bright Knights sponsored one middle schooler and one high schooler to attend a week-long camp with Females of Color and those Underrepresented in STEM Programs (FOCUS) at the University of George Mason. The camp consists of hands-on activities, lectures, and discovery of different career paths with the last day of professionals to talk about careers, education, college, etc. The Bright Knights were able to sponsor two female middle and high schoolers to attend.



DC Metro Regional Manager Jymece Seward held a session titled, Like a Girl: New Faces in STEM Spaces. She shared her journey, her understanding of STEM and its importance, and emerging new and surprising STEM fields. The Bright Knights session; All About FEW and Scholarships, shared FEW's vision and mission, scholarships opportunities, and government STEAM careers. President Sonja Williams shared her daughters' journey in the medical field. Immediate Past-President and DC Metro Regional Rep Reneé Murdock shared FEW's history and government internship opportunities. Bright Knights Diversity Chair Percina Laster shared FEW's scholarships and how to join. Bright Knights

Recording Secretary Miya Cato shared her journey of being a STEM girl and how she got into the government as a Computer Engineer. The campers had numerous questions and were engaged in all sessions with professionals from Potomac River Clinic, FEW's Bright Knights Chapter at the United States Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO), George Mason University, Loper, and Southpoint Consulting Inc. We enjoyed taking pictures and eating lunch with the young girls to chat about life and their goals.



Bright Knights will continue to create fundraising opportunities to sponsor STEM/STEAM girls while lending their resources and talents. We aim to send four girls to George Mason University for the year 2023 FOCUS. We would ask for the FEW footprints to help us reach our goal and become a part of changing a young lady's life. Be on the lookout for ways to support this effort. A special thank you to our DC Metro Regional Manager for her support and expertise, and a special hug to our past National President, Pamela H. Richards, for her continuous push to level us up in our careers as women.





LEVELING UP FOR SUCCESS IN 2023

Don't Wait Until TOMORROW To Do What **YOU Can Do TODAY!**

**Did you know the 2023, FEW National Scholarship
Application period opens on **March 7, 2023**?**

**THERE IS NO TIME BETTER THAN TODAY TO BEGIN THE
PRE-SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION PROCESS.**

Planning is crucial. So, what are you waiting for?

- Go to <https://www.few.org/>
- Log into your FEW MEMBER account
- Review Section IV of the National Policy and Procedures Manual (NPPM), pages 29-32
- Review the four FEW scholarship types, the application process, and the eligibility criteria
- Review the scholarship checklist on page 33
- Begin collecting requisite materials (letters of reference, transcripts, etc.)
- Add the scholarship application deadline (April 7, 2023) to your calendar
- Set reminders on your phone or computer

Communication Tips for Emails and Social Media



- All communication and social media posts associated with Federally Employed Women (FEW) must support FEW's mission and vision, complying with FEW branding guidance detailed in the National Policy and Procedures Manual (NPPM).
- Remember to include the National President's tagline, "Working for the Advancement of Women in the Government" and theme "Leveling Up for Success". These may be found on the Members Only site, under Chapter Resources, National President Logos.
- For communication related to the 2023 National Training Program (NTP), include the theme, "Leveling Up for Success: Ready, Set, Grow!" NTP colors are black, white, and fuchsia or hot pink accents.
- Appropriate and professional messages, videos, and photos are welcome. FEW will request any inappropriate or unprofessional social media posts to be removed.
- All flyers must be reviewed by the Publications Policy

Review Committee and approved by the National President before they may be posted on social media.

- On applicable platforms, tag Federally Employed Women and use several hashtags (#federallyemployedwomen, #levelingup, and any other appropriate keywords).
- Please repost messages from the National Federally Employed Women's social media pages.

Engage with FEW!

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/federally-employed-women/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/federallyemployedwomen>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/fewnational/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/fewnational>

For questions about communications, social media, or engaging with FEW, email communications@few.org.



From The Editor: Finding A New Ladder

By Grace Bridges

15 years as a producer in local TV news... 4 newsrooms... 3 network affiliates... 2 states... 1 career path.

My journey started out like most of yours:

Go to college... check

Get an entry level job in the field you studied... check

Work your way up to management... check

But then what?

To quote Disney's *The Little Mermaid*, "I want more!"

I was climbing the ladder of success, but the reality was my ladder ran out of rungs! **That's when I knew it was time to find a new ladder.** I got the itch to leave local news in January of 2022. To be clear: this is not another "Great Resignation" story. Instead, I surveyed my professional life and decided that I no longer wanted to do the things I've always done. I wanted a new adventure!

Making that move was going to prove more challenging than I thought. I wasn't just looking for a new job. I was trying to find a new job in a new industry. My resume was top-notch... for local news. But the words that I was most proud of like, "Executive Producer," "Murrow Award," or "wall-to-wall coverage," meant nothing to the hiring managers for the communications jobs that I was applying to. So, I stripped my resume of newsy-sounding

words (not going to lie, it hurt). Then, I took inventory of my skills, and used terms more widely accepted in the comms world. Did it work? Not really.

I applied for more than 100 jobs in 6 months and barely got any traction. **Marketing yourself is important but knowing someone on the inside... that's truly the secret weapon.** I started calling past colleagues, professors, and friends. And I let them know, I'm looking for my next big challenge. The networking worked! My calendar started to fill up with interviews and offers. By August, I was walking through the doors of NASA's Press Site at Kennedy Space Center in a new career!

To say it was a smooth transition would be dishonest. Everything is different... the commute, office attire, workload, responsibilities, the acronyms! A good friend gave me some perspective. She said, "It took 15 years to reach the comfort level at your last job. You've only been in this role a couple of months." And they've been some very eventful couple of months. I've hung out with astronauts, observed science experiments, and had a front row seat to history as NASA launched the world's most powerful rocket, Artemis I. Stepping out of your comfort zone can be scary and hard. For me, this journey was totally worth it and I'm excited about what's in store for 2023.



BEING INTERCONNECTED!

Why having a professional network is important

by Khadejah M. Brown, *FEW National Vice President for Training*

Building professional connections is the essence of professional networking. It entails meeting and building mutually beneficial relationships with others in your career or industry. The introduction of professional network sites such as LinkedIn has greatly simplified the process, as connections can now be formed with a single click.

There are several advantages to networking. Someone in your network is considerably more likely to alert you to employment prospects and, more significantly, to recommend you to the employer. A robust professional network can aid in your job hunt and assist you in

making important career choices.

A personal reference will likely expedite your advancement to the interview stage or beyond. If a former coworker can attest to your past work and express confidence in your character, this could make you the frontrunner for the position.



From Remote to Connected: Five Best Practices for a Connected Virtual Workforce



By Jhanvi Ramaiya, Senior Marketing Copywriter at Management Concepts Inc.

Over the last two years, most of us have had to adapt quickly after being dropped into our remote workplaces, which are often our living rooms, bedrooms, or kitchens. And we've normalized and adapted to those solo work-days quickly. As we creep steadily into our third year of working from home, it's important to reevaluate the practices we use each day.

Work-from-home practices over the last two years have caused many of us to be siloed and isolated at our desks, even as we worked with dozens of people toward common professional goals. As we move from adaptation, which is a reactive response to the sudden shift to working remotely, to thriving in this new environment, you can become a proactive leader by implementing best practices in the new normal.

In the webinar *Inspiring Connections, Care, and Collaboration on Remote & Hybrid Teams*, host Mika J. Cross helps unearth the top five tips for keeping your teams collaborative, caring, and connected in their remote or hybrid work environments.

Tip One: Show Your Support

Support your employees and show that support! On average, Cross says 18 percent of employees do not have support outside the workplace, and she has seen workplaces where that is true for up to 35 percent of the workforce. Showing such empathy and caring is difficult, but just like any other skill, it is teachable. We can teach people how to show care. There needs to be a new re-skilling, new reeducation in emotional intelligence. By showing and developing rapport with employees and coworkers, we can bring the human element back to work.

Tip Two: Build from Engagement

A person is most engaged when you hire them. Ensure that you build from there, working with them when they're at their highest energy and keeping them motivated and connected. Part of this includes having clear discussions and having 30-, 60-, and 90-day check-ins. Building from engagement will also build a foundation for an engaged employee, and as you apply the practice again and again, it will lead to a connected and enthusiastic workforce.

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Tip Three: Build Connectivity into the Workday

It's important to recognize that connections don't just happen outside the workplace, at happy hours, or during after-work chats. Most connections forged in in-person workplaces begin during hours: at the water cooler, with pass-by compliments, through team-building activities. After all, the goal is to develop an effective working team. Ways to help strengthen connections with teams are to organize team-building activities that occur during the workday—make it clear that connecting is inseparable from working. Virtual activities, such as guided painting, DIY projects, or activities that can be coordinated from afar are great ideas to help develop a team's connections—especially if they can speak to one another and ask for help and feedback as they are doing it.

Tip Four: “See” Your Employees

Don't forget that behind the Zoom calls and Teams meetings are people sitting at their desks, listening in and sharing. In an in-person environment, appreciative body language and after-meeting comments are easy to share. However, it's important to not take a blank screen for an empty room and to make sure to acknowledge each person in the room. Ways to do this are to greet each person as they enter a meeting, acknowledge them by name, remember who they are, and validate their points as they speak. As you close out meetings, also thank them

for their points individually. Make sure that individuals feel seen, heard, and appreciated.

Tip Five: Be Inclusive of Circumstances

Not everyone has access to the same kind of working environment. Make sure you are aware of where and how your employees are working, and make sure they have the right tools to succeed. Make sure everyone has access to the technology they need and the knowledge to maximize that technology to its best functionality. Identify and provide the training that everyone might need to use their resources in creative ways.

Bonus Tip: Take a Class!

While there are plenty of courses to pick from, we recommend doing your research. As a leader, you must be discerning in your approach to tackling the challenge of building a connected team, or simply creating connections within your existing team. Check out our course *Managing Virtual Teams* as a starting point!

With these five best practices, you can embrace the new normal with grace and forge stronger connections with each employee for an enthusiastic and connected workforce. Want to hear more perspectives on timely issues impacting the workforce? Sign up for our next webinar “DEIA in the Federal Government: Laying the Foundation” [here](#).

Winter Blues



Dark mornings, darker evenings, and chilly gray days in between mean winter is here—and with the coldest season come the winter blues. There’s no clinical diagnosis for the “winter blues,” but experts at the National Institutes of Health say the winter blues are common and are usually marked by feeling more down than usual, sad, less energized, or less interested in activities one usually enjoys.

Although you may feel more unhappy than usual, the winter blues typically do not affect your ability to enjoy life. But if your winter blues start permeating all aspects of your life—from work to personal relationships—you may be experiencing Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD).

SAD is more common in northern parts of the United States where winter days last longer. Research has found that in Florida only about 1% of the population is likely to suffer from SAD. But in the northernmost parts of the U.S, about 10% of people may be affected.

There are things you can do to lift your mood. This winter, try these mood-lifters to beat the winter blues and stay well all winter long:

- Go to a movie, take a walk, go ice-skating or do other activities you normally enjoy.
- Get out in the sunlight or brightly lit spaces, especially early in the day.

- Try to spend time with other people and confide in a trusted friend or relative.
- Eat nutritious foods and avoid overloading on carbohydrates like cookies and candies.
- Be patient. You won’t suddenly “snap out of” depression. Your mood will improve gradually.
- If you have thoughts of suicide, get help right away. Call the toll-free National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).

If you’re feeling blue this winter and those the feelings last for several weeks, talk to a health care provider. It’s true that SAD goes away on its own, but that could take 5 months or more. Five months of every year is a long time to be impaired and suffering. SAD is generally quite treatable, and the treatment options keep increasing and improving.

“The information contained herein is for informational and educational purposes only. This information is not a substitute for professional medical advice and if you have questions regarding a medical condition, regimen, or treatment you should always seek the advice of a qualified health care provider. Never disregard or delay seeking medical advice from a qualified medical professional because of information you have read herein.”

Source: National Institutes of Health



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All Quarterly Reports must be submitted on time (by the 10th of the month – *no exceptions*).

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- Distinguished Service
- Federal Department/Agency
- FEW Regional Achievement
- Private Sector

Chapter Achievement Award Categories

- Best Chapter Programs
- Chapter Fundraiser
- Chapter Newsletter
- Chapter Special Emphasis Project
- Chapter Membership Achievement
- Chapter Special Project
- Helen R. Dudley Chapter Overall Achievement Award

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Pamela H. Richards
National President

