



Employee News

Governor M. Jodi Rell

Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara

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"Ask the Commissioner"

If you have a question for Commissioner O'Meara, you are invited to e-mail Joan Barnish at joan.barnish@po.state.ct.us. Watch for your response in future newsletter editions.

Newsworthy articles should be forwarded to your regional **DMR Employee News** contacts or **DMR Communications Office**:

North/Linda Schaefer

West/Eunice Rivera

South/Jolie Crescimano-Goss

CO/Joan Gurski

Black History 365—A Celebration of Diversity



Pictured, Left to Right: Patricia West, North Region Public Residential Manager; Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara; Lateisha Griggs, Personnel Assistant; Joe Winful, Supervising RN; and John Houchin, Regional Director.

More than 100 Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) staff and management attended Black History 365, a celebration program and luncheon hosted by the North Region (NR) at its East Hartford office. The celebration featured an inspirational program of speakers, each of whom shared a personal reflection or an important moment in Black History.

"Every day, we should all reflect on who we are, where we came from, and what our ancestors contributed to our lives," said Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara. "Even in challenging times, like the Gulf Coast in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, the incredible cooperation put forth was a real testament to the diversity of the land."

Rita Kelley, Director of Affirmative Action, said that growing up in Tolland, Connecticut, she learned almost nothing of her heritage. "There was no mention of African American history in my school except for references to the Civil War and Emancipation Proclamation," she said. She then spoke about December 1, 1955, the day that Rosa Parks, a seamstress in Montgomery Alabama, inspired the Civil Rights Movement with her brave decision to sit at the front of the bus, simply because she was tired and felt it wrong to have to sit in the back because of the color of her skin. Ms. Parks was arrested, and quickly became an icon of the Civil Rights Movement and an important person not only in Black History, but in American History. *Continued on next page*

Human Resources Staff Complete Management Training Program

Eight department human resources staff recently completed the State of Connecticut Human Resources Management Certificate Program, an eleven week course offered by the Department of Administrative Services. The program is designed to provide human resources professionals with a multitude of information and resources to enable them to become competent human resources generalists.

The course is unusual in that participants remain together as a group, working together with their peers throughout the course of the program. Upon completion, the department staff who participated were honored with an informal luncheon at the North Region office hosted by Agency Personnel Administrator Karen Davies, Assistant Personnel Administrator Teresa Gonzalez and the Human Resource Directors, and attended by Commissioner O'Meara and Chief-of-Staff Marty Zito. The luncheon provided the opportunity for discussion of what the staff members learned and how they might bring their new knowledge to assist in improving the department's Human Resources operations. *Continued on next page*

HR Staff Complete Training *continued from page 1*



Left to Right: Commissioner Peter H. O'Meara; Vanessa Stanback, Personnel Officer 1; Scott Bell, Personnel Manager; Jody DeCarli, Personnel Officer 2; Lateisha Griggs, Personnel Assistant; Penelope Davis, Personnel Officer 1; Susan Wisneski, Personnel Officer 1; Amisha Desai, Personnel Officer 1. Missing from photo: Henry Burgos, Principal Personnel Officer; and Nancy Harnick, Personnel Officer 2.

“We are proud of the staff who took the time to complete this program,” Karen Davies said. “As a result of the Certificate Program, they have a broader knowledge of human resources issues, will be better prepared to take on new assignments and play key roles in the human resources operations for the department.”

Staff who took the course included Vanessa Stanback, Personnel Officer 1 in Central Office; Jody DeCarli, Personnel Officer 2 in North Region; Lateisha Griggs, Personnel Assistant in North Region; Penelope Davis, Personnel Officer 1 in North Region; Susan Wisneski, Personnel Officer 1 in South Region; Amisha Desai, Personnel Officer 1 in Central Office; Nancy Harnick, Personnel Officer 2 in West Region; and Henry Burgos, Principal Personnel Officer in Central Office. Other human resources staff will be participating in future sessions of the program.

Black History 365 *continued from page 1*

Ann Marie Brungard, a diversity trainer with the Anti-Defamation League of Connecticut and sister of DMR staffer Patricia West, led an exercise in which participants closed their eyes and followed her verbal directions to fold and tear identical pieces of paper. As everyone opened their eyes and looked, each piece was different from the next. “We open our eyes and look around, and we all have a fear of being different from our neighbor, when we should be celebrating who we are and our diversity,” Ms. Brungard said. “Every person should be respected and celebrated for who they are.”

Led by Patricia West, NR Public Residential Manager, the planning committee included fellow NR staffers Penny Davis, Personnel Officer 1; Lateisha Griggs, Personnel Assistant; Kamilah Hastings, Administrative Assistant; Joe Mulligan, Office Assistant; Jeanine Penta, Case Manager/Broker; May Tyson, Payroll Officer 1; and Joe Winful, Supervising RN.

“We must celebrate our past, celebrate where we are now, and put our feet forward into the future. We’ve come a long way, but we still have a long way to go” said Ms. Brungard.



Program participants, front row: Amy Blazowski, Case Worker/Broker; Joe Winful. Back row: Rita Kelley, Director of Affirmative Action; guest speaker Ann Marie Burgard and Reginald Robinson, Case Manager.



Attendees participated in an exercise in diversity that involved folding and tearing identical pieces of paper with their eyes closed. The results were surprising to all.