

Employee Experience

A MAGAZINE FOR EMPLOYEES, BY EMPLOYEES

VOLUME 2 ~ ISSUE NO. 02 ~ SPRING 2021

Office of Workforce Engagement

Department of Human Resource Management



Engage

Be present and involved

Connect

Link colleagues and resources

Recognize

Our employees are incredible



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Cooking with CommonHealth

Chicken tacos and smoothies freshen up your meal plans this spring!



Explore the Wild

Find out about the adventures that await you through the Department of Wildlife Resources.



Presenting the Winners

Group Awardees from the 2020 Governor's Honor Awards



Employee Resource and Benefit Tool Kit

Want to know more about the resources and benefits available to you as a Commonwealth employee? Check out this tool kit!

From the Desk of the Chief Editor: Re-emergence in 2021

Perhaps it is the unveiling of spring after a hard winter or the return to public after vaccination or even both, but there is definitely a sense of re-emergence in the world. The air seems filled with energy and hope.

It is time to share our optimism and promise to keep the momentum in the positive. I am excited to be active again and see friends that we haven't seen in ages. It brings me joy to see submissions continue to increase from various sources. This magazine is truly a magazine for employees, by employees, and therefore, we truly want your stories, your photos, your expertise on these pages. Thanks to those who have already contributed and here's to hoping more of you will share in issues to come!

What brings you energy, hope, joy, and positivity in 2021?

If you have a **story** to be told, **ideas** or **resources** to share, **talents** to contribute, **congratulations** to be made for hires and promotions, or information on **events or knowledge** to impart, please contact me at employeeexperience@dhrm.virginia.gov.

Susan Perry

Be a Part of These Pages

We make it easy for

YOU

TO SHARE WITH OTHER EMPLOYEES
JUST LIKE YOU

Want to work together? Great! Contact
employeeexperience@dhrm.virginia.gov

Submissions due on the 15th of
June and September.

Employee Experience

Your Connection with
Commonwealth Employees

Features

- Employee Activities and Events across Virginia
- Congratulations and Awards
 - Success Stories
- Service Information for Employees
 - Suggestions/Requests
 - Agency News
 - Your Own Ideas!

A magazine for employees,
by employees--
without YOU, we're missing
something GREAT!

Virginia Public Service Recognition Week

May 3, 2021 - May 7, 2021

Dear State Employees,

#IServeBecause...*I have a duty and obligation to serve the citizens of the Commonwealth who supported me while serving in the U.S. military ~ Jonathan Singleton, DHRM Engagement Consultant*

Throughout Virginia's history, time and time again state employees have tirelessly risen to the occasion and provided the best for their fellow colleagues, citizens and communities. As we begin 2021 Virginia Public Service Week (VPSW), let's not forget that over the last year, state employees have gone above and beyond to help minimize the risk of spreading COVID-19. Serving as essential workers in healthcare settings to those employees that keep Virginia moving, the workforce adapted by working remotely/virtually, practicing social distancing and masking to maintain the Commonwealth's critical infrastructure and continue critical services and functions.

With that said, staying motivated and optimistic is more vital than ever! Workplace recognition should inspire, provide a sense of accomplishment and make employees feel respected. Quality, individualized recognition also sends a reinforced message of what success looks like. This element of engagement and recognition might be one of the greatest missed opportunities for leaders, but it doesn't have to be. Employee recognition is not about rewards or financial incentives. It's about showing your employees appreciation for a job well done and that you value their hard work.

Recognition must be **SMART** and this means that the rewards should be **Sincere, Meaningful, Adaptable, Relevant and Timely**. Keep in mind that there are many creative and low-to-no cost methods in acknowledging accomplishments and expressing gratitude for employee efforts. We encourage you to take advantage of the resources and ideas available to craft your own Virginia Public Service Week recognition activities and ongoing workplace recognition [PSRW 2021 Toolkit](#).

Thank you for your public service!

DHRM Office of Workforce Engagement



SPRING

A FRESH START

A NEW BEGINNING!

A fresh start, a new beginning, is what Spring really feels like;
It gives us more outside time to do things, like riding a bike!
Spring is the time of year when the flowers begin to bloom;
Trees sway as the leaves take their position, shade to assume!

Tilling, plowing, fertilizing & watering, while overseeing generally;
For vegetation to grow to feed us, commercially & some personally.
We change up our routine to include more activities away from our dwelling;
Children outside, in the park; having fun, running, playing & of course yelling!

As Spring time moves on and more people of the world get vaccinated for safety;
It brings us hope that we can spread our wings and soon move about the country.
We can get on board with plans for vacations, short trips and weekend get-aways;
Looking forward to broaden our horizons, checking our bucket lists to do takeaways!

Spring also brings about some fresh air to breath, so take it all in;
With that comes love, new or more love with which we can win!
Spring gives us more outside time to do things, like riding a bike;
A fresh start, a new beginning, is what Spring really feels like!

© March 2021
By Necil B. Oliver, Published Author
VADOC – Court & Legal

Keep Your Immune System Healthy, by OWE Staff Writer

Although you may not be able to fully prevent an illness, a healthy immune system does give your body extra protection. Focusing on nutrient-rich foods and healthy lifestyle behaviors can help you and your family stay a step ahead.

Immune-Supporting Nutrients

Beta Carotene - found in sweet potatoes, spinach, carrots, mango, broccoli and tomatoes.

Vitamin C – found in citrus fruits, berries, melons, tomatoes, bell peppers and broccoli.

Vitamin D – found in fatty fish and eggs, or milk and 100% juices that have been fortified with vitamin D.

Zinc – found in beef and seafood, but also in vegetarian sources such as wheat germ, beans, nuts and tofu.

Probiotics – “good” bacteria that promote health. They can be found in cultured dairy products such as yogurt and in fermented foods such as kimchi.

Protein – found in both animal and plant-based sources, such as milk, yogurt, eggs, beef, chicken, seafood, nuts, seeds, beans and lentils.



Focus on Balance

To help keep your immune system healthy, focus on a balanced eating plan, adequate sleep and stress management.

Aim for five or more servings of vegetables and fruits daily to get vitamins, minerals and antioxidants that support immune health.

Good hygiene and hand-washing help prevent the spread of germs. Washing fresh produce, glasses, and utensils helps reduce the spread and growth of bacteria.



Find healthy and appropriate ways to cope with stress, such as meditation, listening to music or writing. Physical activity is also helpful in managing stress and may help reduce the risk of some chronic diseases that could weaken your immune system further.

Lack of sleep contributes to a variety of health concerns, including a weakened immune system. Aim for the recommended seven to nine hours of sleep for adults.

What About Herbals?

Many herbal remedies are marketed to help fight colds or shorten their duration but check with your health care provider before taking any supplements or medications. No one food or supplement can prevent illness.

Article Source: Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics, <https://www.eatright.org/health/wellness/preventing-illness/how-to-keep-your-immune-system-healthy>



Seven Ways to Eat More Fruit and Vegetables

By OWE Staff Writer

Eating plenty of fruits and vegetables helps control blood pressure and cholesterol, keeps arteries flexible, protects bones, and is good for the eyes, brain, and digestive system. Plan ahead to remove the barriers that get in the way of eating your recommended servings each day.

Set a goal. If fruits and vegetables are minor items in your menu, start by eating one extra fruit or vegetable a day. When you are used to that, add another and keep going.



Be sneaky. Adding finely grated carrots or zucchini to pasta sauce, meat loaf, chili, or a stew is one way to get an extra serving of vegetables.

Try something new. It is easy to get tired of apples, bananas, and grapes. Try a kiwi, mango, fresh pineapple, or some of the more exotic choices now found in many grocery stores.

Spread it on. Try mashed avocado as a dip with diced tomatoes and onions (you can even put in some puréed cooked spinach), or as a sandwich spread, topped with spinach leaves, tomatoes, and a slice of cheese.

Start off right. Ditch your morning donut for an omelet with onions, peppers, and mushrooms. Top it with some salsa to wake up your palate. Try boosting your cereal or oatmeal with a handful of strawberries or blueberries.

Heat them up. Roasting vegetables is easy and brings out new flavors. Cut up onions, carrots, zucchini, asparagus, turnips — whatever you have on hand — coat with olive oil, add a dash of balsamic vinegar, and roast at 350° until done. Grilling is another way to bring out the taste of vegetables. Use roasted or grilled veggies as a side dish, put them on sandwiches, or add them to salads.

Jazz it up. Do not hesitate to add spices, chopped nuts, balsamic vinegar, olive oil, or a specialty oil like walnut or sesame oil to your vegetables. Most grocers carry several spice blends made specifically for vegetables. Even a dash of grated Parmesan cheese can liven up the blandest green beans.

Source and article adaptations for this section: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/13-ways-to-add-fruits-and-vegetables-to-your-diet>



Cooking with CommonHealth



Slow-Cooker Chicken Tacos Recipe

These tacos are bursting with bold flavors. Remove the seeds and membrane of the jalapeño if your family prefers a milder flavor, or just omit the jalapeño. Queso fresco is a mild, crumbly Mexican cheese that can be found in many major supermarkets. If you cannot find it, feta is a good substitute.

Ingredients

2 teaspoons ground cumin ½ teaspoon salt ½ teaspoon black pepper
1 large onion, chopped 2 stalks celery, chopped 4 cloves garlic, minced
3 pounds boneless, skinless chicken thighs (about 12 thighs)
1 ½ tablespoons canola oil, divided
1 large carrot, peeled and chopped
1 medium jalapeño, sliced into thin rings (optional)
2 ½ cups salsa verde (green tomatillo salsa), divided
½ cup fat-free, reduced-sodium chicken broth
24 (6-inch) corn tortillas
½ cup crumbled queso fresco cheese
¼ cup fresh cilantro leaves
2 limes, cut into wedges (optional)

Directions

Before you begin: Wash your hands.

1. In a small bowl, combine cumin, salt and pepper. Rub mixture evenly over chicken thighs. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add half of chicken; cook 3 minutes per side or until browned. Transfer to a 5-or 6-quart slow cooker. Repeat procedure with remaining chicken.
2. Heat remaining ½ tablespoon oil in pan over medium heat. Add onion, celery, carrot, jalapeño and garlic; cook, stirring frequently, 5 to 7 minutes or until vegetables are tender and begin to brown. Transfer to slow cooker. Add 2 cups salsa and broth. Cover and cook on low 4 to 6 hours or until chicken shreds easily with a fork.
3. Remove chicken to a large bowl using a slotted spoon; shred with 2 forks.
4. Warm tortillas according to package instructions. Fill each tortilla with about ¼ cup chicken mixture, 1 teaspoon cheese, 1 teaspoon salsa and ½ teaspoon cilantro. Serve with lime wedges if desired.



Nutrition Information

Serving size: 2 tacos, Serves 6, Calories: 340; Total Fat: 14g; Saturated Fat: 3g; Trans Fat: 0g; Cholesterol: 80mg; Sodium: 620mg; Total Carbohydrate: 30g; Dietary Fiber: 4g; Sugars: 7g; Protein: 24g; Vitamin A: 25%; Vitamin C: 8%; Calcium: 6%; Iron: 8%.

Recipe Source: Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, <https://www.eatright.org/food/planning-and-prep/recipes/slow-cooker-chicken-tacos-recipe>

Blend It – Smoothies are a great way to eat more fruits and vegetables. This recipe uses bananas, and you can try cutting really ripe ones into thick slices, freeze in a plastic bag, and thaw when you are ready to make your smoothie. Try blending in some spinach, carrots, squash or just about any vegetable. Cooked vegetables are easier to blend, so try cooking them the night before and storing them in the refrigerator so they will be cold for your smoothie. For an extra colorful smoothie, try adding beet, avocado or sweet potato.

Simple Fruit/Veggie Smoothie Makes 1 serving

$\frac{3}{4}$ cup plain yogurt

$\frac{1}{2}$ ripe banana

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup cooked, softened, chilled vegetables of your choice

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup berries (fresh or frozen strawberries, blueberries, or berry of your choice)

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup pineapple juice

Optional: 1 tablespoon ground flaxseed (for healthy omega-3 fats)

Put all ingredients in a blender or food processor and blend to combine. You can branch out by adding a dash of ground cinnamon, a splash of vanilla, some mint, or other flavoring.

Sources for article info & recipe from Harvard Health and American Heart Association - <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/13-ways-to-add-fruits-and-vegetables-to-your-diet> ; <https://www.heart.org/en/healthy-living/healthy-eating/add-color/sneaking-more-vegetables-into-meals>

Going Green Smoothie

(Submitted by Carol Anne Brown, UVA Medical School)

This recipe offers a way to get your daily greens and is so delicious ...you could serve it for dessert. To make one serving:

Two big fistfuls of mixed greens—about as much as a salad (like spinach, kale, arugula, chard, lettuces) * Grocery stores sell bags of mixed greens.

$\frac{1}{4}$ cup chopped or sliced bell pepper (orange bell pepper is my favorite). You can leave this ingredient out if preparing for children. It adds a peppery “kick.”

Put the greens and bell pepper in a bowl and microwave for 35 seconds. Use a high-speed blender (like Braun wand mixer, or food processor) to emulsify the greens. Once emulsified, should be about $\frac{1}{4}$ cup greens.

$\frac{1}{2}$ cup frozen blueberries (or the berry of your choice). Add to the greens mixture and emulsify.

8 oz. whole milk yogurt with fruit at the bottom.

2 tablespoons lime juice

1 cup Blueberry juice (or juice of your choice)

Blend the whole mixture. This creates a frothy shake and since the berries are frozen, you don't need to add ice. Enjoy!





This is your fresh start

WW's **NEW myWW+**, the holistic weight-loss program that's made for you, gives you the tools to make healthier choices—and reach your wellness goals—so you don't have to rely on willpower alone.

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- + **9,000+ delicious recipes** so that you can eat what you love
- + **New app features** including workout videos and meal planning tools
- + **And so much more** to help you stay on track!



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over
\$100
value

WW Fresh Start Kit includes: myWW+ Starter Guide, \$50 coupon booklet, *The WW Mediterranean Table* cookbook, food chopper, cookbook/tablet holder, set of tea towels, and set of flex chopping mats. While supplies last. Kit contents may vary.

Take the first step to a **healthier you** today!

1. By May 15, sign up for WW at [WW.com/us/CommonHealth](https://www.weightwatchers.com/us/CommonHealth) All employees, spouses, and adult dependents get an exclusive discount of 50% off the retail price and join now for as low as \$8.48 per month.
2. Get your WW Fresh Start Kit at [WW.com/freshstart](https://www.weightwatchers.com/freshstart)

***FREE WW FRESH START KIT OFFER:** To get a free kit, you must purchase a WW membership plan between April 1 and May 15. Available only where WW membership plans are offered through your employer or health plan, and in participating areas only. One kit per member. Kit must be redeemed by May 31. While supplies last. Over \$100 in value includes \$50 worth of coupons. U.S. addresses only. Please allow at least 3 to 4 weeks for delivery. Offer not available to current members. Offer may be revoked at any time and may not be redeemed for cash. Nontransferable. Void where prohibited.

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will start to see some larger rocks and then a clearing to the vista point. The jagged rocks at the top point your gaze off into the distance offering amazing views over the valley below. This is a great spot to enjoy lunch if you were willing to hike it up with you.

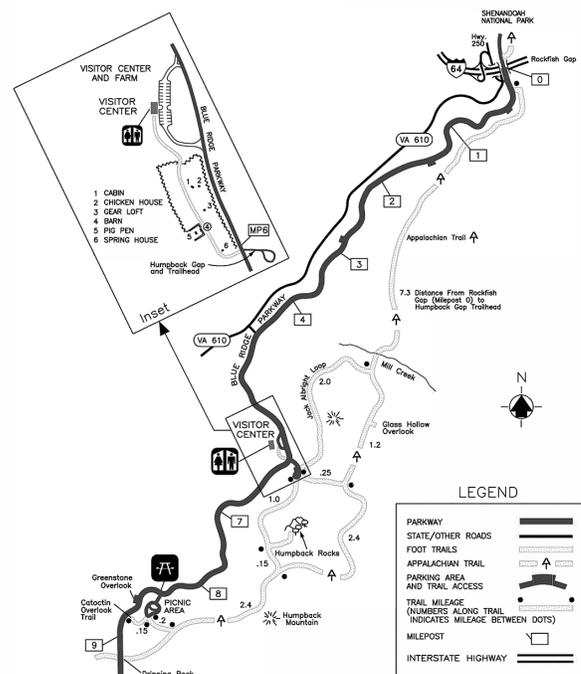


It's time to stretch your calves, fill up that water bottle and head to a view that is recognizable to many people in Virginia. Today, we make the trek up to Humpback rock.

With the air still cool and crisp and the views unobstructed by the spring foliage, late winter can be a great time to take on this somewhat challenging hike. This hike can be done in a few different ways, but today we are taking the out and back option. While this 1 mile out and 1 mile back trail is not long, it is vertically demanding. Statistics fans will love the elevation profile as it resembles a classic bell-shaped curve, meaning you go up, then back down with no outliers in the topography.

This trail can be accessed from the Blue Ridge Parkway at mile post 6. There is a parking lot with plenty of spaces. The trail head is beside the kiosk, which also provides some more information about the area and other trail options.

From the parking lot, this trail starts off as gravel and railroad tie stairs to get your heart pumping right from the start. Take it slow to begin with, as they say, it's uphill from here! While the entire trail is well maintained and marked with blue blazes, this is the widest part. As you continue climbing the stairs, the trail narrows, and you begin the single-track climb where the trail becomes dirt and you will be trekking up and over some rocks and roots. If there has been a recent rain, the trail can become a little muddy, so be careful if things are slippery. This trail does cross 2 intersections; however, you will stay straight and follow the blue blazes, which are easy to find. As you near the top, you



Explore the Wild with the Department of Wildlife Resources, by John Kirk, DWR



Spring is on the way, and it's a great time to get outdoors and enjoy Virginia. You might not know that the Department of Wildlife Resources (DWR) has more than 225,000 acres of public land to enjoy statewide. There are Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs), boating access sites, and a variety of lakes and ponds for fishing and boating. Whether you're looking for fun on the land or on water, we've got some great places where you can explore the wild!

DWR owns and maintains more than 40 WMAs encompassing more than 200,000 acres across Virginia, with terrain from mountains and forests to riverbanks and coastal wetlands. WMAs are a bit more rustic than a state park, as there are no paved paths or bathroom facilities, but they are great places to explore with beautiful scenery full of Virginia's native wildlife. Primitive camping, fishing, hiking, and hunting are all activities people can enjoy on WMAs.

John Kirk, Statewide Access Coordinator for DWR, encourages state employees to "Explore the Wild" by going on an adventure to one of DWR's many destinations. Here are three areas that show what you might find:

Crooked Creek WMA, in the gently rolling mountains of Carroll County, offers a varied outdoor experience. With its natural beauty, native and stocked trout fisheries, hiking, hunting, and wildlife viewing, this area offers visitors rich recreational opportunities in beautiful southwestern Virginia. The WMA's 1,796 acres include both forested and open land and encompass portions of both Crooked Creek and the East Fork of Crooked Creek. Outdoor enthusiasts can explore numerous habitats at Crooked Creek WMA, including hiking, watching wildlife, and photographing nature. An array of wildflowers occurring in old field habitats provide summer nectaring areas for butterflies.

[Find out more about WMAs on the DWR website.](#)

Whether you're planning a day on the water on the Chesapeake Bay or a leisurely paddle on Back River, Fox Hill Boat Landing in Hampton is the spot to start. The facilities include a power boat ramp and canoe/kayak launch, and the surrounding waterways are ideal for fishing, wildlife watching, or a quiet day on the water. DWR owns or maintains more than 200 boating access sites

across the state, allowing access to hundreds of miles of rivers.

[Find DWR public boating access sites.](#)



Lake Albemarle, a 35-acre lake owned by DWR, is located just west of Charlottesville. The shoreline is virtually undeveloped and due to its location in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, Lake Albemarle provides an outing full of gorgeous views.

The lake supports a variety of sport fish including self-sustaining populations of largemouth bass, bluegill, redear sunfish, and black crappie. Channel catfish are stocked annually by DWR to diversify the

fishery. A boat ramp and loading pier is located on the lake off Route 675. Shoreline access is also available at various locations along the eastern (northern) perimeter of the lake as well as at the dam.



[Find out more about Lake Albemarle.](#)

Please be sure to familiarize yourself with specific area rules and be aware that an access permit or license may be required for access. For more information visit <https://dwr.virginia.gov/>.

RECOGNIZE THE GOOD

CommonHealth Wellness Champion
Applications open now
Nominate a co-worker who makes
work a healthier place to be!

Working well in the Commonwealth
www.commonhealth.virginia.gov/wellnesschamp



COORDINATORS' CORNER

Info & Tips for CVC and CommonHealth Coordinators

Greetings CommonHealth Agency Coordinators,

The pandemic has forced all of us to adapt, with some of us adopting work-from-home practices and others instituting new ways to work while maintaining a six-foot distance. It has been challenging to say the least, but your CommonHealth wellness team wants to salute each and every one of our coordinators for rising to meet the day. To those of you who continued to send the CommonHealth Connections out in 2020 and have been sending out the re-designed Weekly Wellnotes in 2021, thank you! That small gesture of sharing information may not seem like a lot, but providing information to your co-workers who may really need services and support has the potential to be incredibly valuable. Your efforts to help others are appreciated.

Many agencies created new ways to stay connected and well in 2020/early 2021 and we'd love to hear about your success (and even some of the things that you tried but didn't completely work). Take a moment to share your stories of wellness and engagement at [this link](#). Anything from revised hand washing practices to Google Meet workouts; tell us about it. If your group had a specific person who motivated others to maintain their health, recognize their good work by nominating them for a [CommonHealth Wellness Champion Award](#) for 2021. We want to celebrate your wins and share your stories to inspire other Commonwealth employees in the coming year.

We look forward to seeing you, in person or virtually, to bring you reliable, relatable, and relevant health information for life in Virginia today. Thank you for making it a priority to keep your workplace well and for being a partner with the CommonHealth team in employee wellness.

The CommonHealth Team

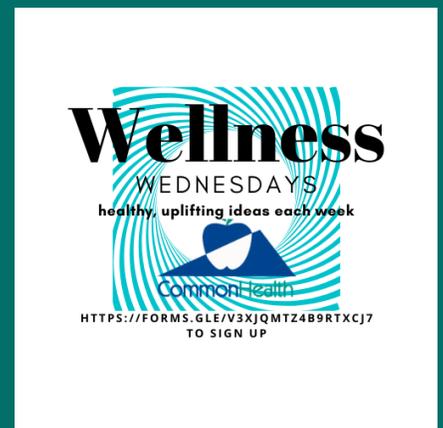
CVC Agency Spotlight: Virginia Retirement System

In these unprecedented times, giving to the Commonwealth of Virginia Campaign has never been more important. Agencies and universities throughout the Commonwealth have come up with many creative ideas to inspire their employees to give. We would like to give a shout-out to the Virginia Retirement System for their creative fundraiser, the VRS Virtual Cookbook.

One thing we were all looking for in 2020 were new recipes to try! Utilizing CVC's online donation platform, VRS created a fun and unique fundraiser. For a minimum one-time contribution of \$10 to the charity of their choice, donors received the VRS e-cookbook comprised of over 40 delicious recipes submitted by members of the VRS team in various categories such as appetizers, entrees, desserts, and snacks. A total of \$1,730.00 for CVC charities was raised through cookbook sales.

Kudos to VRS Agency Coordinator, Gazelle Williams, and her team for coming up with this creative fundraiser. Great job!

Need a mid-week pick-me-up?



Recognize a Co-worker

A full year after Governor Northam issued Executive Order 51, declaring a State of Emergency related to the Novel Coronavirus (Covid-19), employees across the state continue to shine in their service to the Commonwealth. Please join us in celebrating these employees for making a difference since our last issue. Congratulations, and thank you!

[Click here](#) to read more about these and other outstanding colleagues who have been recognized in the past year.



In-Office Team, Virginia Victims' Fund

Cynthia Roberts, DBVI

Buddy Quimpo, DPOR

The VDACS OLS Team

William Robinson, State Mail Services

Nichele Carver, DHCD

Building and Grounds Dept., Southside Virginia Community College

Nursing, Western State Hospital

Mary Clare Smith, M.D., Western State Hospital

If you would like to recognize any employee (or group of employees) for going above and beyond to help maintain operations, assist co-workers or the public, or ensure safety during these turbulent times, [click here to complete a short form](#). DHRM will continue to post these notes of recognition on our website and/or social media.

CONSIDERING DEI: DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION...

by William Brazier

“Diversity, or the state of being different, isn’t the same as inclusion. One is a description of what is, while the other describes a style of interaction essential to effective teams and organizations.” — Bill Crawford, Psychologist (Source: [Leading Differently](#))



Recognizing DIVERSITY is good, but it does not guarantee that we are *acting for INCLUSION*...Listening to ALL voices leads us to EQUITY and INCLUSION. Consider this story.....

A GREAT METAPHOR FOR THINKING ABOUT EQUITY...



One snowy morning, the man in charge of building maintenance at a city office building was shoveling the walkways and the entrance to the building where he worked. A person in a wheelchair struggled through the snow to approach the building entrance. “Good morning,” she said, “Could you perhaps shovel the ramp way to the entrance?” The building maintenance person who was shoveling said, “Look, I need to get the stairs cleared because all of these pedestrians will be coming to work in the building very soon. I’ll get to the ramp after I finish the stairs.” The woman in the wheelchair thought for a minute, and then replied, “I see that many people need to get into the building. And if you shovel the ramp first, we can *all* get in.”





A big “shout out” to our state colleagues at the Virginia Department of Veterans Services for taking concrete collaborative steps to enhance Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in their agency. Starting in 2020, they established an Advisory Group on DEI, composed of staff colleagues from diverse positions and identities, and they conducted “Listening Groups,” so employees of their agency could share feedback about experiences and ideas on DEI and how to work toward greater equity. This year, their Advisory Group will experience some collective professional learning on Cultural Competence, and develop their knowledge in this area so that they can help facilitate conversations with fellow VDVS employees once the DHRM module on Cultural Competence is rolled out for all state employees. Congratulations to VDVS for digging in on the work and for developing ways to expand equitable practices and inclusion!

LEARNING ABOUT DEI and **CULTURAL COMPETENCE**...

*In accordance with legislation passed by the General Assembly, DHRM has created a learning module on DEI and Cultural Competence in which **all state employees** are invited to participate. This module will be available as a learning experience in three ways:*

- a. as a virtual, asynchronous electronic experience through COVLC on the Articulate Storyline platform;
- b. through the COVLC Articulate Storyline platform, but with a "follow-up" online conversation/discussion with agency DEI leaders/coordinators;
- c. as a real-time experience, online, with an agency DEI leader/coordinator in the role of facilitator.



*DHRM employees will have completed this learning during the month of April. For all other state agencies, please be watching for announcements and looking for this module on COVLC or your agency learning platform during the week of **May 17** so that you can sign up for your preferred learning method and be a part of this important learning journey!*

The 2020 Governor's Honor Awards



DHRM's Office of Workforce Engagement, in partnership with the Virginia Credit Union, honored excellence in state government with the annual Governor's Honor Awards virtual event in December. These are the most prestigious awards presented by the Commonwealth recognizing noteworthy accomplishments that significantly contribute to the advancement of the Commonwealth's strategic goals, mission, and overall administrative excellence.

Read on for stories about the 2020's group awardees and their honorable achievements.

ADMINISTRATIVE EXCELLENCE

This honor goes to employees who positively impacted efficiencies and alignment, transforming the culture of the Commonwealth of Virginia, significantly reducing overhead costs, and implementing strategic process improvement.

2020 winners:

The Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation's Continuity of Operations Administrative Team of Laura Ellis, Chris Cole, Dave Neudeck, Michael Harrell, Christina Garcia, Kathy Cook-Jones, and Micah Fairchild.



DCR manages the Virginia State Parks and Natural Area Preserves. At the outset of the pandemic, leadership realized they had safe non-contact outdoor recreational activities that citizens could still enjoy. Since March 2020, the agency has remained at an operational level that is 200% higher than normal. All Divisions within DCR have been seamlessly operational without any disruption to public services due to the quick implementation of the Continuity of Operations plan by these key individuals, and thanks to them, the public has had continued access to public land and water areas for outdoor recreation and mental health.

HEROISM

This award goes to employees who voluntarily risk their lives in the line of duty. This category also recognizes employees who demonstrate exceptional heroism by exhibiting outstanding judgment or courage in an emergency, or displaying meritorious action to prevent injury, loss of life, or preventing damage to or loss of property in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

2020 winners:

The Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services Nursing Leadership Team at Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute. This team includes Andrea Tipton, Melissa Miles, Heidi Caraway, Kennedy Elebo, Laura Benson, Sunpreet Dadwal, and Earle Williams.



These nurses placed their own personal safety at risk of exposure to COVID-19 to provide care to our most vulnerable and challenging patients. They demonstrated consistent leadership, optimism, teamwork, and risk mitigation to lead their staff through unprecedented challenges at the Northern Virginia Mental Health Institute. These employees not only excelled in the execution of their role, but they each went above and beyond to ensure the safety of all within the hospital.

DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, & OUTREACH

This award recognizes employees who demonstrate exceptional commitment to the values of diversity, inclusion, and outreach, showing significant progress in influencing the workforce demographics of an agency and enhancing access to Commonwealth of Virginia services for the communities we serve.

2020 winners:

The Health Equity Work Group and Equity Leadership Taskforce. These groups' key members include Dr. Janice Underwood, Curtis Brown, Sable K Nelson Dyer, Alaysia Hackett, Dr. Lauren Powell, Dr. Rebecca Vargas Jackson, and Karen Brimm.



Virginia Department of
Emergency Management



65 municipalities in the Commonwealth have committed to be part of the pilot program created by these groups that reforms their local unified command toward health equity and creates plans to support the most vulnerable residents in their jurisdiction. As of November 9, 2020, 800,000 masks and nearly 700,000 bottles of hand sanitizer had been distributed to Virginia residents in most need. The ELT has also helped to reform the state COVID-19 unified command with health equity training since March 2020 to thread equity principles in the Commonwealth's vaccination plan and effectively serve all communities.

INNOVATIVE SPIRIT

Employees are recognized for creating something new, improving existing technology or process, or adapting a tried and true idea to a new context.

2020 winners:

The Department of Wildlife Resources, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Transportation, for their HRBT Seabird Nesting Colony Project executed by Rebecca Gwynn, David Norris, Ruth Boettcher, Stephen Living and Chief Deputy Commissioner of VDOT, Robert Cary, who played an integral role in coordinating the efforts between the two agencies.



DEPARTMENT OF
WILDLIFE RESOURCES
CONSERVE. CONNECT. PROTECT.

As part of the Hampton Roads Bridge-Tunnel expansion, the largest seabird colony in Virginia was displaced from South Island, eliminating the nesting habitat of over 25,000 nesting migratory seabirds, including one state threatened species and several species of greatest conservation need as listed in the Virginia Wildlife Action Plan. Moving a colony of this size had never been attempted prior to this effort. In the span of just 3 months (during the onset of the pandemic), the colony was successfully relocated to Rip Raps Island and this critical nesting area was preserved making Virginia a leader in the protection of migratory birds.

PANDEMIC RESPONSE

This honor goes to individuals and teams who have demonstrated an exceptional level of accomplishment in furthering the mission of the Commonwealth of Virginia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2020 winners:

The Virginia Department of Education Staff leading the Recover, Redesign, Restart Initiative (known as RRR) for Virginia's schools including Dr. Linda Reviea, Dr. Linda Wallinger, Maribel Saimre, Dr. Christine Harris, Timothy Nuthall, Jenne Nurse, and Dr. Sandra Curwood.



In the spring of 2020, the Virginia Return to Learn Task Force was created with the specific charge of developing a comprehensive guidance document for use by division leaders to create strong reopening plans for the 2020-2021 school year amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The state-local collaboration covered every facet of school operations, finances, instruction, health and mental health and provided divisions with practical considerations and recommendations. The RRR Initiative was a direct fulfillment of Virginia's shared mission to advance equitable and innovative learning. It reflects countless hours and the deep expertise of a wide variety of VDOE staff who went above and beyond their typical scope of work to meet the pressing needs of local school division leaders, administrators and teachers.

Congratulations to the 2020 Awardees!



Watch for more information in the Employee Experience about the 2021 awards nominations to see how your agency or institution's work may be recognized as an example of the finest public service in the Commonwealth.

Employee Appreciation...It's Not as Hard as We Think

Written by Mary Louise Geredes

Most workplaces have some type of employee recognition program or an employee appreciation celebration once a year. These kinds of programs serve an important role, but they are also complicated and do not necessarily show appreciation for all the “little things” that employees across the organization are doing to fulfill the agency’s mission. Let’s face it, everyone likes to feel appreciated.

in your employees’ growth and in them as individuals.

- ◆ Taking time to say hello and check in regularly – A simple “Good morning, how are you doing?” can be as meaningful as formal recognition.
- ◆ Not taking employees for granted.
- ◆ Expressing your appreciation authentically. A hollow thank you is worse than no thank you at all.



The good news is, it’s easier than you may think.

If you talk to your employees, you are likely to find that making them feel valued and recognized isn’t all that complicated. It mostly comes down to small, commonsense practices like:

- ◆ Remembering to say thank you in a personal and sincere way.
- ◆ Making it clear that you are interested

The best part of appreciation is that it is free and doesn’t consume a lot of time. Start by expressing more gratitude to your team members and see what happens. You might be surprised at what a big difference the little things can make. Even though supervisors sometimes think it’s a challenge to show their appreciation to their employees, employees think it’s actually quite simple.

EMPLOYEE FINANCIAL WELLNESS

Your Future Awaits: Realize Your Goals Through VRS Supplemental Savings

Save more for the future and build on your Virginia Retirement System benefit by contributing to the [Commonwealth of Virginia 457 Deferred Compensation Plan](#), a VRS supplemental savings plan. Eligible employees receive a cash match to help you reach your goals faster. The Commonwealth of Virginia 457 plan offers several opportunities:

- ◆ Automate your savings with paycheck deductions.
- ◆ Defer taxes on contributions until you withdraw money from your plan, or contribute using the [Roth option for qualified tax-free withdrawals](#).
- ◆ Increase the amount you save at any time, subject to tax code and plan limits.
- ◆ Construct your investment portfolio from premixed target date portfolios and a menu of investment options across asset classes.
- ◆ Learn about your investment options and receive one-on-one counseling through [dedicated plan specialists](#).

Salaried and wage employees can [opt-in at any time online](#) or by calling 877-327-5261. If you're already enrolled, check and adjust your contributions through [Account Access](#), your online portal for VRS defined contribution accounts. The 457 plan is part of [VRS' defined contribution plans](#), record kept by ICMA-RC. For a more detailed look, browse the [457 and Cash Match Plan Features and Highlights Brochure](#).

Take Advantage of Your Employer's Cash Match

Don't leave money on the table. For salaried employees, your employer will match 50% of your contribution to the 457 Plan up to \$20 per pay date. That means when you contribute \$40 or more per pay period, you receive a \$20 contribution from your employer in your [Virginia Cash Match Plan account](#).

Hybrid Plan Members: Max Out Your Hybrid Savings First

Don't stop at the minimum [voluntary contribution](#) to the Hybrid Retirement Plan. Save the maximum 4% and you'll receive 2.5% in employer matching contributions. Once you contribute the maximum amount to your hybrid plan, you'll be eligible to receive the cash match on contributions to the Commonwealth of Virginia 457 Plan.

Use Financial Tools to Simplify Your Saving

Don't overthink saving. Small, simple changes can help you save and reach your retirement goal.

[Calculate Impact to Your Pay](#) – Use the VRS Paycheck Calculator to see how increasing your contributions to the 457 plan affects your take-home pay.

[Calculate Your Debt](#) – Log into your [myVRS account](#) and select Financial Wellness for tips, tools and resources to help you plan for and pay down your debt.

[Small Change, Big Savings](#) – Use this savings calculator to see how slight habit changes that save you a few dollars a day can make a huge difference over time.

To stay up to date on the latest VRS news and information, follow [Virginia Retirement System on Facebook](#) and subscribe to Member News at [varetire.org/newsletter](#).

The value of contributing more money over time

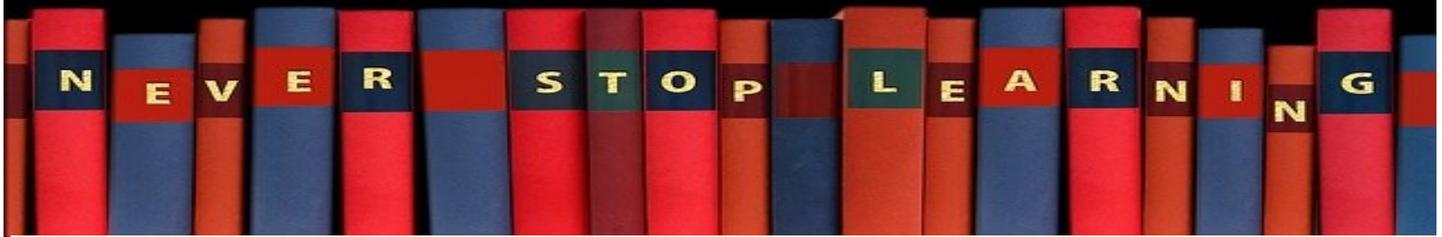


This chart demonstrates the added value of contributing more money over time.

For illustrative purposes only; assumes bimonthly employee contribution made on 15th and 30th of each month and a 6% effective annual return. The final account balance does not account for plan fees or expenses, which would reflect lower net returns. Investment return and principal value will fluctuate, so when shares are redeemed they may be worth more or less than the original cost.



Professional Development



Easy Ways to Support Your Professional Development

by Maribel Castañeda, Governor's Office, for govloop.com in October 2020

Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset

Have you ever heard of a growth mindset vs. a fixed mindset? Having a growth mindset allows you to embrace challenges, and it encourages a drive to learn more. Having a fixed mindset means you avoid challenges and easily give up when given the opportunity to overcome obstacles. Which one do you most identify with?

Even in a growth mindset, life tends to take over and we get stuck in our work that we forget about our own professional development. Most of us in government do not have professional development plans. In order to achieve our goals and professional aspirations, we need to hold ourselves accountable for what's next.

Continuing Education for Government Employees

Here are some easy ways to grow professionally and achieve your career goals.

- ♦ **Free resources.** The misconception is that professional development has to cost money. There are a ton of free resources you can take advantage of – books, podcasts, blogs, Youtube videos, [GovLoop Academy](#), LinkedIn articles, etc. Some of the most valuable lessons can be learned free of charge.
- ♦ **Encourage a space of growth at work.** Motivate your team and send them articles or videos to read or watch. Encourage a space where everyone can share resources that will support them. At my office, I discuss professional development at every check-in to share resources and discuss opportunities.
- ♦ **Informational interviews.** Interested in another position in the next year or in five to 10 years? It doesn't hurt to start the process now. Grab a virtual coffee with someone you look up to and ask them about their journey. What were some of the challenges they had to overcome? What were the skills they had to cultivate? This will give you a good idea on how to map your own journey to that next step.
- ♦ **Virtual conferences.** Take advantage of virtual conferences that are at a reduced cost or free of charge due to COVID-19. The number of webinar recordings has also gone up. Search associations that you might be a part of and see if they have any webinars on topics you're interested in.
- ♦ **Pinpoint that something you're really passionate about in your current work.** Perhaps you enjoy programming or data. Identify something that really energizes you

and learn more about it. For example, I enjoy learning about effective leadership. Last year, I was accepted into a 5-month long leadership program that gave me the tools to be a better leader. A few months later, I was promoted at my office to a leadership role. Pinpoint something you're already doing and keep learning more about it.

- ◆ **Higher education.** Have you been thinking about getting a higher education? My advice is to look at programs near you before making the investment. If they have informational sessions, join them and talk to people currently enrolled. Look at syllabi and the coursework. While government employees tend to gravitate to public policy or public administration, there are other degrees that can certainly support your career. Not interested in

making a big investment? Most universities will allow you to take

classes in a non-degree seeking capacity and they might even offer certificates.

- ◆ **Make the**

time. Whether you decide to watch one video a day or one hour a week to grow your skills, make the time and stick to it. Build it into your routine and

Knock on Learning Opportunities' Door

Written by Deanna Goldstein, DHRM

Employee learning and development has always been a fundamental component of workplace success. Over the past year, the critical value of learning has become more evident in state government as employees and agencies have navigated an increasingly complex world. In support of learning and development as key components for attracting, engaging, and retaining talent, the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) has published the [DHRM Learning Opportunities Catalog](#).

To support employee and agency learning needs, the DHRM Learning Opportunities Catalog provides a comprehensive view of learning opportunities available from DHRM. These opportunities include virtual or in-person training and workshops, e-learning content available in the [Commonwealth of Virginia Learning Center \(COVLC\)](#), and other opportunities to support employee development.

In addition to this DHRM resource, many state agencies provide workplace learning opportunities for employees. Be sure to also review your agency provided learning opportunities to identify how you can best support your workplace learning and development needs.

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By Necil B. Oliver
Published Author
VADOC - Court & Legal

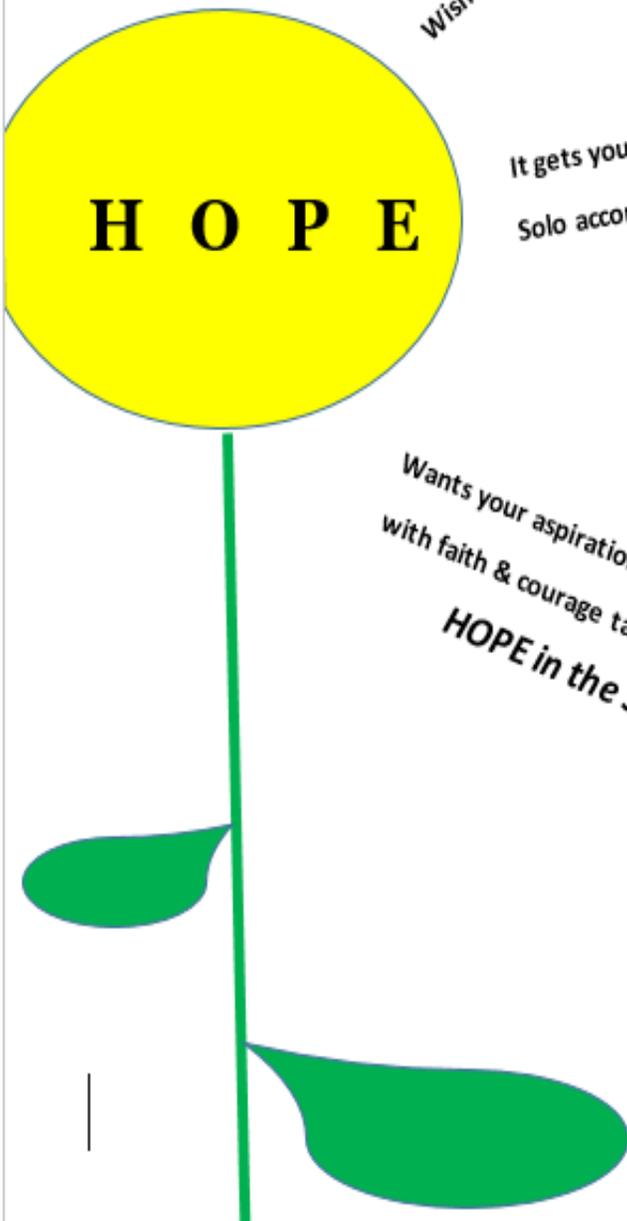
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Wishes, desires, more fun & then some!

*It gets you thinking about goals, not just a dream,
Solo accomplishments or even with a team!*

H O P E

*Wants your aspiration & expectations to be put into motion;
with faith & courage taking you beyond just being a notion!*
HOPE in the Spring is a good thing!



Celebrate Employees May 3 - 7, 2021

Virginia Public Service Week Toolkit – Searching for Public Service Week recognition ideas? The federal website, [Public Service Recognition Week](#), has a toolkit with excellent tips for engaging employees this week!

[How To Celebrate Guide](#) (see page 3 for easy ways to recognize employees).

[Recognize A Co-Worker Campaign](#) – Recognize any employee (or group of employees or peer-to-peer) for going above and beyond to help maintain operations, assist co-workers or the public, or ensure safety during these turbulent times.

Engage your employees with the [Kahoot! Learning Platform Toolkit](#) – Build a strong workplace culture by boosting morale and connecting remote teams.

[CommonHealth #SelfCare Series & Sessions](#) – View and share two offerings created by your CommonHealth Team. Available now on [YouTube](#), a four part series providing several ways to help reduce and manage stress and anxiety through meditation. During VPSW week on [Facebook](#), join them for self-care, mini-sessions.

[Ways to Recognize Your Remote Workforce 2021](#)

[Employee Recognition and Engagement Policy 1.15](#)

[VPSW Easy Engagement Ideas for Agencies](#)

Contact the Office of Workforce Engagement at 804-225-2131 or visit them online at www.dhrm.virginia.gov for opportunities to develop your recognition program.



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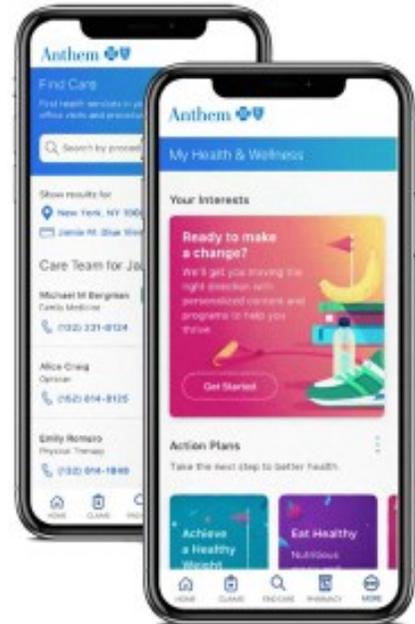


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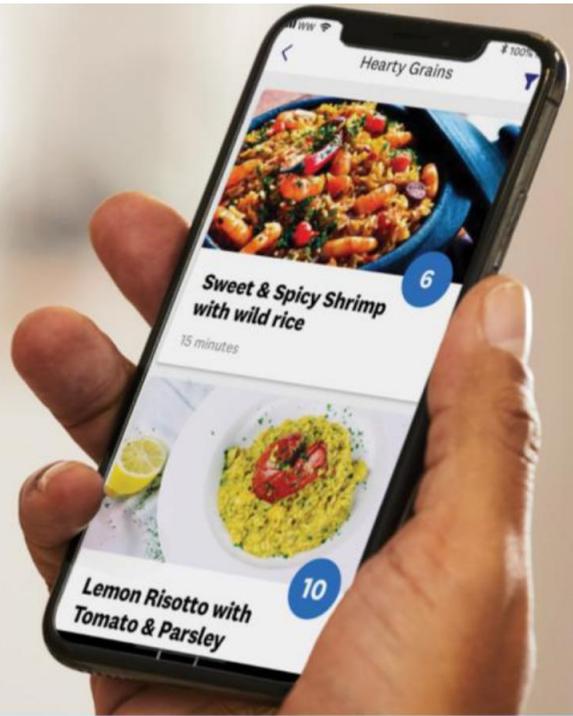
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