

EOPO: Making progress for you

By Estella Hernandez Gillette



The JSC Equal Opportunity Programs Office (EOPO) has gone through many changes since it was established in 1972 when Affirmative Action was extended to the Federal sector.

Our team is comprised of five civil servants, one detailee from Alabama A&M University and one Office Education student. We have oversight of two major groups of JSC employee groups who help us carry out our mission: The JSC Diversity Council and the JSC EO Counselors.

We are the responsible organization for oversight of the affirmative employment regulations and

policies. JSC has invested heavily in diversifying its work force throughout the years - it now consists of approximately 52 percent white males and 48 percent minorities and women. Progress has been made but certainly there's much more to do!

What we do for JSC

We transformed our previously multiple, weeklong cultural observances into American Heritage Week, a week to celebrate the rich heritage that we all bring to our U. S. space mission.

This year, we want to try something new for American Heritage Week and we are seeking your input. How about a celebration of our "American Heroes," which are those members of the JSC work force and/or their children who have served or are serving in defense of our American freedom? What better proof that we all have common objectives, but maybe from different perspectives? Call us at x30601 or email paula.n.scheffman1@jsc.nasa.gov to offer your suggestions.

We also continue to celebrate our special emphasis observances. Employees have been entertained by many different performers and for this year's observances, we'll be sponsoring different exhibits to make all of us more aware of the contributions of each group, including contributions to NASA's goals and objectives.

In the area of discrimination complaints, we have taken a very proactive approach to resolve issues, including extensive training of the Equal Opportunity staff and the JSC EO Counselors, as well as the establishment of a JSC mediation team to further help resolve issues. We have successfully resolved issues because we have involved all necessary levels of the aggrieved employee's organization to help resolve the issue. Our goal is to return employees to their productive environment - we all want solid careers and a stable future in our professions.

In the area of education and outreach, we have programmed millions of dollars through the Minority University Research and Education Program (MUREP) to assure a future work force that can do our NASA work and continue to keep our country in the forefront of technology. We identified our growing minority workforce as a business concern a long time ago, even before the word "outreach" became popular!

Our academic partners are doing research that is relevant to the NASA mission with funding from the MUREP. We are currently preparing for the arrival of about 40 students from historically Black universities and colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions and Tribal colleges, as well as college- and high school-level students with disabilities. Our goal is for those students to gain positive experiences in their JSC internships so that they will return to us as full-time employees upon graduation.

Cooperation and coordination with the various JSC Directorates is paramount. We couldn't plan our different activities without the help of our JSC workforce, nor resolve issues without the involvement of our JSC employees and management. And, we couldn't place our summer interns without the cooperation and support of our JSC mentors.

We work very closely with management, the Human Resources Office, the Legal Office, the Public Affairs Office and the American Federation of Government Employees to make sure that we do the most we can to afford all of our employees opportunities to succeed.

However, the road to success is multi-faceted. It doesn't just take the organization or the EOPO or management to help an individual succeed. JSC has many opportunities for development, visibility and for individuals to gain practice that will help them achieve their next level of success.

It's not only hard work that helps us to succeed - it's also attitude and the ability to step out of our comfort zone. JSC is filled with talented, qualified individuals who work in a competitive environment, but there is so much our system has to offer!

We have a formal Mentoring Program now, one that everyone can sign up for as either a mentor or protégé. We have a formal Leadership Development Program to assure that we get the proper development to be the leaders of the future. Finally, we have new leadership - a fresh start for all of us.

We all have a common goal: The success of our Center and our Agency. Our leaders have the responsibility to provide us with the vision, but we have equal responsibility to be ready and willing to tackle the challenges that they set before us. From those challenges will come many opportunities. Prepare yourself for



FROM THE DESK OF ROY S. ESTESS

Recently, Estella Gillette and her Equal Opportunity Program Office staff hosted the Agency's Equal Opportunity (EO) Board meeting here at JSC. The EO Board is comprised of Agency Deputy Associate and Assistant Administrators, Deputy Center Directors and EO Directors.

We were very pleased that Administrator Sean O'Keefe wanted to transmit a live message to this group. I think it valuable and pertinent to pass on what he had to say about diversity.

He said, "The objectives of diversity should be to resolve the way we do things. It should not be a pursuit in or of itself for reporting purposes only. The only way to avoid 'the group thing' is to be proactive by emphasizing diversity throughout whatever agenda we pursue. It's an opportunity to look at problems differently, not just by academic discipline, but also by the diversity of thought."

I agree with him, but more importantly, I have observed this in practice here at JSC. A few years ago, JSC examined its philosophy and determined that it was time to better match the current JSC environment. That process led to discontinuing the committees for the different cultural groups, in existence for 20 years, and instead the JSC Diversity Council (DC) was formed. The DC represents all of the JSC community and works together to understand the issues existing within our work force and to bring those issues to senior management through the JSC Evolution Team (JET).

The JET, was formed to involve senior management in addressing the issues once they were identified. Through focus-group interviews, we identified a set of leading concerns that included:

- ❖ Lack of defined vision for the Agency and the Center
- ❖ Limited career tracks for some of the work force
- ❖ Lack of a formal mentoring process
- ❖ Balancing family concerns with work demands
- ❖ The development of strong future leaders who would lead us through the challenges we are facing as a Center and Agency.

These are all areas that the Center is in the process of remedying - witness the many programs that HR is fielding and that were highlighted in the January issue of the *Roundup*.

Are we satisfied with our gain? Pleased, but not nearly satisfied. I don't think we can afford to rest on our laurels, as there remains much work to do. However, I am proud of the progress that JSC has made through the years in expanding its understanding and appreciation of the positive impact a diverse work force delivers to the rich contributions JSC makes to the country.

I applaud your efforts in this arena and encourage you to continue to foster diversity in our attitudes and work relationships. By attaining a diverse outlook within our environment and workforce we strengthen the threads that tie together our common goals and objectives.

Roy S. Estess

HOWELL NAMED JSC DIRECTOR

The yearlong wait is over. **Jefferson Davis Howell, Jr.**, has been named Director of the Johnson Space Center effective April 1.

Howell is no stranger to JSC. He currently serves as Senior Vice President and Program Manager for the Safety, Reliability and Quality Assurance contract at JSC. The contract focuses on safety and mission assurance for the Space Shuttle and International Space Station programs. He is employed by Science Applications International Corporation (SAIC).

A retired U.S. Marine Corps Lieutenant General, Howell is only the eighth person to serve as Director in the center's 40-year history. In the April issue of the *Roundup*, we will have more extensive coverage of JSC's new Center Director. We will also provide a look back at Roy Estess' year of leadership. Until then, for additional information on Howell, please visit the JSC homepage at: www.jsc.nasa.gov.