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Wednesday, May 26, 2004

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DLA Public Affairs

Women's Leadership Symposium a success

"Moving Forward with Direction: Leadership, Professionalism, Teamwork" was the theme of this year's Equal Employment Opportunity Office-sponsored Women's Leadership Symposium held May 12-14 at Fairfax, Va.

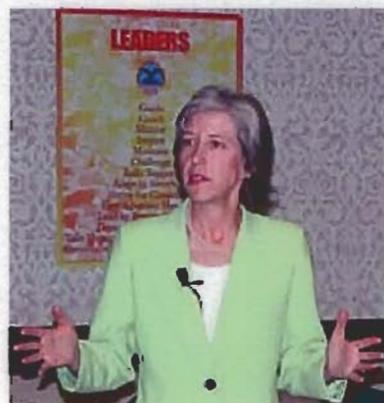
This was the first symposium designed to support For Women's Advancement and Recognition, or FORWARD, representation initiative and the Federal Women's Program. More than 100 women and a few men attended this year's event intended to provide added tools for current and future leaders to use for successful careers.

"It took about a year to plan this event, but if the attendees walk away with new and usable information and a new outlook, then that year of planning was worth it," said Gilda Grant, one of the advisors from the planning committee.

Day 1 of the symposium focused on leadership, and Defense Logistics Agency Director Vice Adm. Keith Lippert opened with remarks on how proud he was of the women employed at DLA. He went on to say, "Our six-cylinder DLA car is running on four cylinders -- just imagine what we could accomplish if everyone was using their full capabilities. We would and could have the best car on the road."

He provided statistics of the percentage of women in DLA's work force:

- 41 percent are grades GS 13-15
- 51 percent make up grades GS 9-12



University of Maryland Senior Fellow for Executive Education Robin Gerber speaks at the symposium. (Photo by Jay Williams)



Maj. Gen. Mary Saunders talks to attendees of the Women's Leadership Symposium. (Photo by Thomas Wilkins)

Lippert discussed the climate survey results and told the group that everyone's voice was heard, and now they are trying to find ways to improve how managers work with their people. One of those ideas is the implementation of a 360-degree assessment – a tool used for persons to comment on how they feel about the management skills of their current bosses.

Throughout the symposium several guest speakers mentioned that effective leaders cannot sit behind their desks all day. They needed to get up, walk around, speak to their people, know their people, find out their people's strength and weaknesses and be genuine, sincere and open in all communication.

"Leaders need to be optimistic because if you are pessimistic, you will fall behind," said University of Maryland Senior Fellow for Executive Education Robin Gerber. "Set your standards high, and whether you reach them or not, they should serve to guide you in your journey."

Many conversations that day revolved around conflict and how most people do not like to deal with it. People would rather avoid it, and that leads to no visible changes in the situation. J-6's Brenda Fairfax spoke on that particular topic and commented how being a good leader requires the ability to be able to interact with other people, regardless of the situation.

Lt. Col. Cassandra Roberts, chief of the Enterprise Integration Team, echoed that theme when she spoke on leadership styles. She said, "You have to have character, competence and integrity to be a good leader."

She showed a chart that highlighted the differences between being the boss and being a leader.

The boss drives workers, a leader teaches them. The boss depends upon authority and the leader on goodwill. The boss inspires fear, the leader inspires enthusiasm. The boss says I, the leader says we. The boss fixes the blame for the breakdown, the leader fixes the breakdown. The boss knows how it was done, the leader shows how. The boss says go, and the leader says, let's go. Real leadership, according to Roberts, is being the person who others will gladly and confidently follow.

Day 2, with professionalism being the main subject, DLA Vice Director Maj. Gen. Mary Saunders told everyone, "Life isn't fair, it just is." She said that people needed to recognize that, and if they did, moving forward would be much easier. "If life gives you lemons, make lemonade," she said. A strong advocate for communication, Saunders said, "We have to learn how to project ourselves in the environment that we are in, regardless of personalities."

Accountability and responsibility of one's actions was the highlight of talks that day. "No one is going to come to you -- you have to decide what you want to do and



Liz Moore talks about effective communication. (Photo by Gladys Bush)



Lt. Col. Robert Shaw of J-4 was one of the few men who attended the event. (Photo by Jay Williams)

then go and do it," Saunders said. She explained that the world is constantly changing, and you have to change with it in order to keep up.

"One can not keep the attitude of always doing things the way it used to be done," she said. "Being a professional means you have to know your job. How do you stay informed, and knowing some of the external things that affect our jobs is important," she asked. "It all ties into being accountable for the job you do and the work you produce."

Helen McCoy, former assistant secretary of the Army, followed with the same message and told everyone "they should take that extra step with integrity, knowledge and caring about themselves, their work and their people. Be the best at what you do, and always be open to new ideas," she said.

Vicki Brooks, J-1 deputy director, had everyone rise from their chairs and repeat after her: "You've got to get up every morning with a smile on your face and show the world all the love in your heart. Then people are going to treat you better, and you're going to find you are as beautiful as you feel." She said when you manage and handle your own life, it becomes a strong indicator on how your career can progress. She advised everyone to do a roadmap for themselves and then travel that path to get there. "There are several programs available within DLA for career progression," she said. "Visit <http://www.hr.dla.mil> to find them."

"Do you understand your organization's political and cultural framework?" asked Director of DLA Support Services Ella Studer and Fannie Mae's director of Asset, Acquisition and Custody Marialane Schultz. They both said being politically savvy is the ability to build influence through relationships and results. "Often times we fail at this because we fail to recognize how human relationships affect achieving objectives," Studer said. "We fail to identify allies and opponents of projects and fail to develop strategies for defusing resistance."

She said everyone should all read the political landscape in the Agency and then build critical mass to support ideas and objectives. That is done by knowing who the key players are and what type of relationship exists within those players. "Advancing your career depends not only on what you know but whom you know and who knows you," Studer said. "Embrace it, identify it, build it, and then leverage that influence in order to achieve results. Then maximize the value of those results."

Mentoring links employees with experienced professionals for career development, according to J-642's Patricia Kemp. "Mentoring is important because it builds relationships, capabilities for the future, provides a medium for people to learn and develop on the job, and maintains technical capability," she said.

A mentor can facilitate personal and professional



Fania Magana, director of Equal Employment Opportunity, said, "The symposium exceeded our expectations." (Photo by Gladys Bush)

growth in an employee by sharing knowledge and insights and allows for retention of consistency within the Agency. A mentored employee will develop increased growth and confidence, a better understanding of the organization and gives better job satisfaction. For the mentor, Kemp said, it benefits them because it sharpens their skills, expands their personal contacts, it provides for information gathering and feedback and builds a personal satisfaction level and contributes to career enhancement. J-1 will be publicizing its new Agency mentoring handbook soon.

The final day focused on teamwork. Liz Moore, DLA public affairs specialist, talked to the group about effective communication and how one has to practice, practice and practice to communicate, communicate and communicate. The 3 P's and the 3 C's lead to success, Moore said. She stressed that cubicle email should cease, and one should get up and talk to people again. "Because of email, we take the liberty of saying things we most likely wouldn't say face to face. We have forgotten how to talk to people," she said.

Mark Smith, DLA corporate recruitment analyst, demonstrated the benefit of a good interview and how to project "you" as a valuable asset.

Former J-1 Director Juanita Smith, now of Smith and Smith Consultants, continued the teamwork cycle by having a group of people stand and hold hands facing inward. She said that by facing inward, people don't see the whole picture and how it makes for a smaller team. She turned the group around and had them face outward, this way always surveying and looking out. "There are lots of ways to form a team," she stressed, "but you have to be able to connect; you have to have a pulse. Not one person can take the group and spin a wheel alone."

Closing the training, Fania Magana, director of Equal Employment Opportunity, said, "The symposium exceeded our expectations. We successfully gathered more than 100 women who spent three very full days broadening their knowledge and understanding of the three DLA managerial competencies that were the focus of the symposium: leadership, professionalism and teamwork. We created a learning environment that enabled participants to expand their DLA networking opportunities through meeting new people, to assess their personal goals and career paths, and to come away from the experience with renewed personal motivation, enthusiasm and focus that will benefit the Agency."