



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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Commissary employees honored for excellence in EEO

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NOTE: To access photos of the Defense Commissary Agency's 2011 Equal Employment Opportunity Award ceremony, go to <http://www.flickr.com/photos/commissary/sets/72157627610647067/>.

FORT LEE, Va. – The Defense Commissary Agency recognized its 2011 Equal Employment Opportunity Award winners during a ceremony at its headquarters on Fort Lee, Va., Aug. 31. Winners received letters of appreciation and plaques presented by DeCA Director and CEO Joseph H. Jeu.

DeCA's 2011 EEO Award winners were cited for excellence in promoting diversity awareness and acceptance of people of all ages, races, genders, religious preferences and disabilities. They are:

- **Leader of the Year** — *Ronald Yoder*, store director, Yokota Air Base Commissary, Japan. Yoder was recognized for being “a beacon of professional hope to his employees and an outstanding steward of cultural and ethnic diversity.” He is credited with fostering an atmosphere of fairness and equal opportunity, opening up opportunities for training and advancement, and focusing on under-represented groups. From his actions came an improved, positive work tempo where one of eight management positions is now occupied by minorities, with the top three management positions being held by women.

Yoder was also recognized for his efforts with local personnel offices to recruit and hire people with targeted disabilities.

- **Employee of the Year** — *Teresa Komahcheet*, lead store associate, Fort Sill Commissary, Okla. Komahcheet, is a Native American and key member of the Comanche tribe. The 26-year commissary veteran was hired as a cashier and worked her way up to her current position. Komahcheet was recognized for her efforts in promoting ethnic diversity, spearheading ethnic diversity celebrations and helping others recognize the significance and importance of their culture.

- **Disabled Employee of the Year** — *Anthony Green*, store associate, McGuire Air Force Base Commissary, Joint Base McGuire-Dix-Lakehurst, N.J. Green achieved his second win in this category, honored first in 2007. Although profoundly hearing impaired, customers and co-workers alike are inspired by his “infectious personality and ready smile that make communicating with him easy and delightful.” He was recognized for having a “diligent work ethic” that also influences his interests outside the store, where he gathers clothes and food for the needy during the winter; provides fans and air-conditioning units for senior citizens during the summer; and makes small repairs and delivers groceries, medical equipment and supplies to the elderly and disabled. Green also devotes time and financial support to a nonprofit organization that promotes the employment of men and women with disabilities.

- **Organization of the Year** — *U.S. Air Force Academy Commissary, Colo.* At this store, 55 of its 73 DeCA employees are considered minorities; nine of the 55 are in leadership positions with 90 percent of those positions being held by women. And, 4 percent of the Air Force Academy Commissary’s workforce consists of people with disabilities. The store management is credited with providing training and advancement opportunities as well as developing a relationship with the Colorado Vocational Rehabilitation Center and recording zero EEO complaints in the past year. Store Director Kelly Wentling accepted the award for the Air Force Academy store.

Diversity is a key ingredient to DeCA's success, Jeu pointed out during the award ceremony, noting that the agency is among the military's leaders in equal employment opportunity. For example, although 0.8 percent of the Department of Defense civilian workforce consists of people with severe or targeted disabilities, DeCA employs 1.39 percent – one of the highest percentages of all defense agencies.

“We are finding ways to put disabled people to work in some very difficult jobs and to show them that what matters to us are their abilities, not their disabilities,” Jeu said, adding that DeCA plans to hire more people with disabilities and achieve DoD's employment goal of 2 percent.

DeCA places a high priority on hiring and retaining diverse employees, and that emphasis helps the commissary agency reflect the same diversity of its customers, Jeu said.

“For more than 40 years, the importance of equal employment opportunity has brought fairness, equality, respect – and most recently – diversity to the workplace,” Jeu added. “This year, DeCA's 2011 Equal Employment Opportunity award recipients, lauded as the ‘Best in DeCA,’ took fairness and respect in the workplace to new heights.”

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About DeCA: *The Defense Commissary Agency operates a worldwide chain of commissaries providing groceries to military personnel, retirees and their families in a safe and secure shopping environment. Authorized patrons purchase items at cost plus a 5-percent surcharge, which covers the costs of building new commissaries and modernizing existing ones. Shoppers save an average of more than 30 percent on their purchases compared to commercial prices – savings amounting to thousands of dollars annually. For current savings figures for various groups – single member up to a family of seven – visit <http://www.commissaries.com>. A core military family support element, and a valued part of military pay and benefits, commissaries contribute to family readiness, enhance the quality of life for America's military and their families, and help recruit and retain the best and brightest men and women to serve their country.*