



NEWS RELEASE

Defense Commissary Agency

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DeCA awarded for hiring people with disabilities

*By Kevin L. Robinson,
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FORT LEE, Va. – Hiring people with disabilities is more than an admin box that gets checked at the Defense Commissary Agency, according to its director.

“We actively recruit qualified people with disabilities, not only because it’s the right thing to do,” said Joseph H. Jeu, DeCA director and CEO, “but also because we see their strengths and contributions every day as we deliver the commissary benefit.”

DeCA’s track record in hiring people with disabilities was recently recognized at Department of Defense level when it received the Best Mid-Sized Component Award. The commissary agency joined three other DoD components in receiving secretary of defense awards for their 2011 performance in employing individuals with disabilities: the Department of the Navy, Best Military Department Award; the Joint Staff, Best Small-Sized Component Award; and the Defense Intelligence Agency, Best Intelligence Component Award.

The commissary agency achieved Best Mid-Sized honors on the strength of increasing the number of employees with targeted disabilities on its rolls from 1.1 percent in fiscal 2010 to 1.51 percent in fiscal 2011. The DoD goal for hiring people with targeted disabilities is 2 percent – the DoD-wide average percentage is 0.77 and the federal-wide average is 0.88.

Targeted disabilities, as defined by the Federal Equal Employment Opportunities Commission, include: deafness, blindness, missing extremities, partial paralysis, complete

paralysis, convulsive disorders, mental retardation, mental illness and genetic and physical conditions affecting limbs or spine.

“Considering the physical requirements of many DeCA jobs, this is a significant accomplishment,” said Marcus Lashley, director of equal employment. “Leadership sets the tone for an organization’s strides in equal employment opportunities, and Mr. Jeu did that by asking senior DeCA leaders to focus on ‘moving the needle’ in this metric.”

Lashley also credited DeCA’s human resources directorate for creating relationships with federal, state and private organizations to help recruit qualified people with disabilities and Wounded Warriors.

DeCA Human Resources Deputy Director Cynthia Craft, who supervised former Diversity Program Manager Claudie Grant, credited the retired employee “as being pivotal in focusing and shaping the agency’s recruitment of people with disabilities.” That recruitment mission puts DeCA on the road to colleges, job fairs and any events that focus on people with targeted disabilities and Wounded Warriors to inform them of commissary job opportunities.

“We also participate in DoD’s Workforce Recruitment Program, which sponsors disabled college students working in various DoD components,” said Beverly White, diversity manager for human resources responsible for the agency’s recruiting matters for people with disabilities. “The WRP gives us a wonderful opportunity to hire a graduating student into a permanent position.”

Hiring people with disabilities fits with DeCA’s emphasis to foster a culture where employees are valued for their qualifications to do the job and not for their race, creed, religious background or physical disabilities, said Tonja Ancrum, the agency’s affirmative employment manager. She and White were part of an agency contingent led by Jeu to accept the award from Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy John R. Campbell in Bethesda, Md., last month.

“We will continue to do more to follow Mr. Jeu’s lead and support DoD’s goal to offer more job opportunities to qualified people with targeted disabilities,” Ancrum said.

To learn more about the government’s report, “Improving the Participation Rate of People with Targeted Disabilities in the Federal Work Force,” visit <http://www1.eeoc.gov/federal/reports/pwtd.html>. For more information about the 31st Annual Department of Defense Disability Awards Ceremony, visit <http://www.defense.gov/releases/release.aspx?releaseid=14951>.

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.*

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