

AMC celebrates diversity, provides resources to support disabled employees

By Samantha Tyler, October 29, 2021



National Disability Employment Awareness Month is an opportunity to reaffirm the Department of Defense's commitment to recruit, retain, and advance individuals with disabilities throughout our workforce. It is also a time to recognize the many...

Army Materiel Command employees virtually celebrated National Disability Employment Awareness Month, recognizing the strength of diversity and discussing resources to support teammates.

AMC Chief of Staff Brig. Gen. Walt Duzzny spoke about the historical significance of this observance, noting how what started as a week-long occasion in 1945 extended over time to a month-long recognition and expanded its scope to recognize non-physical disabilities.

Duzzny said diversity, including disability, is the strength of the Army.

"We want to serve in an organization that recognizes that and recognizes that benefit of inclusion," Duzzny said.

This year's theme is "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion." AMC invited Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program Manager and Assessment Specialist Michael Young to speak. CAP provides assistive technology and accommodations to support individuals with disabilities, as well as wounded, ill and injured service members. Assisted technology can help disabled employees with dexterity, vision, hearing, cognitive and learning, and communication.

In addition to procuring technology and accommodations, CAP also conducts comprehensive needs assessments and tech demonstrations, provides training on disability program management, supports compliance of federal regulations and serves as a centrally funded resource to help Department of Defense agencies meet their obligations to accommodate.

“Providing accommodations is just good business sense,” Young said.

During the observance, Noberto Soto Fuentes, an affirmative employment program manager at AMC, outlined additional resources, including the Job Accommodation Network and the Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities. He said learning about JAN and WRP can help supervisors and disabled employees know what opportunities and resources are out there.

“This is about awareness,” Soto Fuentes said. “This is about knowing where the resources are, and what I can do as an individual and what I can do as an organization.”

JAN anonymously provides information, guidance and solutions to those with questions about accommodations. WRP connects federal and private entities nationwide with college students and recent graduates with disabilities for summer or permanent jobs. The program allows students and recent graduates opportunities in career fields from human resources and budget analysis to environmental protection and engineering.

The observance ended with a question and answer session focused on reasonable accommodations. AMC’s Equal Employment Opportunity Deputy Director Tora Henry led the session, explaining terms and letting supervisors know different ways an employee could request a reasonable accommodation.

When employees have a request, they will visit AMC’s EEO office and explain what they are looking for and mention whether they have a disability that aligns with the request. EEO synchronizes with the command surgeon and legal team to best address requests and get employees the resources they need.

More than 75 years after recognitions began in 1945, the Army still remains committed to recruiting, hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities to capitalize on the innovation and problem solving capabilities of a diverse and inclusive force.

“Today we are here in recognition of that, but we also recognize that there is a lot of work to be done,” Duzzny said. “Part of the way we continue that journey is by getting together like we are during this observance.”