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Corps is Model for Disabilities Recruitment Nationwide

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ALBUQUERQUE – The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Albuquerque District, with help from the University of New Mexico (UNM), and the Technical Vocational Institute (TVI), earned the U.S. Army's top awards for its recruitment program of Americans with disabilities in New Mexico, 2005 and 2006.

Through innovative partnerships with UNM and TVI, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has improved opportunities for recruitment of disabled Americans from within the local community into the Corps, well enough to receive top national recognition. Nearly 23 percent of the Albuquerque District Corps employment population is currently identified with disabilities.

"...it's a really worthwhile program," said Mary Montana, Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) coordinator at UNM. "The placement rate is the best I've seen in comparison to the private sector."

"The District recognizes the increasing numbers of individuals with disabilities in the workforce and is addressing the need for improved community involvement with the disability population," said Eddie L. Paulsgrove, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District Regulatory Project Manager and manager of the Individuals with Disabilities Program (IWDP). "The program has been very successful in recruiting, promoting and retaining employees with disabilities."

Paulsgrove received the Department of the Army's 2005-2006 Award for Most Outstanding Achievement in Providing Equal Employment Opportunity, and was presented the top award by the Secretary of the Army, Dr. Francis J. Harvey, at the Pentagon in Washington D.C. March 29. The Corps also won the 2005 Army's Best Disability Program and received the distinguished Meritorious Civilian Service Award presented by Mr. Dan Denning, Principle Deputy to the Secretary of Personnel Affairs at the Pentagon December 6. The awards recognize the Corps for its dedication in hiring through the WRP and providing developmental opportunities for, and retaining individuals with disabilities.

"His (Paulsgrove's) tenacious networking with other agencies, specifically with colleges and universities, was significant because he really reached out to the community to make certain that college students with disabilities are being offered opportunities for employment," said Ernie Moya, IWDP director, headquartered in Arlington,

Virginia.

"Raters for the award noticed growth in employment through use of the WRP for college students with disabilities. They really got high, high ratings," she said.

The number of employees assigned to the District that have identified themselves as having a disability



Photo by Frank Martin

Eddie Paulsgrove, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers - Albuquerque District Disability Programs manager, and Cheryl Fogle, archaeologist, talk about her new job in the Environmental Resources section in Albuquerque. Fogle was hired through the local Workforce Recruitment Program May 2005.

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is much higher than the national average, said Paulsgrove. The District hired three employees through UNM since 2004 under WRP, and is currently in the process of hiring one from TVI and another from UNM.

“We’re currently working to branch out to more schools to participate in the program,” he said. WRP, set up by the U.S. Department of Labor and U.S. Department of Defense, is a separate program from IWDP designed to provide disabled college students with potential employment opportunities. WRP has been an active program in the Army since the 1970’s. Paulsgrove’s IWDP manager position is a volunteer position that he took up in 1999 to recruit through the WRP and provide assistance to current employees with disabilities.

“When the District recognized there weren’t any participating colleges in the Albuquerque, Santa Fe region in the Workforce Recruitment Program in 2002, the Corps then recruited schools of undergraduate and post-graduate programs to create a candidate pool of students with disabilities,” said Paulsgrove. The District recruited UNM and the Technical Vocational Institute, both of Albuquerque, into the workforce recruitment program. In addition, while recruiting UNM, the District assisted them in starting their own disabilities advisory group.

The information came to Montano from the UNM human resources department for her to reach out to students with disabilities. Once designated as WRP coordinator, Montano worked to get the word out on the WRP around Campus beginning early fall of 2004.

“The program has worked great for employees with disabilities here,” said Paulsgrove. “We’ve successfully made reasonable accommodations for individuals in both materials and in lateral reassignments to positions that better accommodate the individual’s disability.”

Cheryl K. Fogle, an archaeologist with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Albuquerque District, is legally blind and began working for the Corps in May 2005 as a WRP recruit. Through IWDP, she received special computer equipment so she could complete her work while her colleagues received awareness training provided by representatives from the New Mexico Commission for the Blind to promote an understanding of her condition and her capabilities.

“The fact that Eddie works to create a position for WRP students and that he’s so open is instrumental



File Photo

Eddie Paulsgrove, (right) Albuquerque District, receives the Department of the Army’s 2005-2006 Award for Most Outstanding Achievement in Providing Equal Employment Opportunity, presented by Secretary of the Army, Dr. Francis J. Harvey, at the Pentagon in March. The Corps also won the 2005 Army’s Best Disability Program and received the distinguished Meritorious Civilian Service Award presented by Mr. Dan Denning, Principle Deputy to the Secretary of Personnel Affairs at the Pentagon in December. The awards recognize the Corps for its dedication in hiring through the Workforce Recruitment Program and providing developmental opportunities for, and retaining individuals with disabilities.

in my successful start on the job,” said Fogle. He organized training in May, and I gave him contact information for him to invite people from the commission for the blind. “Eddie was instrumental by creating general awareness training for other employees, which alleviated any potential apprehension coworkers might have in forwarding work to me.”

Paulsgrove’s outreach initiatives to universities and colleges as well as other federal and local communities resulted in increasing opportunities for employment to college students with disabilities, and provided gainful work experience through innovative marketing, said Moya.

Paulsgrove gave a presentation on the Army’s Best Disability Program at the Hyatt Regency in Bethesda, Maryland December 5.

It was a first for any Army Best program where the award recipient gave a feature presentation before the participants of the Department of Army IWDP forum, said Moya. He shared what the Albuquerque District did to create such a successful program.

“We look for people with abilities rather than turn away people with disabilities,” said Paulsgrove. “Everybody has something to offer.” 