

DEIB YEAR IN REVIEW | 2024



(Right) Photo of a presentation on Inclusive Leadership, given to the cadets at New Jersey Youth Academy during the month of December.

A Landmark Year for DEIB...

In 2024 the DMAVA Office of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging marked its first full year of operation in April. Pioneering a new initiative during such dynamic times can sometimes feel like laying tracks ahead of a speeding train. Over the past year, the DEIB office has introduced many firsts for DMAVA, while also gaining valuable insights into the diverse needs of our workforce. We are grateful for the support and participation of everyone across our department as we continue this important journey. As we look ahead to 2025, the DEIB office is brimming with new ideas and initiatives aimed at further engaging and empowering our employees. Our mission remains clear: to create a space where everyone can bring their authentic selves to the table. This train is just getting started.



MLK Day Blood Drive

To kick off the year, DMAVA hosted our inaugural blood drive in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day. Partnering with the Red Cross, the DEIB Office transformed the Central Office Cafeteria into a dedicated blood donation center. Over the course of the event, several dozen employees generously donated their time and blood, helping to save the lives of 75 individuals. We are proud of the impact our community made and look forward to sharing details about this year's upcoming blood drive and how you can get involved!



Human Trafficking Awareness

January is National Human Trafficking Awareness Month, a time to shed light on this often misunderstood and sensationalized issue, despite its widespread presence in modern society. To promote education and understanding of this complex crisis, the DEIB Office welcomed Debbie Riscica, a representative from the New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking and the Central Jersey Family Health Consortium, to provide staff with valuable insights into the realities of human trafficking and ways to combat it. In addition, DMAVA hosted a successful gift card drive for victims, raising over \$400 to support those affected.



Cadets create 'Identity Shields' together at the Youth Challenge Leadership Summit

DEIB Collaborates with the NJYCA

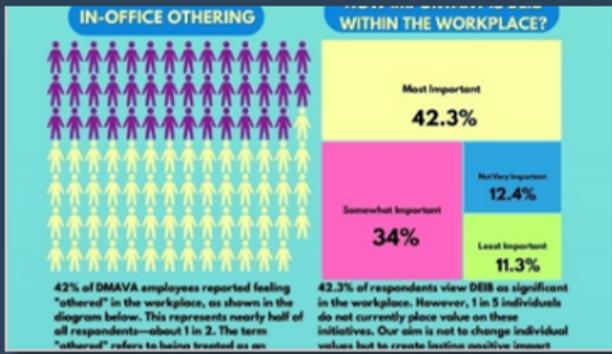
In 2024, the New Jersey Youth Challenge Academy (NJYCA) marked its thirtieth year of operation. For the first time, the Office of DEIB facilitated two on-site training sessions for staff members, focusing on DEIB principles. Additionally, DMAVA hosted the inaugural NJYCA Leadership Summit, designed to prepare, inspire, and empower cadets in their journeys of growth. During this day-long event, cadets had the opportunity to engage with military leaders, learning from their diverse experiences and gaining insights into potential military careers, as well as the importance of making positive choices. The DEIB Office also introduced an Inclusive Leadership course, featuring interactive activities designed to foster collaboration, self-reflection, and self-expression, all while having fun. Two of these sessions were held in 2024, with plans to continue offering them for each NJYCA class moving forward.



Driven to care and driven to give...

The first half of the year saw DMAVA host several diverse cause-driven drives, starting with the blood drive. The DEIB Office was deeply humbled by the incredible generosity and support from our teams. After the successful gift card drive for the New Jersey Coalition Against Human Trafficking, we organized three more impactful drives throughout the year. In March, to honor Women's History Month, we held a feminine products drive benefiting veteran residents at Vets Haven North & South, which was a resounding success. In April, we hosted a clothing drive in memory of SFC Latoya Sotomayor, with donations going to her beloved mission in the Dominican Republic, reflecting her passion and generosity. Additionally, as part of our ongoing partnership with the New Jersey Youth Challenge Academy, we organized a book drive to diversify and enrich cadets' reading efforts as a reward for graduation, with surplus books donated to the NJYCA library. The DEIB Office is incredibly grateful for the charitable spirit within NJDMAVA, making these drives possible and impactful!

The First DEIB Climate Survey



Spring 2024 marked a significant milestone in our ongoing commitment to DEIB with the launch of our first-ever DEIB Climate Survey. This initiative offered valuable insights from across the organization, helping us better understand our current position and identify key areas for growth and improvement.

Among the key findings, we learned that the reach of our DEIB initiatives face limitations due to the size of our organization and the diverse functions of our workforce. This highlights the importance of developing more tailored strategies to effectively address and engage the diverse needs of our staff. The Office of DEIB remains committed to fostering an inclusive environment where all employees feel valued and engaged. Feedback collected from staff this year has been instrumental in shaping our ongoing efforts and guiding future initiatives. In 2025, we will introduce new programs designed to help employees align with our values and mission from the very beginning of their journey with us. Additionally, we are enhancing opportunities for collaboration and engagement across all areas of the organization to ensure every voice is heard. As we identify new needs, our strategy will continue to evolve, reflecting our commitment to creating a workplace where everyone can thrive and contribute meaningfully.

DMAVA Observes Suicide Prevention and Awareness Month

In observance of Suicide Awareness Month, the Office of DEIB partnered with Veterans Affairs to host a crucial webinar for all DMAVA employees. The session featured S.A.V.E. Training, a powerful initiative designed to equip individuals with the tools to respond with empathy and care when encountering a veteran—or anyone—experiencing emotional distress or contemplating suicide. The webinar also highlighted the Don't Wait, Reach Out campaign, which serves as both a resource and a support guide aimed at preventing a crisis before it happens. We extend our heartfelt thanks to everyone who participated in this important event and contributed to raising awareness and fostering a culture of support.

Creating Moments that Unite Us

Throughout the year, the Office of DEIB actively engaged with staff through a variety of events designed to offer a break from work and create meaningful connections, whether for fun or education—and, of course, with plenty of snacks! For Juneteenth, the DEIB Office hosted a screening of the documentary Faith & Freedom at the Central Office, which explored the history of Juneteenth and its significance as a National Holiday in the United States. On Earth Day, we gave the DMAVA team a chance to connect with nature through in-office planting, while also offering several "walk-arounds" to promote mental wellness. We also celebrated the awe-inspiring eclipse with style, providing themed goodie bags and protective eyewear so our team could experience the once-in-a-lifetime cosmic event together. And let's not forget our semi-regular coffee days—organized in partnership with the Events Committee—where the DEIB team plays barista, serving up coffee and creating an opportunity for the entire faculty to connect over a cup of coffee.



Veterans Haven South

Veterans Haven South has truly made significant strides over the years in fostering inclusion within their facility. As a team, they have been proactive in raising awareness and sharing valuable resources through initiatives focused on Diabetes, Breast Cancer and many more. They have honored the legacy of veterans by celebrating the birthdays of every military branch, recognizing the service and sacrifices of those who have served in each. In June, they hosted a Mental Health Response Training event, demonstrating their commitment to supporting the well-being of all. To cap off the year, Veterans Haven South held their annual Holiday Express, where Santa made a special appearance to entertain the veterans, all while they enjoyed a hot meal and dessert. It was a heartwarming and joyful event that brought everyone together in celebration.



Moving into 2025...

As we look ahead to 2025, the DEIB Office is excited to offer even more opportunities for engagement through a variety of fun, educational, and impactful events, both in-person and virtual. Keep an eye on future newsletters for announcements about upcoming events—some of which will be open to the public. We look forward to connecting and engaging with everyone! They will provide spaces for employees to connect with those who share similar experiences while also encouraging everyone to learn and engage with new perspectives. As mentioned earlier, one of our key goals for 2025 is to further enhance opportunities for collaboration and inclusion across the organization. Looking ahead, we have exciting events planned for 2025, including a Women's History Celebration in March, a Pride 5K Color Run in June to honor LGBTQ+ members of the military and beyond, and the NJ State Workforce DEIB Summit in late June, offering opportunities for learning and networking. We're excited to host these events and more, fostering engagement, fun, and connection throughout the year—and we look forward to you being a part of it!