

The Advocator Newsletter

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program



Technological Inventions by African Americans, Women, Arab Americans, Jewish Americans, and Asian Americans, Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders

During the first half of 2024, the Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action (EEO/AA) Program in the Civil Rights Division celebrated several diversity months. Below are highlights of technological advancements contributed to our society from African American, Women, Arab American, Jewish American, and Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) communities.

In the mid-19th century, Ada Lovelace became known as the first computer programmer after developing an algorithm designed to be carried out by a machine. (Women’s History Month, March)

In the early 1910s, actress Hedy Lamarr developed her “Secret Communication System, which was a frequency hopping device. This invention led to the development of Wi-Fi, GPS, and Bluetooth. (Women’s History Month, March)

In 1932, Richard Spikes invented the first automatic gear shift for cars. (African American History Month, February)

In 1952, Katherine Johnson developed the world’s first human programmable computer language, which was used for NASA missions. You may recall her name from the 2017 film, *Hidden Figures!* (Women’s History, March/African American History Month, February)

In 1955, Gregorio Y. Zara, a Filipino engineer and physicist, invented the first two-way video telephone, similar to FaceTime! (AANHPI Month, May)

CELEBRATING



**DIVERSITY,
EQUITY &
INCLUSION**



Inside This Issue

- Twelve Technological Inventions (continued) 2
- Region II Black History Month Celebration Pictures 3
- Outreach & Recruitment Photos.4
- REAP Pictures 5
- DEI Initiatives..... 6
- Diversity Week and EEO/AA Updates..... 7
- EEO/AA Updates (continued)... 8
- New CRD Staff and Retirement Announcement..... 9
- The Women of CRD and Upcoming Events..... 10

Special Points of Interest

- Read information from each Brown Bag Presentation
- Welcome new CRD staff
- Retirement Announcement
- Upcoming Events

For more information, or to contact the EEO/AA staff at 615-741-3681 or website: [Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action \(EEO/AA\) Program](#)

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Jewish American cardiologist Paul Zoll played a pivotal role in the development of pacemakers and defibrillators. These developments and/or methods, gave way to his title as , “The Father of Modern Cardiac Therapy.” (Jewish American Heritage Month, May)

In the 1960s, Narinder S. Kapany, an Indian American physicist, helped develop fiber optic technology that is used worldwide today for things like internet services. (AANHPI Month, May)

In 1962, James E. West patented the electret microphone, which is used in nearly 90% off all microphones developed each year. This technology can be found in your cell phones, baby monitors, and hearing aids. (African American History Month, February)

In 1964, An Wang, a Chinese American computer scientist, developed one of the first desktop electronic calculators with digital displays. (AANHPI Month, May)

In 1969, Marie Van Brittan Brown developed closed-circuit television security (CCTV) or security cameras. (Women’s History, March/African American History Month, February)

In the 1970s, Research conducted by Shirley Ann Jackson, the first black woman to earn a doctorate from MIT, led to the invention or caller ID and portable fax machines. (Women’s History, March/African American History Month, February)

In the 1980s, Taher Elgamal pioneered internet security before anyone else was considering security algorithms. His paper “A Public Key Cryptosystem and a Signature Scheme based on Discrete Logarithms,” published in 1984, formed the bases of the Digital Signature Algorithm (DSA) and the Advanced Encryption Standard. (Arab American Awareness Month, April)

In the late 1990s, Indian American computer architect Ajay Bhatt created the Universal Serial Bus or as it’s better know, the USB. (AANHPI Month, May)

In 1998, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, Ph.D. students with a vision to change the way people interact with information on the World Word Web, conceived the idea of a unique search engine that would organize search results based on the popularity of web pages initially known as “Backrub” but is known today as “Google”. (Jewish American Heritage Month, May)

In 2001, Apple CEO Steve Jobs hired Arab American inventor Anthony “Tony” Fadell to develop new projects, including the ever-popular iPod. Fadell went on to oversee the first 18 iterations of the iPod before he was given his next assignment: to create a mobile phone with many of the same features as the iPod. (Arab American Awareness Month, April)

In 2005, Steven Shih Chen, Taiwanese American entrepreneur, helped launch one of the most popular websites to exist, YouTube. (AANHPI Month, May)

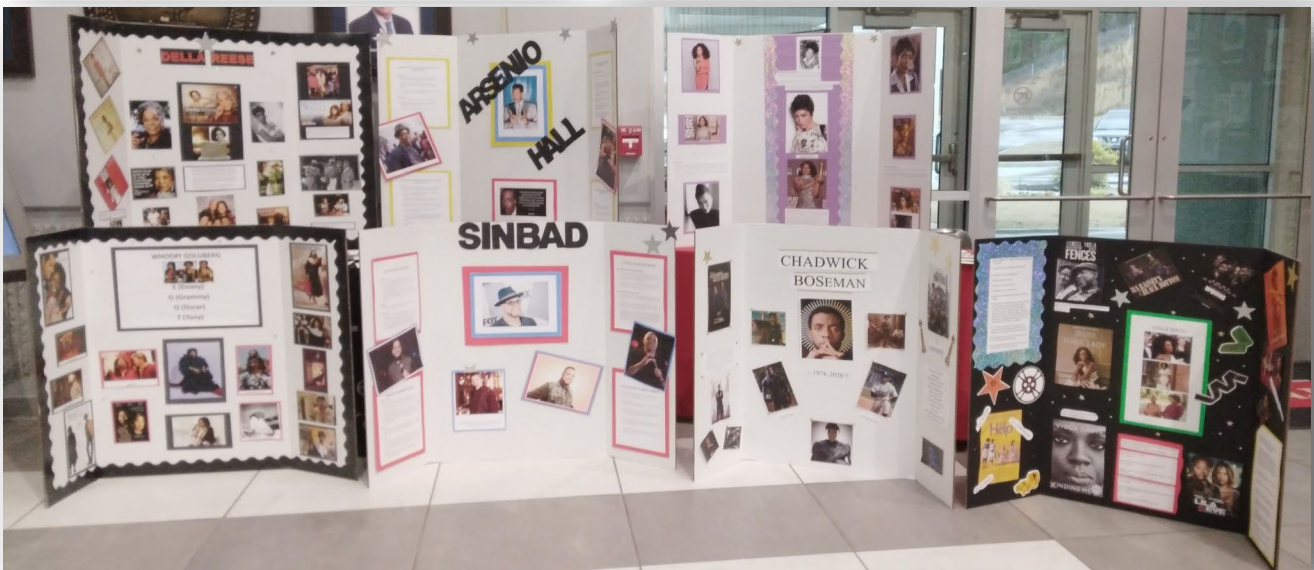
This is only a snapshot of some of the amazing advancements made by America’s diverse population!



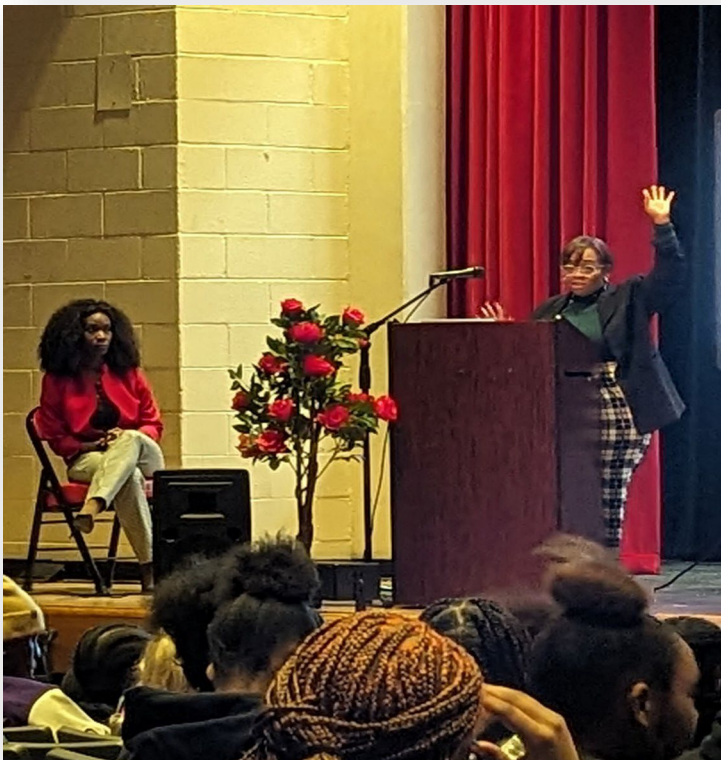
Region II Black History Month Celebration



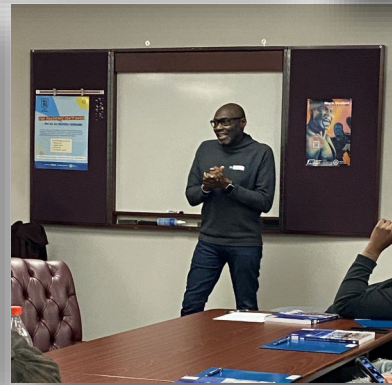
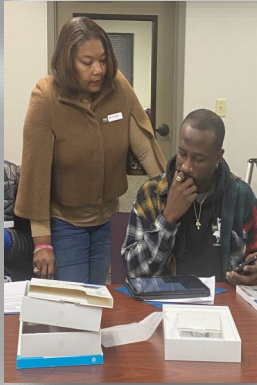
BLACK HISTORY MONTH



Outreach and Recruitment



Reentry Experience Advancement Partnership Program



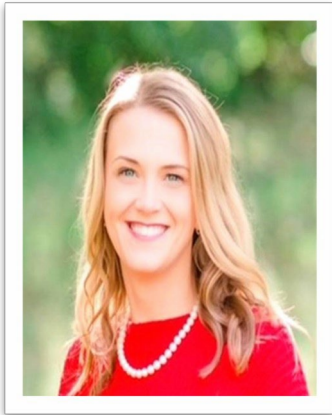
Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Initiatives

Black History Month Celebration — Region II

In February, Region II celebrated their annual Black History Month Event. Each year the event has a theme, oral presentations, floor displays and décor, games, music, and food. This year's theme was Hollywood "Wall of Fame."

(Pictures from the event can be seen on page 3).

Brown Bag Presentations



Women's History

The Diversity Brown Bag Lunch to honor Women's History Month was held on March 21, 2024. The presenter was TDOT General Counsel, Leslie South. She is a member of the Lawyers' Association for Women – Marion Griffin Chapter in Nashville, which is an organization comprised of women and men that emphasizes and addresses issues of concern to women within the legal profession and encourages all interested attorneys to participate.

During her presentation, she shared interesting videos and clips of notable women who have changed the involvement of women in the workplace and other facets of life. Leslie also shared the works of notable women who have changed America's history. She stated that diversity can bring a variety of perspectives to the table, strengthening the workplace.

Juneteenth

A Diversity Brown Bag Lunch was held on June 18, 2024, recognizing Freedom Day, officially named, "Juneteenth National Independence Day," to commemorate the ending of slavery. Juneteenth National Independence Day became a federal holiday on June 17, 2021, and was recognized as a state holiday in Tennessee on May 5, 2023.

The Juneteenth presentation discussed recognition of the independences celebrated by both Juneteenth and the July 4th, which is crucial in understanding and appreciating the full scope of American history and its commitment to freedom and equality. Some factors shared between the two important holidays are:

Comprehensive understanding of freedom – both holidays provide a more complete look at what freedom means in the American framework. It acknowledges that while the 4th of July celebrates national independence, Juneteenth represents the fulfillment of the promise of freedom to all citizens.

Reflection and Progress – these holidays offer opportunities to reflect on the progress made and the challenges that remain in the pursuit of equality and justice. They remind us that the journey toward true freedom and equality is ongoing.

Togetherness – Juneteenth and the 4th of July capture the complex history of America's struggle for freedom and equality, serving as reminders of the nation's ideals and the ongoing efforts to achieve them for every citizen.



Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Initiatives

Diversity Week

The Civil Rights Division EEO/AA Program continues to host the annual celebration of Diversity Week during the last week of April. This year, Michelle Bacon, Transportation Program Monitor, and Katie Swartwood Mariani, Affirmative Action Officer II, hosted a range of diverse activities and presentations, including a Virtual Cultural Food Tour and Recipe Swap; Cultural Show and Tell; Disability, Accessibility, and Inclusion in the Workplace; Diversity, Equity, and Implicit Bias; and a Diversity Crossword Puzzle.

This event is one of the Department's special program initiatives to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion that brings employees together to learn about different cultures, customs, traditions, and histories of the diverse employees that make up TDOT's workforce.

EEO/AA Updates

Annual EEO/AA Policies Posting

The Civil Rights Division completed the annual review of required federal and state employment nondiscrimination workplace posters. This review is done the first part of each year to ensure compliance with the dissemination of required employment law posters. This information is located in areas readily accessible in an externally visible, conspicuous place in each work environment to include project sites to employees, applicants for employment, and potential employees.

The department is in full compliance with the posting of the following notices, posters, and policies:

- ✚ EEO Workplace Posters – Non-Discrimination Notice
- ✚ EEOC Know Your Rights: Workplace Discrimination is Illegal (English and Spanish versions)
- ✚ OFCCP Pay Transparency Nondiscrimination Provision
- ✚ Tennessee Law Prohibits Discrimination in Employment
- ✚ Departmental Policy, 105 – 01, Equal Employment Opportunity
- ✚ Departmental Policy, 230.04 - Productive Workplace Policy and Investigation Protocols
- ✚ Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Commitment Statements

EEO/AA Updates Continued

Training

Annual External EEO Officer Training

The Annual EEO Officer Online Training for contractors as defined in Federal-aid Highway Act of 1968, Section 22 assists in the development and administering of an EEO compliant program was conducted successfully. This year's training had 129 contractors and/or subcontractors' EEO Officers receive a certification of completion. The purpose of this annual training is to educate contractors' EEO Officers in identifying the authorities, procedures and guidance for implementation of their EEO Program and ensuring they are fully indoctrinated on the Federal EEO provisions and requirements included in the TDOT Construction contracts.

There are several key accomplishments with the completion of the training related to federally funded highway projects. Some key accomplishments include compliance with federal requirements defined in 23 Code of Federal Regulations 230 and FHWA 1273, understanding of EEO obligations, prevention of discrimination and harassment; and implementation of affirmative action measures, and compliance with reporting and recordkeeping requirements. Upon completion, the EEO Officer demonstrates their company's commitment to ensuring an equitable and inclusive work environment.

On-the-Job Training/Supportive Services (OJT/SS) Program

The OJT/SS Program provides academic and occupational skills training opportunities in highway construction for minorities, women, and disadvantage individuals.

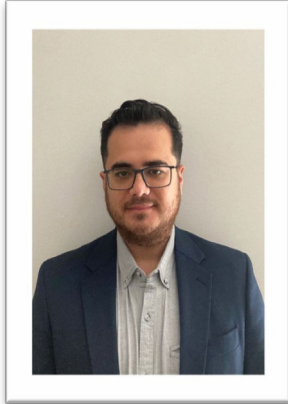
In January, the Reentry Experience Advancement Partnership (REAP) Program was successfully launched to justice involved (parole and/or probation) individuals interested in working in highway construction and maintenance. The program was a 6 ½ week training based on the National Center for Construction Education & Research (NCCER) Curricula that provided portable and industry recognized credentials to start careers in the construction field. The participants earned up to \$150 weekly stipend and 100% of graduates were offered full time employment at the conclusion of the program.

(Pictures from the program can be seen on page 5).

To better understand justice involved individuals, the Civil Rights Division participated in the TN Department of Human Resources Second Chance Employment Program Reentry Simulation. This simulation provided 1). an understanding of the formidable obstacles formerly incarcerated individuals face when attempting to navigate the system and return to their communities; 2). a realistic landscape of the complex barriers formerly incarcerated individuals face when coming home; and 3). a way to discover innovative ways to help them succeed.

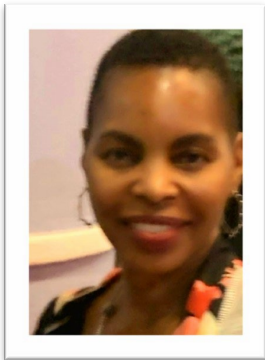
New Civil Rights Division Staff

Welcome Robert and Shavita to the Civil Rights and TDOT Staff!



Robert Edwards
Contract Compliance Officer II

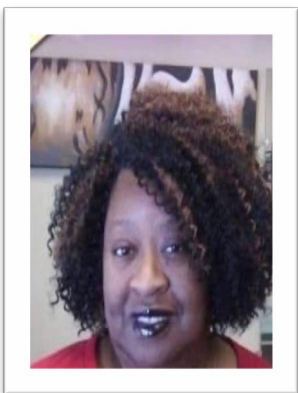
CRD is pleased to introduce Robert, a dedicated and multifaceted individual currently pursuing a Master of Business Administration (MBA) at Middle TN State University. Robert holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice from Capella University, bringing a diverse academic background to his professional endeavors. Since 2017, Robert has served as an active reservist in the United States Navy Reserves, where he has honed his skills in logistics, which will be a valuable asset to the Title VI Program. He is deeply committed to his personal interests and community service. He enjoys spending quality time with his family, exploring the natural beauty of the outdoors, and contributing to various community service initiatives. Robert enjoys traveling, has a keen interest in food, and enjoys exploring new cuisines and culinary practices. He values the opportunity to experience diverse cultures and perspectives, which enriches his understanding of the world.



Shavita Littles
Contract Compliance Officer II

CRD is excited to welcome Shavita, a dedicated professional with a rich background in auditing, programmatic monitoring, and federal contract administration, to our team. Originally from South Florida, Shavita holds a bachelor's degree in criminal justice with a focus on internal affairs and investigations, bringing a wealth of experience and knowledge to her role. She looks forward to leveraging her skills with the Small Business Development team. Her unique background and professional strengths will undoubtedly contribute to the success of CRD's objectives.

Congratulations on Retirement, Stephanie!



Stephanie Brooks
Contract Compliance Officer II

After a distinguished career spanning 27 years with State government, including TDOT's Civil Rights Division, Stephanie has embarked on a new chapter in her life- embracing retirement with the same enthusiasm and dedication she brought to her professional endeavors. Through her career, she holds her time with the Small Business Development Program dearest. Reflecting on her tenure, Stephanie fondly recalls the exceptional management team at CRD and expressing her gratitude for their unwavering support and assistance. During her time, she built lasting relationships with many colleagues. Now enjoying her well-deserved retirement, Stephanie gives back to the community by volunteering at the MS Resource Center. Lastly, Stephanie has joined the 50 Forward where she stays active and engaged while participating in various programs and activities.

Please join us in celebrating Stephanie's retirement!

Women's History Month!

The Women of CRD Celebrate Women's History Month!



CRD Staff Not Pictured: Natalie Douglass, Stephanie Brooks, and Shavita Littles.

Upcoming Events

- ◇ September 18, 2024: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Fair
- ◇ October 2024: Disability Brown Bag Lunch (TBD)
- ◇ November 2024: Veteran's Day Brown Bag Lunch (TBD)



Mission Statement

“To facilitate equal opportunity throughout TDOT by ensuring all employment practices are conducted in a fair manner which affords employees and applicants equal employment on the basis of merit, experience and other work related criteria without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age or disability.”

TDOT Civil Rights Division

Jessica M. Starling, Director

Equal Employment Opportunity/Affirmative Action Program Team

Yolando Jackson

Affirmative Action Manager

Rodney Ursery, J.D.

Affirmative Action Officer II

Katie Swartwood Mariani

Affirmative Action Officer II

Natalie Douglass

Affirmative Action Officer II