

# The Briefing

## Labor Of Love

Exercise is always more fun when you've got a buddy, especially the furry kind.

The Labor Department Fitness Association and the Washington Humane Society have joined forces to promote healthy living for federal employees and to give shelter dogs some much-needed exercise. More than 20 Labor employees who participated in the Obama administration's Feds Get Fit program spent a lunch hour this fall running or walking around the National Mall with dogs available for adoption.

The event was the second partnership between Labor and the WHS People and Animals Cardio Klub (PACK), whose volunteers run regularly with adoptable dogs. Kevin Simpson, WHS director of animal behavior and training, hopes to coordinate another outing with the department in the spring.

"This event seemed to spark a lot of



**FUN FOR ALL** Labor's Marisa Johnson and Yoda team up for fitness.

interest with people who wouldn't have otherwise gone out [for a walk or run]," Simpson says. "It was a pretty crummy day, but we had a lot of people show up." The PACK program could increase a dog's odds of being placed in a permanent home. Dogs that exercise regularly will appear more true-to-character to potential owners, Simpson says, adding that running or walking around the Mall allows the dogs to interact with many types of people in a variety of settings.

As for Labor employees, a lunch hour spent walking or running is good for the heart and the mind. It's a win-win for feds and Fido. —Norah Swanson

## PHYSICIAN, HEAL THYSELF

The Center for Plain Language is a research and advocacy group aimed at ridding government and business of jargon, a worthy mission since agencies are on the hook to incorporate clear writing into all public documents by October 2011. But judging from a recent workshop, the center itself could use a few pointers on clarity. Tips included creating a "persona walk-through" and "informal usability testing." Huh? Let's break it down:

- **Persona walk-through:** Create a fictional character representing the target audience to walk through the content of a website or document.
- **Hallway review:** Post a document where workers gather and encourage feedback via Post-it Notes.
- **Informal usability testing:** Observe people who are reading government documents and gather input.

In other (simpler) words, solicit feedback on the clarity and precision of your work. Period.

—Kellie Lunney

KEVIN KENNEDY

## FROM NEXTGOV

# 22%

Percentage of federal employees who telework one day a week or less

# 36%

Employees who do not telework because they have to be physically on the job

# 23%

Employees who are able to telework but don't because they aren't allowed

# 7%

Employees who do not telework because they lack the necessary technology

SOURCE: OPM'S 2010 FEDERAL EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINT SURVEY



## Fed of the Year

**Carolyn Bohlen** was named federal manager of the year in 2010 by the Federal Managers Association for her work in mentoring. Now acting chief of civil rights at the Environmental Protection Agency, Bohlen has long been an EPA section chief for Superfund compliance and enforcement of the Freedom of Information Act. She spoke to *Government Executive* about her current work.

**Q:** You have a background in science, education and management. Which is most valuable to your success as a federal manager?

**A:** Management. All the experiences I have had helped me build strong managerial skills. I'm a believer in lifelong learning, and I'm often involved in training of some sort to help develop myself personally.

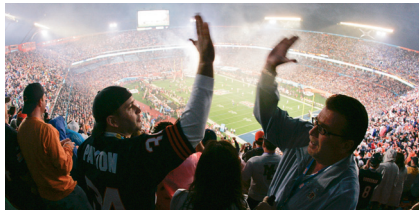
**Q:** Is the civil rights job at EPA as important in 2010 as it was decades ago?

**A:** Yes. For me, civil rights will always be important for the workforce. If you look at the civilian labor force,

at the numbers and the diversity, they're perhaps not as robust as we'd like them to be. I do the best I can to spread the information and work with minority academic institutions to recruit in the areas of environmental science and technical programs.

**Q:** How do you feel about recent bashing of federal workers in the political campaigns?

**A:** I'm proud to be a federal worker—I am a third-generation federal employee. I am a very confident federal worker and very supportive of individuals coming to work for the federal government.



## RULES OF THE GAME

As the 2010 NFL Fantasy Football season winds down, legions of fanatical players are planning for their league's playoffs. But it's best to set those lineups on your own time.

While the government has never set guidelines for playing fantasy sports on the job, federal regulations prohibit gambling at work. Most fantasy leagues include a cash prize. But some wonder whether agencies are missing a golden opportunity. "Fantasy football builds bonds at work that can be very useful," says Steve Ressler, founder of the social networking site GovLoop.

Recent studies show fantasy football players spend about four hours a week on their team, including 1.2 hours at the office—a loss of \$1.5 billion in productivity during a typical season. —Robert Brodsky

## A Stately Honor

In December, Deputy Secretary of State James B. Steinberg honored six Americans for their dedication to charitable service while stationed abroad.

The 2010 Associates of the American Foreign Service Worldwide Secretary of State Award for Outstanding Volunteerism Abroad was given to Foreign Service employees Beth Brownson, stationed in Mumbai, India; and Melissa Schraibman, stationed in Tirana, Albania. Four awards also were given to family members of Foreign Service employees.

Brownson created a system for regular interaction between the U.S. consulate in Mumbai and the local nonprofit community. She started the Social Outreach Committee to coordinate monthly volunteer opportunities for consulate staff at nonprofits such as the Women's Empowerment Center and Network and a number of shelters for children. With a structured system in place, Brownson's commitment to philanthropy will be



**HONORED** Beth Brownson (center) and Melissa Schraibman (below)

preserved at the consulate beyond her own post in Mumbai.

Schraibman and her partner, Mindy Michels, who also received an award, helped Albanian activists unify the local lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community. The women also helped create the Alliance Against LGBT Discrimination—a grass-roots organization to deter discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation—in a society where hate crimes and intolerance are commonplace.

This past year marked the 20th anniversary of the awards, created in 1990 by then-Secretary of State James Baker and his wife, Susan. —Norah Swanson

