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# *The Cutting Edge*



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*Veterans Enterprise Technology Solutions, Inc. is a Service-Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB)*

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## *A Message from President and CEO, Jim Moody*

Dear VETS Teammates,

My warmest regards and sincerest thanks for all you do every day to support the multiple and diversified tasks our company has taken on.

This edition of our VETS Newsletter introduces several new senior leaders, highlights those achieving new professional skills, provides thoughts from our Chaplain, Greg Randall, and includes articles on leadership and our e-learning program via Learn Smart.

Let me begin by introducing the newest member of our executive team, Ms. Dawn Lewandowski, who serves as the Vice-President for Veterans Affairs (VA) programs. Please read the article about Dawn that highlights her background, experiences and skills. Also, I would like to introduce two of our very successful program managers and the roles they play for our team. John Sella, the new PM for our Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) eFAST program and Jennifer Hughes our PM for the Veterans Affairs Training and Performance Support System work in Orlando, Florida. Our work with both the Department of Transportation and VA are great examples of the variety and depth of our programs. I believe you will find the work of John and Jennifer, and their teams, of interest and, as you will see, Jennifer is trying to do a bit of recruiting as well.

One area that I am particularly proud of is the professional development of our employees. In this edition of the newsletter, please read the background and accounts of our two newest certified Project Management Program successes---Candice Cantrell and Keith Boyer. To achieve PMP certification is clearly one of the most difficult challenges for those desiring to be Program and Project Managers. We commend their drive and determination.

Also, we are pleased to introduce our first two certified SCRUM Master employees----Wanda Fields and Jerry Prewitt. We are hoping to expand our SCRUM Master certification program in the near future. Wanda and Jerry are leading the way in this endeavor.

Because I have a strong belief in education and professional growth, may I extend my sincerest congratulations to Candice, Keith, Wanda, and Jerry for their willingness to go that extra step to grow professionally and extend their knowledge and skills in the dynamic information and technology environment we are in today.

Finally, I would urge all to read and think about the wise and insightful thoughts of Chaplain Greg Randall. His advice is always timely and relevant. Don't forget that Chaplain Randall is always available to talk with you and help lead anyone through tough times.

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## Continued:

Knowing that "leadership" is a key to our success please note the tips suggested by John Rose, our Corporate Strategic Planner. Finally, last but certainly not least, take a moment to review the two articles on our e-learning investment program via Learn Smart. There will be something here for everyone.

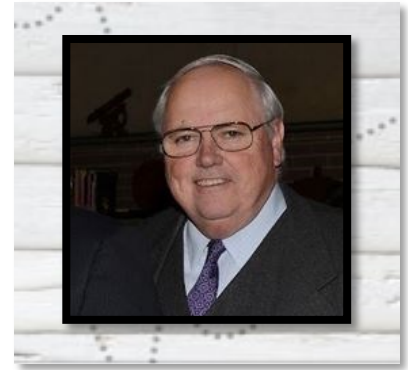
Overall this edition of the VETS Newsletter contains information on several of our successful programs and highlights things we are doing to prepare our employees for future challenges. I urge all to read the informative articles in this edition. Let our editorial team know if we missed anyone and what we can do to enhance your professional growth.

My sincerest thanks to all for your dedicated efforts to serve and support our customers, our country and those values for which we stand.

*James H. Moody*

President and CEO, VETS, Inc.

(Please forward comments and/or suggestions to Melissa Chumney at [mchumney@VETS-Inc.com](mailto:mchumney@VETS-Inc.com) or John Rose at [jrose@VETS-Inc.com](mailto:jrose@VETS-Inc.com)).



## GIVING TO OTHERS

VETS employees have been known for giving to others in need. Recently there have been contributions totaling close to \$2000.00 to the Sandy Hook United Way Foundation and to needy families from Hurricane Sandy through the American Red Cross. On behalf of Jim Moody, our President and CEO, and VETS leaders, we wish to thank those that so generously contributed to help those who truly need our assistance.





## SPOTLIGHT:

### *Ms. Dawn R. Lewandowski,* Vice President for Veterans Affairs Programs



We have a new senior leader on the VETS team, Ms. Dawn R. Lewandowski, and we would like to take this opportunity to welcome Dawn to our team and introduce her to our employees.

Dawn assumed duties as our Vice President for Veterans Affairs (VA) Programs in April 2014. In this role she oversees VETS VA programs which includes projects in Washington, DC, San Antonio and Austin, Texas, Frederick, Maryland, Orlando, Florida, San Francisco, California, Hines, Illinois, and Fredericksburg, Virginia. Dawn's past professional experiences, leadership and executive positions, and diversified education background make her uniquely qualified to lead our VA efforts. She knows the business, has served in senior positions throughout her career and has a wealth of experiences working closely with people solving problems. Dawn is perfect for our VA team.

In terms of education, Dawn has a Master's Degree in Education from the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska. Her studies included organizational leadership & development, human resource development, performance improvement, program development and small group dynamics. This followed a Bachelor of Science degree in Education from Kearney State College with study of business and vocational education.

To further certify her business credentials Dawn is:

- a certified Project Management Professional (PMP),
- a certified Six Sigma Black Belt, from TAP University,
- a Quality Improvements Associate with the American Society for Quality,
- a Certified Records Manager,
- a Federal Records Manager, NARA, and
- a graduate of Total Quality Management training with the Immigration and Naturalization Service.

The message for all of us is to model ourselves after Dawn---she never stopped learning, never stopped growing professionally, never stopped improving her professional skills through education and never backed away from a challenge.

Dawn's education and background speak volumes to her professionalism and her love of working with people. We are honored to have her on our team.

Before joining VETS, Dawn was the Program Manager for SERCO North America and was the senior representative at the U.S. Citizenship & Immigration Services (USCIS) Service Center Operations Support Service (SCOSS) team overseeing operations in both Lincoln, Nebraska and Dallas, Texas. Her accomplishments during the 2009 to 2014 timeframe are legendary. Dawn worked only on the most complex and difficult problems, such as, the design and implementation of new procedures to support the introduction of Deferred



## Continued

### *Spotlight:*

Ms. Dawn R. Lewandowski,  
Vice President for Veterans  
Affairs Programs

Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) and the Electronic Immigration System (ELIS) for visa processing to achieving same-day receipting of fees received at the Lincoln, Nebraska and Dallas, Texas service centers. In this capacity she oversaw projects amounting to approximately \$30 million annually.

During the 2001 to 2009 timeframe, as a SERCO Program Manager for USCIS/SCOSS, Dawn had a staff size of 2,000 employees across the United States at four service centers and a contract value of over \$100 million annually.

Dawn was recently awarded the 2013 VETS President's Partnership Award and honored by SERCO, Inc. with their Excellence Award for Outstanding Performance.

Outside the office, Dawn and her husband, Randy, for a great 32 years, have three children—Seth, Taylor and Sarah and three granddaughters all under the age of 5. Dawn's favorite song, according to her granddaughters is "Let It Go" from the movie Frozen. Her hobbies include fishing and boating, even ice fishing in the winter, bowling, yoga and anything associated with family.

It is truly an honor to have Dawn Lewandowski on the VETS team.

# SPOTLIGHT: JOHN SELLA,

*Program Manager,  
Federal Aviation Administration eFAST contract*



VETS welcomes John Sella, our new Program Manager of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) eFAST contract.

John joined the VETS team on May 27, 2014, replacing John Follino, now serving as VETS Vice-President for Civilian Programs. John's office is in the Washington, DC area with our FAA eFAST team.

John has over 28 years of progressive management and leadership experience while serving the U.S. government professional services industry in a variety of different and important career building positions.

From February 2011 to January

2014, John served as the Vice President and Director of Cyber Solutions Group and Corporate Chief of Staff for Imperatis Corporation. In this capacity, John led efforts to transition corporate support functions from the FedConcepts' legacy environment into the Imperatis infrastructure. In addition, John served as the Chief of Staff to the Corporate CEO assisting with the management, tracking and performance of multiple, simultaneous litigation, Public Relations, and project performance issues. John also assumed operational control of the company's Warner Robins, Georgia logistics support operations upon the unplanned retirement of the previous manager. Clearly John earned valuable experience in a variety of roles in these positions.

For a period of almost 5 years (April 2006 to February 2011), John was the President of FedConcepts, LLC, until it was acquired by Jorge Scientific. In this capacity, John provided sen-

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## Continued **JOHN SELLA,**

*Program Manager,  
Federal Aviation Administration eFAST contract*

ior management and leadership through a period of growth, maturation and acquisition. He oversaw development of team performance metrics and allocation of group and corporate resources to achieve operating targets. During this timeframe, John picked up valuable experience in business operation functions in which he oversaw the accounting, legal, software integration, and Human Resources operations for the company. As a result of these experiences there is not an area of the business environment where he has not had experience.

Earlier in John's career while a program and project analyst at Stanley Associates, he led a team looking at new ways to augment U.S. Naval capacity through modification of civilian ships to support military contingencies via new automation systems and processes. It was during this time (December to March of 1992) that John deployed to Mogadishu, Somalia in support of U.S. military forces where he orchestrated the flow of goods and services to support American deployed forces. Needless to say this was both an adventurous as well as dangerous assignment.

Looking back on his career John has worked as a systems analyst, lead analyst, project manager, program manager, director, Vice President and President of small companies in an array of diversified information technology positions. Few business leaders have had

such vast experiences. It was based on his background and experiences, and great success in each position, along with his team building personality that led our team to pursue John's talents for the very important and challenging work of leading the eFast work with the FAA.

John is a Washington, DC native. He and his wife, Susan, have four children ages 14 to 23. Susan currently works as a kindergarten teacher. Their oldest son, Ed, is an Ensign in the U.S. Coast Guard and currently in flight school. Chris is a Grants Auditor currently performing an end of year audit to ensure that U.S. Department of Labor grants were able to achieve the goal of assisting workers transition to full time employment. John and Susan also have two daughters, Becky, an education major at Duquesne University, and Jenny, a high school freshman.

John has a Bachelors of Science degree in Marine Transportation and Management from the State University of New York Maritime College, a Master's Degree in Information Systems from George Mason and attended Harvard University's "Leadership in Professional Services" program.

We at VETS welcome John and his family to our team!!! We are lucky to have a professional of his skills and background leading our FAA team.

# What is VETS doing in Orlando, Florida and would you be interested in joining our PM, Jennifer Hughes and her team?

VETS and our partner, American Systems Corporation, is providing Instruction Design and Development expertise to the Veterans Affairs (VA) Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) Training and Performance Support System (TPSS) contract in Orlando, FL. The VETS Team is one of three contractors on this Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) contract and we won our first task order in September 2013 converting existing initial training components to refresher training modules. We are in the home stretch of our first year and have four more to grow and expand our presence in this agency. We are a small but mighty team, consisting of 8 part-time team members but have hopes that this team will grow as new task orders are won by the VETS Team.

We begin our process by understanding the gap in job performance so that we can provide an analysis of training

and media solutions to increase the learners job skills. We operate within an agile environment to show the clients courseware and other training products early and often. Our client expects us to be creative and think outside of the box and to bring fresh, innovative ideas. Our client wants performance



Pictured above: Anthony Cruz-Graphic Artist developing amazing graphics and multimedia for our courseware, Brina Norman-Senior ISD developing challenging and interesting courseware, Kelly Hackett-ISD developing robust, beautiful courseware, and Kim Baker-Graphic Artist developing awesome graphics for our courseware. Not pictured: Brittanie Ferrara, Don Durie, Mike Mus-tain, and Jennifer Hughes.

based training products that are highly engaging to the learner. Because our client is an Instructional Designer, we work closely to brainstorm ideas and work through instructional challenges. The client is refreshing as they believe in partnership with their contractors. They don't want us to simply do as directed, but bring our brains and provide thoughtful solutions to their problems. Our mission is to provide robust solutions with instructional integrity. We want to WOW the socks off of our client.

The leader and program manager of our VETS team is Mrs. Jennifer Hughes. Jennifer comes to us through our partnership with CEEK LLC. Jennifer brings passion, integrity, perspective, and honesty into her coaching and leadership development activities. She has skills to listen that enables her to grasp what

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What is VETS doing in Orlando, Florida and would you be interested in joining our PM, Jennifer Hughes and her team?



Jennifer Hughes, PM

leaders are saying and what they are not saying all in pursuit of helping our teams tap into their potential.

Jennifer holds a Bachelor's degree in English from Virginia Tech (1998) and a Master's degree in Educational Technology Leadership from The George Washington University (2004). She is an Associate Certified Coach (ACC) through the International Coach Federation (ICF) and a PMI certified Project Management Professional (PMP).

Jennifer has served as a career coach, executive coach and leadership coach for the past five years. She recently completed a certificate program in Advanced Coaching in Leadership & Well-Being through the

George Mason University and is dedicated to learning how she can improve her coaching presence in service of her various clients. In addition, Jennifer keeps well versed in the consulting realm by providing Program Management support to various consulting companies.

Jennifer's passion for education is evident in her educational pursuits and also through her volunteer efforts tutoring at-risk high school students in the Washington, DC region. Through this volunteer program, she has helped "English as a second language" students pass standardized tests that once seemed a dream to them. She has assisted students in developing videos, papers, and

other projects in pursuit of scholarships and additional funding for their schools. In addition, Jennifer pursues her own "happiness project" by refusing to let her first question be, "What is wrong?" and instead asking, "What is right?"

VETS is so very fortunate to have Jennifer lead our team. If we are successful in winning new work in the Orlando area, we will be looking for people with skills in Project Management, Instructional Systems Design, Graphic Art, and HTML Programming. If interested, Jennifer would love to include you on her list. Feel free to contact her at: [jhughes@vets-inc.com](mailto:jhughes@vets-inc.com)



# What is SCRUM?

Wanda Fields,  
Project Manager – VETS, Inc.  
SCRUM Master Certified



## What is SCRUM?

Scrum is an Agile framework for completing complex projects.

SCRUM emphasizes team collaboration and provides rules that create structure for teams to focus their innovation on solving what might otherwise be an unbearable challenge.

SCRUM helps teams prioritize and commit to requirements.

All work done in SCRUM is iterative and incremental, and it “time boxes” the process.

Recently, I took a 2-day training course to help prepare for the Scrum Master certification exam and become a Certified SCRUM Master. This 2 day course described how the SCRUM Framework is based on an empirical process and how it relates to the values and principles of the Agile Manifesto. The class was presented in a highly interactive and collaborative format with elements of lecture, classroom discussions, exercises, simulations, and video interwoven throughout the class. The instructor identified SCRUM roles and responsibilities and described why these roles form the SCRUM Team. We discussed how the SCRUM Master protects, guides, and serves the team while also acting as a change agent. Also, the SCRUM Master identifies how to facilitate SCRUM ceremonies: Sprint Planning, Daily SCRUM, and Sprint Demo/ Review/Retrospective, Release Planning. Our training helped us identify the value of SCRUM Artifacts: Product Backlog, Product Increment and Definition of Done, Sprint Backlog, Burndown Charts and how to lead teams effectively in a large-scale environment.

We explored how the SCRUM concepts fit in real world projects. There was extensive team engagement. We learned facilitation skills and were given the opportunity to build on those skills. There were students new to Agile and some seasoned professionals.

I use material introduced in this course with the VETS team at the VA Acquisition Academy (VAAA) in Frederick, Maryland. Through the use of the SCRUM Framework process, the VETS team has been receiving more feedback from stakeholders and clients much earlier in the process, which helps in delivering an accurate and working product that will actually be used. The VETS team uses not only the SCRUM Framework, but also the Kanban Framework as a process work flow. Both SCRUM and Kanban are flexible and do not have hardcore processes to follow. The VETS team combined both frame-

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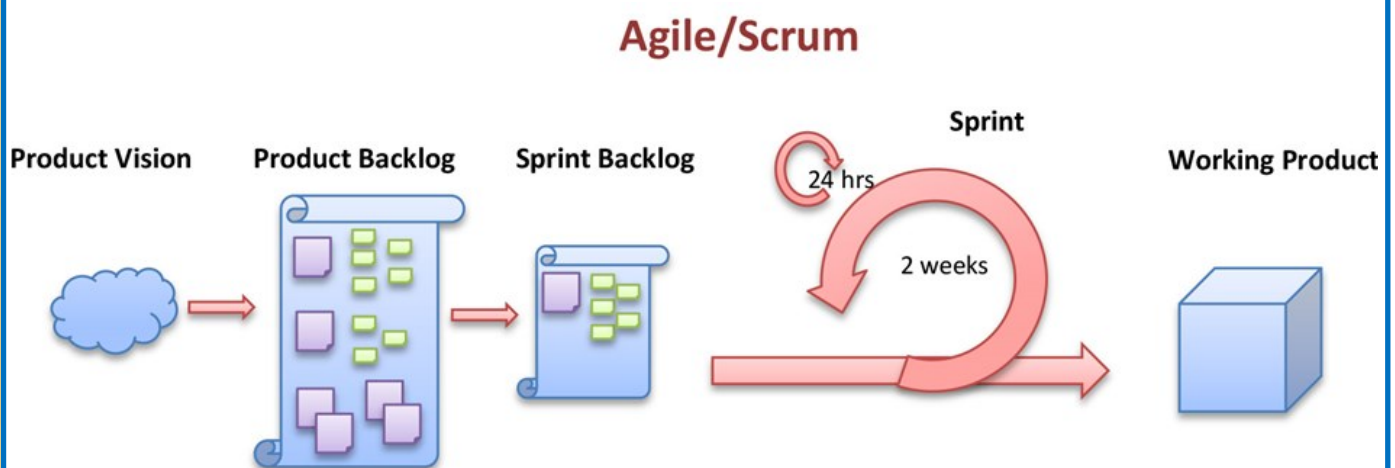
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## What is SCRUM?

works, and uses a “best practices” approach to achieve team synergy and improve productivity. Using both SCRUM and Kanban emphasize more productivity with quality and efficiency. The advantage of using both processes has produced the following:

- ◆ Increased efficiency & flexibility...
- ◆ Greater Transparency in the work process...
- ◆ Higher product quality...
- ◆ A sustainable work pace...
- ◆ Improved focus on important tasks...
- ◆ Reduction of wasted work & wasted time...
- ◆ Allows our client to change priorities and requirements quickly without a major disruption to the work schedule...

Below is an example of the Agile/Scrum process flow the VETS team uses with our clients at the VA Acquisition Academy.

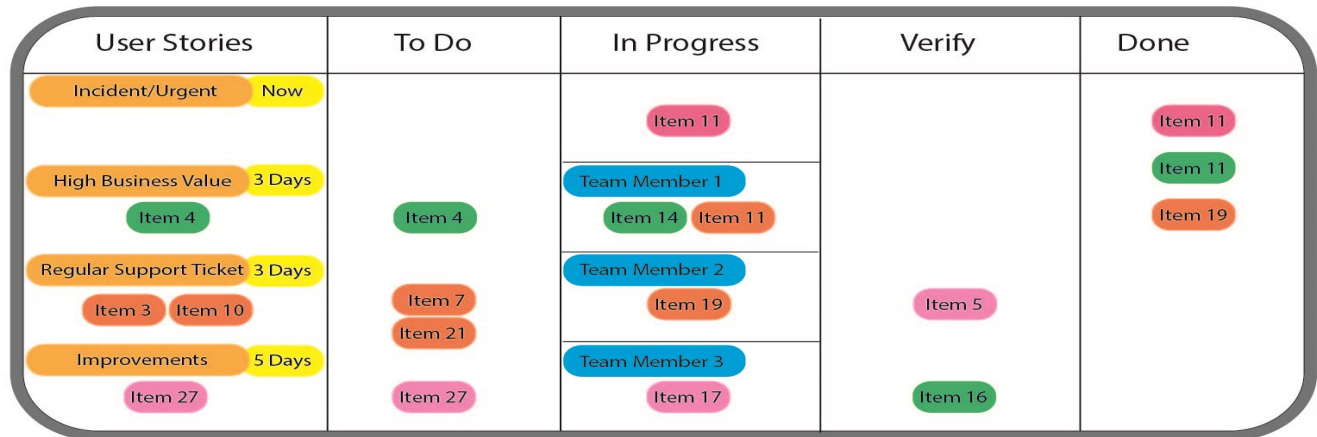


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## What is SCRUM?

A sample of a Kanban Board that the VETS team uses would look something like the following illustration. *Note that this is just a sample, not the actual Lean (Kanban board) we are currently using.*



As previously mentioned, using both SCRUM and Kanban emphasize more productivity with quality and efficiency. Thus, the VETS team is better able to define:

- ◆ Priority tasks and which tasks will take highest priority...
- ◆ The time each support task takes to get done...
- ◆ The time each new project takes to finish...
- ◆ The number of support tasks and new project tasks on each state...
- ◆ Helps to identify individual backlog during the in-progress stage...

The instructor used samples similar to the ones above in our training class to show the uniqueness and effectiveness of how they can help the team stay on track/task with the Sprint Backlog Items. I strongly recommend anyone looking to become a Certified SCRUM Masters, to take the SCRUM Alliance full 2 day Certified Master's training courses. My instructor managed to successfully combine a deep understanding of the principles of SCRUM, together with a creative and practical training style. SCRUM Master certification and using what I have learned has made a huge and very positive difference in our work for the VA Acquisition Academy.

(Post Script: VETS sponsored Wanda Fields and Jerry Prewitt's SCRUM Master Certification. If this certification is necessary for your project, contact your Vice President for information and the possibility of attending a future VETS sponsored SCRUM Certification program.)



# Jerry Prewitt:

## Instructional Designer & Certified Scrum Master

Jerry Prewitt wasn't always an Instructional Designer and Certified ScrumMaster. His career includes nine years in hospitality management and over 12 years in education, training, and development with a wide array of job titles including Innkeeper, Teacher, Instructional Technology Specialist, Training Specialist, Performance Solutions Designer, and Instructional Systems Designer.

Throughout his experience, Jerry observed that employees want to perform at their best and do their work in efficient ways. The role of Instructional Designer is to help organizations improve and develop their workforce to handle today's challenges while keeping an eye on the changes to come.

The field of software development has struggled for decades with ever increasing demands for higher productivity, reduced time for development, and constantly changing needs. This led to the creation of Agile, a methodology rooted in the concept of lean to produce incrementally, respond to high level requirements, and embrace the constant of change. Agile has been used successfully since the 90's in corporate software development, and is a proven

means of producing quality software with faster time to market.

Many Federal Government agencies began exploring the use of Agile for their software development projects after the release of the *25 Point Implementation Plan to Reform Federal Information Technology Management* by the U.S. Chief Information Officer in December 2010, and the GAO-12-681 report *Effective Practices and Federal Challenges in Applying Agile Methods*, in July 2012.

Meanwhile, Agile is gaining popularity in other development industries including instructional design and training. In response to the PM Agile Task Order I project, VETS has created an Agile way of developing training. Jerry is working with a team of instructional and graphic designers, Agile coaches/SMEs, and our client applying Agile to the instructional design process. The VETS team with help from partners at American Systems is developing a series of three courses on Agile for the Federal Government for the VA Acquisition Academy Program Management School.

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## Jerry Prewitt: Instructional Designer & Certified Scrum Master

Jerry says, “I have sympathy for my learners because I have struggled myself in learning Agile and implementing it into my daily work. Now I am seeing the results, and know this was the best approach to the design of this course to meet the project parameters.”

The team is using Scrum, an Agile framework that uses daily stand-up meetings, a Scrum board for members to select and track their tasks, and two-week Sprints to deliver segments of training materials. “I was skeptical that developing training materials in this manner was even possible. Never have I worked so collaboratively with a client, getting feedback on material before it was in a polished state” recalls Jerry. However, he now understands the real value of collaboration and the flexibility it provides to incorporate new content.

“We are not developing training for a tried and true process or system,” Jerry explains. “Agile is new to our learners. Some learners may have experience with some variation of Agile, but most will not. We are developing training to help implement a new method for software development, and it affects everything from contracting to final delivery. So our content is fluid, ever changing; fortunately Agile ISD

has allowed us to compensate for this.” Jerry became a Certified ScrumMaster in May as part of VETS’ commitment to becoming more Agile in support of our clients, especially the VA Acquisition Academy Program Management School. “Attending the ScrumMaster training really pulled together the concepts of Scrum and enabled me to further apply this to the instructional systems design process. I am excited to see VETS be a leader in using Agile in the area of instructional design, and supporting Agile ISD.”

He is now one of a growing number of VETS employees who are Certified ScrumMasters working and leading Scrum teams for various projects. These certifications demonstrate VETS’ commitment to Agile and the benefits it brings to the Federal Government, as well as a commitment to invest in and develop its employees.

VETS is delighted to have Jerry on our team. He leads by example, he is focused on “tomorrow” as well as today, and he is a master at improving his professional skills. The sky is the limit for Jerry. We hope to provide him opportunities to continue his growth and lead us into the future.

# Congratulations to Keith Boyer, our newest Project Management Institute (PMI) Project Management Professional (PMP) certified employee!



Keith Boyer works at Scott Air Force outside of St. Louis on the Surface Transportation Information Support (STIS) contract for the Surface Deployment & Distribution Command (SDDC) G6 Enterprise Services—a service and data management group. Keith has achieved the coveted and prestigious PMP certificate after over a year of study and preparation.

Keith has been working for VETS on the SDDC SOA team for over four years. In that time he produced a software solution to manage enterprise service business functions. In addition, he developed two new Programs: Installation Outload Collection Capability (IOCC) and Bidding Interface for Delivery Solicitation (BIDS), and is currently working on a third, the Joint Equipment Characteristics Database (JECD). While software development is part of his role, the lack of any process and a need for structure led him to develop his own. The current project process used by the team was a structure Keith developed leveraging the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBOK), Agile development principles, and SCRUM.

We asked Keith three questions:

- What did you do to prepare for the exam?
- Why did you take the time and effort to become PMP certified?
- What drove you to success?

Here are Keith's responses.

## **What did you do to prepare for the exam?**

Keith: "I studied off and on for over a year. I am also finishing up my MCIS (Management – Computer Information Systems) bachelor degree, so I usually blocked out study time for the PMP during my downtime. I typically do not learn from memori-

zation, but by practice. By implementing some of the processes in the workplace, I was able to understand the context of the process. This aided me greatly on the test." Also, Keith used Learn Smart to reinforce the information after covering sections in the PMBOK.

## **Why did you do this?**

Keith: "Part of the reason I wanted my PMP was a desire for advancement. My long-term goal is Solutions Architecture, and Project Management plays a key role in that function. I have always been a natural fit in team leadership. Even in my early twenties when I was doing system administration, I would be tapped for leading groups and teams of people. I learned early on that when teams follow processes they often succeed, and fail due to lack of processes. I'm a process driven person by nature, so finding a framework that works was important to me."

## **What drove you to success?**

Keith: "This is really a very simple answer: A wife who would not give up on me. My wife received her PMP a little over a year ago. After I rushed into taking the test too early, she knew I needed to prove to myself that I could do it."

We are absolutely delighted at Keith's dedication, determination and perseverance to achieve this very valuable certification.

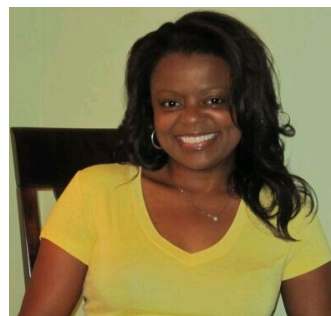
Congratulations Keith!!! We are proud and honored to have you on our team!

If you are interested in the challenges of PMI PMP certification, there are opportunities for VETS employees. To begin your quest we recommend starting with the PMP courses offered via our Learn Smart program. Contact your VETS VP to get started.

## **VETS honors Candice Cantrell on the FAA eFast Team**

VETS is honored to highlight that Candice Cantrell serving the Department of Transportation Federal Aviation Administration eFAST contract has earned the coveted Project Management Institute (PMI) Project Management Professional (PMP) certification.

Academic excellence is not new to Candice. She has already earned an undergraduate degree in Accounting from Howard University and a Masters in Business Administration (MBA) in Finance from the University of Georgia. Candice has been a Certified Public Accountant (CPA) in the state of Maryland since 1997. Noteworthy is the fact that the MBA degree and CPA exam are among the most prestigious and demanding professional exams in the United States. Adding the International PMP certification to this makes Candice one of the most skilled and talented accounting, finance, and trained program managers in our company.



Candice is currently a critical Team Lead for the Quality Assurance Team on the VETS/eFAST account in Washington, DC. Her responsibilities include Quality Assurance, Training, and Business Process Development.

When asked why she took on the challenges of the PMI PMP certification process, Candice said,

“I perceived that attaining the certification would provide me with more growth opportunities career wise. I presented the idea to my Project Manager at the time and he supported it. We made it one of my development goals. “

How did you do it?

“I knew that an interactive learning environment would be more effective for me. So, I chose to use classroom learning. The class was full of study tips and suggested areas of focus.”

What do you hope to do now that you have this certification?

“I haven’t made plans to change my current role. The deeper knowledge of PMI principles provides me with a better arsenal of techniques to draw from as I seek to build the foundation for a process-centric delivery environment for my client. I believe that it will also be an asset for me as I grow into other roles.”

As Candice knows all too well, there is no easy way to earn a PMP certification. It requires hard work, dedication, intensive study, and hours and hours of learning and practice. It is considered one of the most difficult measures of professional program management in the business community.

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### VETS honors Candice Cantrell

To achieve her PMP certification Candice pursued a PMP Boot Camp class from Global Knowledge on her own time for which she paid the full cost. She knew that a classroom environment would provide the discipline and full engagement that she would need to accomplish this goal.

A PMP certification is designed to open doors and provide opportunities for professional growth. It is becoming more and more frequent that to work in the role of a program manager or project manager, a PMI PMP certificate is required. There is no doubt in our mind that Candice is up to that challenge and will be serving in a program management position soon.

Our sincerest congratulations to Candice for her drive, excellence and dedication to improving her professional business, accounting and finance skills. We are so very proud of Candice and her success.

I suspect many of us will be working for Candice someday soon.

# The Chaplain's Corner

A very wise person recently told me that the first step in dealing with a difficult issue is to recognize that you have a difficult issue. Don't ignore it, don't try to avoid it, but look at what you are dealing with and say to yourself, "This is hard. This will take some time and energy to fix. I may not see a solution right now, but I can find one."

When we face illness, death, trouble with relationships or difficult issues at work we may wish the issue would just go away or get better. When we develop a plan to find a good solution, we are always better off than if we ignore it. Here are some suggestions for positive ways to face difficult issues.

*Be ready before the problem comes.* Take care of your body and mind with rest, time to relax, and practice a healthy spiritual life of prayer, meditation and worship.

*Respond, don't react.* Take time to listen, investigate and learn. William Sloan Coffin said, "The worst thing we can do with a dilemma is to resolve it prematurely because we haven't the courage to live with uncertainty." Seek out help from leaders you respect or research books or articles that deal with the issue you are facing. Keep practicing the spiritual disciplines of prayer and meditation to keep yourself calm and focused.

*Engage with gentleness.* Once you know more about the issue and who is involved, seek to find a way forward that benefits everyone. Come with an end in mind, but be willing to go down a different path than you envisioned to get there.

Difficult issues arise in every family and organization. Recognize the difficulties you have and then seek ways to resolve the issue that will make you stronger than before you encountered it.

On the journey together,

Greg

Dr. Greg Randall  
VETS Corporate Chaplain



You can contact Greg via e-mail at [chaplain@vets-inc.com](mailto:chaplain@vets-inc.com). Feel free to send a prayer request or ask a question anytime.

To speak to Greg, call 855-483-8746 ext 121. Please leave a message if you get the voice mail, and the chaplain will return your call.

Greg is available to talk with you about spiritual issues, family issues, relationships, stress, grief, or any other area that is a concern for you. All chaplain services are voluntary and at the employee's direction and initiative, and the chaplain does not favor or promote one expression of faith over another.





## LEADERSHIP CORNER

### Key's to Success in Today's Business Environment

John P. Rose

I am often asked what are the "keys to success" in today's business environment. The first thing to be said is that there is no single list to follow. There are however a number of good ideas. Here are some of the items on my list. Feel free to use as you see fit. Over time you will know what works, what does not and develop your own "keys to success".

Start now.

At the top of my list in leading any organization is caring for employees and showing it in words, actions and deeds.

If you are a leader or in a leadership position, your chief task is to build a community, a team, and work with everyone to achieve measurable objectives. That sometimes means making tough decisions such as taking disciplinary action, counseling for poor performance and even letting someone go that does not measure up to the standards set for business success. Being a leader means taking responsibility to praise, discipline,

correct and enforce standards. That is why you are a leader. Do not back away from that responsibility.

Next, be aware that in the work place you find every emotion in life. Leaders must be prepared to assist, support, comfort, and help those with both professional problems and those of a personal nature. Don't think that you can or need to solve all problems that arise. You can't. But there are people in our company that can help. Start with seeking advice from your superior, or someone in the chain of command whose judgment you trust. Also consider asking someone on our Human Resources team if the nature of the problem involves their area of responsibility and don't forget about seeking assistance from our corporate Chaplain should that be applicable. All are available to assist. Use them. They are there to help solve problems and offer advice and suggestions. Many of them have been where you are,

so do not hesitate to reach out for advice when needed. We cannot possibly know the answer or best course of action all the time. Do not ever forget---a team exist to help teammates!

Another tool in the leaders tool box are the words you use to communicate. A note of thanks (hand written or even by email) can carry far beyond the end of the paper. Try to be positive in everything you say and do. Positive thinking and actions carry far beyond what you could ever imagine possible.

The business leader's challenge is not to create stress on the job but to lower stress among the team. It is about paying attention to the little things, showing trust and allowing your team to show you (the leader) their skills and talents.

Never let your actions be a joyless striving for a paycheck. It has been shown time and again that employees do not stay for money alone. They remain because

**Continued on the next page.**

## **CONTINUED: LEADERSHIP CORNER**

of the challenge, the opportunity for growth, and because you—the leader—are doing something about their professional growth and development. A life without meaning is what people dislike most. We leaders must give our people challenges, a sense of belonging, and the feeling that they are our most important asset. That is because they are our most important asset!

A difficult task for leaders (I never said being a leader is easy!) is to find good people with the qualifications to do the job and then develop, hone and advance their skills and talents and just as they get to the next level, let them go. When employees feel good about what they are doing and have confidence and trust in their leaders, they will achieve unbelievable heights.

While technical skills are important, critical and necessary to accomplish complex tasks the glue that ties it all together is the compassion, trust and vision of the leader. It is the job of the leader to create the climate for success. Do not allow that bond to be broken.

In our line of work an area of concern is often job security. Since all of our tasks are of

limited time frame it is so very important to keep the team informed on the way ahead and the prospects for continued work. We all share in this responsibility from the President of the company all the way to the project manager and team leader.

Don't find yourself or your team on a job without opportunity, a task without a sense of direction, work without hope for the future, or a path lacking in new opportunities. This is far easier said than done. But no one is out there alone. We are all in this business to work together, to accomplish the task, to be the best we can be, and to help our people move to better positions when an opportunity comes their way.

Leaders must listen. Be open to criticism, open to new ideas, and above all else, be trustworthy.

Finally, leaders and employees both must have some sense of where they want to be 5-10 years in the future. Leaders must help their employees use their time wisely to insure they have the skills, talents, and education required to compete for higher positions. We leaders must help them

achieve their goals. Everyone should have a sense of where they are going and what it takes to get there.

A mentorship program will help them get there.

So fellow leaders, if you do not have a mentorship program in place for each of your employees, get one.

A mentorship program needs to have a plan that builds to the next 5-10 years. We leaders must assist employees develop the game plan to make it happen. It also must include opportunities for higher education, ways to improve skills, and chances to seek higher positions when available. VETS has several programs that enhance all employees growth and professional development. Take advantage of what this great company has to offer.

A mentorship program separates the "great" from the "good" and will result in both trust and pride at all levels in our company. If implemented correctly it can show that the leader really cares about his or her team.

NEXT TIME: THOUGHTS ON THE WORK-LIFE BALANCE FOR YOU, YOUR FAMILY AND YOUR PRIVATE LIVES.



## The Learn Smart Mapping Guides

John P. Rose

Ladies & Gentlemen, fellow VETS employees,

If you have a VETS Learn Smart account, are you aware that you have access to over 25 Learn Smart Course Mapping Guides that identify courses directing you to the most relevant information for a given topic?

It is also designed to help those that require testing or certification in a given area.

Course Mapping Guides are available in the following areas:

- Administering Windows Server 2012
- Business Execution
- CCNA Routing & Switching
- CCNA Security
- CCNA Wireless
- COMPTIA A+ 800 Exam Series
- COMPTIA Network+
- COMPTIA Security+
- Configuring Advanced Windows Server 2012 Services
- Frontline Leadership
- Installing & Configuring Server 2012 for certification
- Microsoft Office Power Point 2013
- Microsoft Office Outlook 2013
- Microsoft Office Word 2010
- Microsoft Office Word 2013
- MOS: Microsoft Office Access 2013
- MOS: Microsoft Office Excel 2013
- Moving into Management
- Premiere Pro CS6
- Project Management Professional (PMP)<sup>®</sup>
- Share Point Services 3.0
- Sexual Harassment Prevention
- Workforce Generations
- And other topics

If you require certification/qualification in any of the areas listed above and have VETS Learn Smart access, the attached mapping guides will lessen your time to search for relevant courses and connect you with the courses that will provide you the knowledge and skills required to become certified.

Completing a course does not certify you for a given skill, but it does prepare you to take the certification exam. If knowledge is power, then here it is---available as a VETS professional development opportunity. All costs are paid for by VETS. The only cost to you is your time.

This program is for you. If you do not take advantage of this free knowledge building capability, you are missing an opportunity. If not used, we waste precious corporate funds to no positive end. It is up to you.

Should you not work in any of the mapping guided areas do not forget that there over 1000 course offerings available. Learn Smart adds courses on a monthly basis with immediate access to all with a license.

Here is an opportunity for you to grow professionally, grow in confidence, grow in skills development, and become better qualified in your profession.

Note that we only have 125 licenses and to date 108 employees are registered. If you are a VETS full time employee and would like to have access, contact your VP supervisor who will work to get you an account.

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LearnSmart provides corporate e-learning solutions including a full suite of IT, project management, HR / compliance, workplace safety, and management & leadership training.

# When Duty Calls ...

## Linemen Answer



***"A lineman's job requires skill, concentration, mental and physical strength, patience, common sense and good judgment; and it takes a unique individual to be a great lineman."***

-John C. Lee, Jr.  
President and CEO  
Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative

With permission of "Cooperative Living" and an article by Deborah Blue Winn, we are very happy to share with you an article about the spouse of our HR Director, Kendele Underwood. Kendele's husband, Paul, is a lineman/serviceman at Mecklenburg Electric Cooperative with its headquarters in Chase City, Virginia. Paul is a professional "lineman" and part of a team of dedicated men and women that work under the most adverse of weather conditions, on-call 24/7 and ready to restore electrical service to our community when it has been lost. Paul and other professional

linemen work in rain, snow, darkness, and deal with wind, cold and hot temperatures with what could be between 7,200 and 14,400 volts of electricity to restore lost power. This work can be and often is quite dangerous. He, along with his colleagues, need to know what they are doing. They have to be right---all the time. If wrong they risk serious injury or even death. The article is a wonderful overview of the challenges, dangers, hazards and rewards of Paul and others that serve to support our communities. I strongly urge you to go to the link below and read about "a day in the life of a lineman."



This article in COOPERATIVE LIVING magazine was written by Deborah Blue Winn and is distributed to all members of Cooperatives in VA, MD, DE. We are grateful that they have permitted us provide you this link.

<http://www.co-opliving.com/coopliving/issues/2014/August%202014/cover%20story.htm>



# New to the VETS Family!



**Ava Marie**

Born to Luke and Ashley Lenzi and big sister, Elizabeth, on June 15, 2014.



**Aubrey Garrett**

Born to Jonathan and Melissa Chumney and big sister, Addison, on April 9, 2014.



**Cheyenne Marie**

Born to Jeffery and Jamie Rose and big sister, Brooklyn, on May 29, 2014.