

DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

Selected May 2007 Dates to Remember

(From the Multicultural Calendar 2007)

- *National Asian/Pacific Heritage Month (USA, Canada)-recognizes contributions which have helped Canada become a multicultural and diverse nation*
- National Older Peoples Month (USA)*
- *May 02: Wesak (Buddhist)-celebrates birth, enlightenment and death of Buddha as one event*
- *May 13: Mother's Day (Australia, Canada, Italy, Mexico, New Zealand, USA, Denmark)*
- *May 17: World Information Society Day (UN)*
- *May 21: Victoria Day (Canada)*
- *May 23: African Liberation Day (International)-celebrates achievements and victories of African people worldwide*
- *May 29: United Nations Peacekeepers Day (UN)*

MAY is also **HEARING AWARENESS MONTH**

sponsored by the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (www.caslpa.ca) and the Canadian Hearing Society (www.chs.ca). Check out those websites for a list of special events by month as well as the Charity Village website for a fantastic calendar of special events by month, location and focus (www.charityvillage.com).

WORKPLACE CHALLENGES AND DIVERSITY: LET'S SEE IF YOU ARE READY

Every day people with disabilities face challenges that impact not only their daily living but also present them with additional challenges in workplaces that may not be fully equipped or structured to support individuals who have disabilities. How often have you thought about the additional challenges that some people in your workplace may face? Whether it is someone you only see once in a while at a meeting or someone you work beside everyday, do you have a good understanding of the challenges they face? Is there anything you can do to assist them?

Role-playing provides a simulated environment that can help you and your co-workers experience first hand some of the challenges that individuals with different disabilities face in the workplace. You can gain a deeper understanding of the impact that disabilities in the workplace can have and identify how you can support your organization to be better prepared to assist those with varying needs. A regular business meeting provides the perfect opportunity to simulate, through role-playing, the challenges that some employees face in their day-to-day life. Below you will find a few suggestions along with some questions to stimulate discussion and progressive ideas. **You may be surprised what you learn!**

The Diversity Committee would be pleased to hear of your experiences and outcomes as a result of your role-plays. Please send any feedback you wish to share with the Diversity Committee to the HRPLD Administrator hrlpd@isp.ca.

Role Play - Simulating the Impact of Disabilities during a Business Meeting:

- Have one person wear a blindfold to impair vision
- Have one person wear ear plugs to impair hearing
- Have presenter use overhead slides that are backward to simulate dyslexia
- Have one person take notes with left instead of right hand to simulate small motor dysfunction
- Have one person in a wheelchair coming into a very small meeting room or one with a doorway of less than 36" to simulate the challenges of manoeuvring a room
- Have one person communicate as if they are speech impaired
- Have one person represent someone who is new to the country and doesn't speak or understand English well
- Position an air freshener in the room: what is the impact on someone with environmental sensitivities?
- Serve a lunch with peanut butter cookies: what is the impact on someone with allergies to nut products?
- Position one person beside a loud fan and under a bright light: how would someone with a migraine/tension headache react?
- Schedule the meeting for 7.30 am: what is the impact on someone with chronic fatigue syndrome?

Discussion Points

1. What did you anticipate would happen in the meeting? How were the group dynamics the same and how were they different than usual?
2. What was the reaction from fellow employees in this meeting? What thoughts and feelings did they experience?
3. What kind of changes does your organization need to implement in order to be more accommodating?
4. What kind of changes does your organization need to implement in order to raise awareness about differently abled employees?
5. What recommendations would you take to senior management to ensure your company not only meets legislative requirements but does the right thing to be an inclusive, barrier-free employer?

In June look for **“Global Talent: Are You Tapping In?”**

We'd be delighted to showcase *your* organization's successful diversity initiatives in the newsletter; details can be sent to us via HRPLD's Administrator.