

## OTHER PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AAA NORTHEAST



**INCLUSIVE LEADERSHIP:** AAA Northeast diversity and inclusion leaders gather outside their Providence headquarters. They are, from left, Robert Conners, travel agent; Isabel Stewart, project coordinator; Catherine Mendez, web content strategist; Randy Delgado, senior vice president of strategy and innovation; Sarah Palmer, project specialist; Karen Diehl, senior employee experience specialist; Djelisa Daveiga, lead insurance processor; and Donna Goncalves, human resources manager.  
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**RON ARIGO**

**AAA Northeast senior vice president of human resources**

# Talent recruitment efforts boost AAA’s work atmosphere

BY MARY HOWE | Contributing Writer

**BRINGING A DIVERSITY OF PEOPLE** into workplaces, C-suites and board rooms is the moral thing to do, and a smart business strategy in a country where people of color and many ethnicities and gender types are becoming an ever-larger percentage of the population.

That is the view of the top managers and leadership of AAA Northeast, a Providence-based membership organization that employs 3,200 people to serve 6.1 million customers from New Jersey to New Hampshire, said Ron Arigo, senior vice president of human resources.

Reaching into local colleges, neighborhoods and businesses, AAA Northeast is cultivating women and people of many ethnicities and races to run the organization and serve members, Arigo said.

“Purchasing power is rising in the diverse population and we have to align what we are offering to that customer base,” he said. “It is important to have a diverse staff that is increasingly representative of society. This helps us understand which products and services to bring to market. Our staff is mirroring society, allowing us to be optimally aligned for the benefit of growing business.”

Most of us are familiar with the sight of AAA trucks on roadsides, helping travelers with battery charges and other trials of car travel. The company also offers travel planning, insurance and banking services, and a variety of discounts.

Achieving greater diversity in businesses and institutions relies heavily on the principles and example set by their leaders. In fact, Arigo noted, leaders in industry and academia are stepping forward more than government officials these days in bringing essential social change.

“In these turbulent times, when many of us are looking for leaders to solve big problems, CEOs are increasingly looked at as champions of change,” Arigo said, noting that AAA Northeast CEO John Galvin is a strong proponent of diversity in the workplace.

AAA Northeast tries to be transparent about its efforts to hire and promote people of color and other diverse populations, Arigo said, to encourage diverse peoples to consider a career with the organization.

In the last three years, minority representation has increased by 4% and female representation has increased by 7% at the director and executive staff level, AAA Northeast reports.

“We won’t be satisfied until those numbers are bigger,” Arigo said.

So, how exactly is the company tackling these objectives?

One avenue is to create a talent pipeline into and through the company. An internal Career Exploration Program describes to entry-level employees the different jobs and business lines within AAA Northeast to which they could aspire as their career moves forward. The program tutors people in business skills such as writing a resume, being interviewed and developing a personal brand.

Training for all hiring managers in the company includes an interview bias component, which is designed to help managers recognize their own biases and preferences and to thereby offset the effect of these biases during the interview process.

The company’s talent acquisition team includes a diversity and inclusion recruiter who visits colleges such as the Community College of Rhode Island and nonprofit groups such as Skills for Rhode Island’s Future to extoll the values of working for – and developing a career at – AAA Northeast.

The company hosts job fairs and has cooperative partnerships with organizations that support diverse peoples such as Veterans Inc., ResCare, Asian Community Development Corp., Alianza Hispana and the R.I. Department of Labor and Training.

AAA Northeast also reaches into the realm of minority- and woman-owned businesses to secure vendors.

Galvin promotes an exclusive charitable giving team that has supported more than two dozen charitable giving organizations such as the Black Council of Massachusetts, ERASE Racism, Youth Pride and Progreso Latino.

Noting that many small businesses owned by ethnic minorities tend to be restaurants, AAA Northeast surveyed its employees to learn about minority-owned restaurants that they patronize.

“We partnered with some of those businesses to forge a relationship to help improve the businesses’ sustainability through the mechanism of a discount and rewards program,” Arigo said. The result is that AAA members and employees “get discounts to restaurants that AAA chooses to support.” ■

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