

Agency Gets New ‘Greenback’ Manager

Mark Woodbury | DCMA Public Affairs



Recently appointed Financial and Business Operations Executive Director Pam Conklin, left, discusses budget items with Jocelyn Rolen, Defense Contract Management Agency Financial and Business Operations Directorate executive assistant, during a meeting at DCMA Forward in Chester, Va. Conklin started with the agency on Aug. 29 and was the first Senior Executive Service appointee to the duty stationed at the future headquarters location on Fort Lee, Va. (Photos by Mark Woodbury, DCMA Public Affairs)

“Follow the money. Always follow the money,” is advice from an anonymous source in “All the President’s Men” that led *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward to discover critical information on the Watergate coverup.

When a person follows the money within the Defense Contract Management Agency, it leads squarely back to Pam

Conklin, Financial and Business Operations executive director. However, unlike “All the President’s Men,” there’s no coverup at the end of this information trail, just a seasoned professional who lives for the challenge of ensuring all dollars and cents are accounted for.

Conklin recently joined the DCMA team and is eager to share her experience and expertise. She comes to the agency

with more than 28 years’ experience in finance and budget, having served in various capacities for the government. Her most recent assignment was as the Defense Commissary Agency’s chief financial executive where she managed a \$1.3 billion appropriations and \$6 billion resale stock fund. As the Financial and Business Operations executive director, Conklin is responsible for the management

of DCMA's business infrastructure and all matters pertaining to the financial operations within the agency.

Interested in knowing more about the person who handles the agency's money, the *Communicator* sat down with Conklin to discuss the kind of person she is and what she finds important in life.

Q: What do you like most about your job with DCMA so far?

A: I am thrilled with the challenge and to hopefully make a positive impact on DCMA. I am also thrilled with the people here. Everyone has welcomed me with open arms. It's been fantastic to see the professionalism, work ethic and dedication, especially with all the turmoil of the transition and relocating. But, everyone has been fantastic, very positive and encouraging. I am just excited to be here.

Q: Do you have a personal motto? If so, what would that be?

A: No, I really don't. I am a very positive person and a very passionate person. Some people talk about the glass being half-empty or half-full; I like to say my glass is full. But, no, I really don't have a personal motto.

Q: How has having a glass-full perspective on life been a benefit to you?

A: Well, I am all about sharing knowledge and information to empower people and giving everyone an opportunity to do his or her best. This has obviously helped me get to where I am today. With the Defense Commissary Agency, we did a lot of good things — clean audit opinions and become the gold standard within the Department of Defense for internal controls. That wasn't just one person. That wasn't just me as the comptroller or chief financial executive; it was everyone in my organization working together as a team. So, I am all about empowering everybody and hopefully motivating them with my passion and positive outlook.

Q: Any prior military service?

A: No; I worked for the Army but not in the military. I was a civilian. I was in

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— Pam Conklin, Defense Contract Management Agency Financial and Business Operations executive director

Germany for eight years at the four-star Army headquarters in Heidelberg. The first three years was in budget work, but for the last five years, I was actually an arms control specialist doing force structure for the drawdown in Europe from 1990 to 1995. Those were pretty exciting times.

Q: What perspectives did your arms control specialist job help give you that have helped within your budget career?

A: It gave me the perspective that I could do anything. If I could go from being a budget analyst to being an arms control specialist and excel at it, it told me I could do anything I put my mind to, but I have always had that attitude. Just give me a job, and I am going to do it well. I believe in baptism by fire; throw them into the deep end, and they'll not only come out treading water but swimming laps. I definitely believe in throwing myself into and immersing myself into the process and learning everything I can as quickly as I can.

Q: While living in Germany did you learn any German?

A: Somewhat. For me, the best way to learn about a country and its people is through its food, and I certainly embraced learning German as it applied to reading menus. If anything, this is my motto: “Some people eat to live, but I certainly live to eat.” Food is very important to me. I was raised in the South, so, of course, food is important to my heritage and culture. My husband is Italian, so we have another important food angle going on there. On top of that, he is a fantastic cook. So, we definitely embraced learning about Germany and the other nearby countries, France and Italy, through their restaurants.

But, yeah, I can still speak a little German. I still throw a phrase or two out there. I am not conversational today, but I can still read a German menu. Funny thing is, I cannot understand an English menu at a German restaurant. I was in Germany a year and a half ago on business with colleagues, who were novices in German menus, so I asked if they had an English carte — an English menu — and they did. I had one too, but I couldn't understand it. I had to ask for a German menu. Fried potatoes on the English menu just didn't tell me if it was pommes frites (French fries), bratkartoffeln (hash browns) or croquettes (potato pancake). I could still figure out schnitzel on the English menu, but with just about everything else, you lose something in translation.

Q: When you're not at work, where would people find you?

A: (1) At home with my family. My husband and I have two teenage sons. We are very blessed to have a great neighborhood where we enjoy being right in the social center of it. (2) Somewhere with a book. I love reading. I read hardbacks, listen to audio books and often am in four different books at the same time. I try to make sure they are different genres so I don't get the plots confused — a fiction, a nonfiction, something from a different time era. I am certainly an avid reader. (3) Doing a Sudoku puzzle. This is kind of ironic because I am a numbers person as a comptroller, and some people might think that I wouldn't want to have anything to do with numbers when I get home. But, doing my Sudoku puzzle is kind of my destressor after a long day.

Q: What would you say is the best book you have ever read?

A: “Killer Angels.” It’s a Civil War book by Michael Shaara. It’s about the Battle of Gettysburg. The way he writes it focuses on five or six key leaders — (Gen. Robert E.) Lee being one and (Brevet Maj. Gen.) Joshua Chamberlain, who was my favorite to read about. He was a college professor from Maine, and the college basically said, “You have to stop enflaming your students to join the Army. You have to stop and take a sabbatical.” So, his sabbatical was to go to the governor and say, “Commission me into the Army.” He has some really great leadership moments in the war. One was at Gettysburg at the Battle of Little Round

Top, and the other is where he has been handed over a group of deserters from the Union Army he is ordered to kill. Instead, he gives them this impassioned speech, and these people are ready to fight for him. They pick up their guns and go off to fight another fight. So, I would have to say it is one of the best books of all time. A close second is “Les Misérables” by Victor Hugo.

Q: Who is the most important person in your life, and how has that person influenced you?

A: My dad. He comes from a humble background. He was a farmer. Both he and my mom worked hard their entire lives. There were some rough times, and he instilled in us a work ethic and a great

understanding in “the basics” of life. My dad was the person who taught me how to balance a checkbook while I was still in high school. He did this because I was the treasurer of Beta Society at the state level. I marvel at that because, in today’s generation, many people don’t know how to balance a checkbook.

Q: What five things could you not live without?

A: My family, food, reading, Sudoku and, truly, my work.

Conklin was the first Senior Executive Service appointee to be duty stationed at the future headquarters location on Fort Lee, Va. She officially came onboard Aug. 29. 



Charlie Williams, Jr., Defense Contract Management Agency director, left, introduces Pam Conklin, recently selected DCMA Financial and Business Operations/Comptroller executive director, to the finance and budgeting personnel at DCMA Forward in Chester, Va., Aug. 13.