



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 2, Issue 8

June 2012

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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A Message from Secretary Tom Vilsack

We have just begun the 4th annual Feds Feed Families food drive – and I'm writing to ask for your help in making this year's food drive the most successful yet.

The fact is, many of our fellow Americans are working hard but still having trouble making ends meet. Through a wide variety of food assistance programs, USDA helps one in four Americans put healthy food on their plate. But we also have help from food banks and nonprofit organizations across the country – from our biggest cities to our small towns and rural communities. Those partners need our help this summer.

Last summer, USDA donated 1.79 million pounds of perishable and non-perishable food through Feds Feed Families, including fresh produce grown in People's Gardens across the country and from partnering

with farmers and neighbors in local gleaning efforts. This tremendous accomplishment exemplifies your commitment to serving the American people. This year, I hope we can do even better.

If every USDA employee donates just two pounds of food per week this summer, we will donate more than 2 million pounds – providing Americans with an abundant source of healthy food, and helping hard-working families get a leg up. That's integral to our mission here at USDA, and I'm proud of the impact we can have when we work together.

You can start today by dropping off non-perishable goods in the bins near offices in the Washington, DC metro region, or by [registering your food drives across the country](#) at: <http://tinyurl.com/USDAFeedsFamilies>. If you have



additional questions, each USDA Agency has a captain for this effort, or you can email: collaborate@usda.gov.

Thank you for the work you do every day – and thanks in advance for your support for food banks and American families.

You can contact the staff of My USDA via email at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and don't forget to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary
USDA



Feds Feed Families Food Challenge from Deputy Secretary Merrigan

I am challenging USDA employees to donate more than 1.8 million pounds of food this summer! If you're in the Washington, DC area, you can drop off your non-perishable donations in the Feds Feed Families bins located around your building. If you have

questions, please email collaborate@usda.gov.

Each year, USDA employees have stepped up to the plate: in 2011, we organized over 2,000 food drives across the country and collected 1.79 million pounds of fresh and shelf-stable food. This year, I challenge USDA employees

to regain our number one spot amongst Federal departments and agencies by raising the most food.

Last year, USDA raised the most pounds of food per employee. This year, we will do it again. Thank you for your generous support.

Kathleen Merrigan
Deputy Secretary

Feds Feed Families—USDA Kickoff!



Agriculture Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan stakes tomatoes in the People’s Garden before the USDA kickoff event for Feds Feed Families at the U.S. Department of Agriculture Farmers Market in Washington, D.C., on Friday, June 8, 2012. USDA Photo by Tom Witham.

Duane Williams (right) is the Feds Feed Families (FFF) Program Manager for the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). He spoke at the USDA kickoff of FFF earlier this month.



Duane is a participant in the USDA SES Candidate Development program and is on a detail to OPM to lead the FFF initiative across government. His home agency is the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS).

Photo by Tom Witham.



Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan and Mike Curtin (right), CEO of DC Central Kitchen, attended the USDA kickoff event for Feds Feed Families at the USDA Farmers Market in Washington, D.C. USDA Photo by Tom Witham.



Feds Feed Families is a government-wide effort led by the [Chief Human Capital Officers \(CHCO\) Council](#), in partnership with the [Office of Personnel Management \(OPM\)](#), the [U.S. Department of Defense \(DOD\)](#), and the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#). Check out our [Agency Contacts page](#) for the list of participating Federal Agencies and their chairs and champions.

The need has not gone away. In too many families, one or both parents are still searching for work. Children are now out of school, and so they aren’t benefiting from school nutrition programs. The need is even greater throughout our country this year.

John Berry, Director, Office of Personnel Management

People’s Garden in Denver Fosters Teamwork and Helps Community

By Susan Siemietkowski

Employees from the Mountain Plains Regional Office of USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service, along with staff from USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service, Rural Development, and Farm Service Agency, were recognized by the [Jeffco Action Center](http://theactioncenter.org) (<http://theactioncenter.org>) in Lakewood, Colorado, for food contributions made from the USDA People’s Garden located at the Denver Federal Center.

This endeavor supports Cultural Transformation as it brings USDA staff together from several mission areas and provides healthy food to people who otherwise may not have enough to eat.

A [video created by the General Services Administration](#) (and subsequently posted on YouTube,) provides additional details on the partnership between USDA’s Peoples Garden in Denver and the Jeffco Action Center:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Td9CQK78pCw&feature=share>.



Mountain Plains Region WIC Director Jean Liekhus (left) and School Programs Specialist Sadie Walton (right) pull carrots from the FNS plot at the Denver Federal Center’s People’s Garden.



Lekhus and Walton join USDA colleagues from the Farm Service Agency to deliver harvested produce to the Jeffco Action Center in Lakewood, Colorado.

USDA Employees Donate “Power Packs” To Help Hungry Children

In an effort to promote Cultural Transformation’s Customer Service/Community Outreach pillar, Food Nutrition and Consumer Service (FNCS) staff recently donated close to 2,000 pounds of healthy food to Northern Virginia area children through a “Power Pack” initiative. While many children take advantage of breakfast and lunch feeding programs offered at schools, a large number do not get enough to eat while at home. This includes weekends and is especially true during tough economic times. Power Packs are given out at schools on Friday afternoons and include items such as fruit cups, granola bars and oatmeal, provide nourishment to kids who may otherwise go hungry.

As a result of employees’ generosity, Power Packs were distributed over the course of several weekends this spring to children who attend Parklawn Elementary School in Alexandria, Virginia, which is only a few miles from FNCS HQ/POC. Depending on need and how this pilot program works out, FNCS hopes to expand the program through the next school year.



FNCS staff collect, sort and prepare to deliver nutritious food to help feed children from a nearby elementary school.

Virtually Redefining Internships at USDA



Dora Flores (left), Dairy Programs Virtual Intern Program Team Lead, communicates from Washington, DC, with virtual intern Daman Wandke (right) in Bellingham, Washington.

By Sarah Buikema, Dora Flores, and the entire AMS Dairy Programs Virtual Internship Team



ence. At summer's end, interns leave their jobs behind in Washington, DC, and return to schools across the country.

Through the Virtual Internship Program, AMS has extended this summertime experience to a year-round

from Western Washington University in Bellingham, WA. This is a win-win program! Our focus on collaboration and creativity encourages interns to inject innovative ideas and new approaches into our government processes.

Students continue their studies and extracurricular activities while participating in an internship program no matter where they are located. It's virtually a perfect fit!

The definition of "being in the office" or "being on the clock" is changing. Most organizations—

government and private—have a diverse workforce that may or may not be co-located. Through its Virtual Internship Program, the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) is building a workplace that offers opportunity for today's best and brightest students to work as interns regardless of physical location.

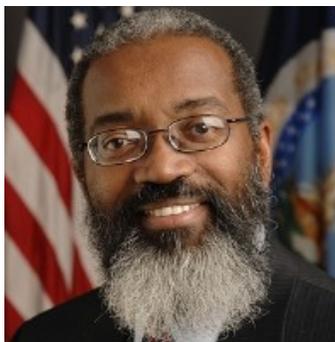
Every year, college students come to Washington, DC, to spend their summer break to gain valuable work experi-

program. During the school year, our virtual student interns stay connected using a full communications toolbox that includes Microsoft Live Meeting and Office Communicator to stay connected. Using available technology, our virtual interns work with us on a part-time and intermittent basis from remote locations. For example, Daman Wandke came to USDA headquarters in Washington, DC, for a summer internship, and then continued as a virtual intern while pursuing a degree in Management Information Systems

AMS is proud to be a leader in offering virtual internships. We are developing Virtual Internship "Leadership" guidelines to present to the Department as an option for all USDA interns, and our program has become an example for other agencies.

We are excited for the upcoming internship season. If you are interested in becoming one of our virtual interns or want to learn about how you can start your own program, [visit our internship site](#) for more information.

Secretary Vilsack Names New Assistant Secretary for Administration



Dr. Gregory Parham
Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration

With the recent retirement of Mr. Pearlie Reed, Secretary Vilsack has designated Dr. Gregory Parham to serve as Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration. Dr. Parham has had a long history at the USDA, most recently as Administrator for the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS). He introduced himself to Departmental Management via [this video](#).

Dr. Parham says he is excited about his new duties. "When the Secretary asked me to take this job, I knew I had big shoes to fill. Pearlie Reed was a valued colleague and wonderful leader to us all. His legacy will be carried on, and his commitment to serving the disadvantaged, be it farmers or

employees, will be long remembered. I assure you it is important to me to continue his standard of excellence....Employees are my top priority."

Dr. Parham holds a masters degree from the Johns Hopkins University in administrative science and doctorate and bachelor degrees from the Ohio State University in veterinary medicine and microbiology.

Acting ASA Parham will be scheduling a meet and greet with employees during the second week of July. He says the only price for admittance is ten pounds of food to donate to the Feds Feed Families food drive! Watch your inbox for details.

Diversity Students Inspired by USDA's Annual Outlook Forum



By Brenda Chapin

Secretary Vilsack met with students from across the country who were selected to attend the USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum Student Diversity Program. These students were selected based on their essays, "Agriculture as a Career."

Every year the USDA Agricultural Outlook Forum Student Diversity Program provides 24 students with the opportunity to attend USDA's Outlook Forum in Washington, DC, to learn about careers in agriculture.

The program aims to increase the diversity of youthful participation in the Forum and, ultimately, the diversity of USDA. It exposes our future agricultural leaders to the broad world of opportunities in USDA and enables them to meet leaders in all aspects of the field.

The students who are chosen from Land-Grant Colleges and Universities, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, and American Association of State Colleges of Agriculture and Renewable Resources institutions come from across the nation. They also learn about agri-business, the latest research, future trends, and policy in contemporary agriculture.

Many of the students have gone on to work for USDA. All agree that the Forum experience broadened their horizons. One student echoed the comments of others when he said the Forum raised the bar, showing him the range of opportunities to achieve a rewarding and productive career.

The program was conceived in 2006 by USDA's Office of the Chief Economist and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture in partnership with the University of Maryland Eastern Shore.

The program has received strong private sector support from CHS, Inc., Farm Credit, Deere & Company, and Tyson Foods, Inc. The Economic Research Service has also participated in the program since its inception, and in 2012, the Natural Resources Conservation Service joined forces.

The students receive a briefing at USDA Headquarters and tour our Beltsville research facilities. Every year, since the program's launch in 2007, the students met the Secretary of Agriculture. **Since inception, 115 students have participated in the program, and 10 percent now work fulltime for USDA.**

To be considered for the program, students submit an essay titled "Agriculture as a Career," to their respective institution (i.e., academic dean or department chair). Institutions may then select two students whom they recommend to USDA to participate in the program. Applicants come from a wide array of agricultural disciplines – econom-

ics, communications, business, science, pre-veterinary, or the food industry.

USDA's Agricultural Outlook Forum, which first began in 1923, provides producers, policymakers, business, government, industry leaders, and staffers with a unique opportunity to meet, exchange ideas, and discuss timely issues at the forefront of America's agriculture.

The 2013 Agricultural Outlook Forum will be held February 21-22 in Arlington, Virginia, at the Crystal Gateway Marriott Hotel. To learn more about the program, view essays of current winners, and discover what previous winners are doing today, please visit: http://www.usda.gov/oce/forum/diversity/diversity_program.htm.

Some of the winning essays:

[Monica Adamson, Middle Tennessee State University](#)

[Danielle Farley, Southern Illinois University](#)

[Thomas Griffin, Oregon State University](#)

[Jason Harris, Oklahoma State University](#)

[Emmaline Long, Cornell University](#)

[Carlos Vazquez, St. Thomas University](#)

USDA Disability Employment Program: Information for Employees



If you have any questions or have best practices to share, please contact Alison Levy, USDA Disability Employment Program Manager: Alison.Levy@dm.usda.gov. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

standing the basics about reasonable accommodations.

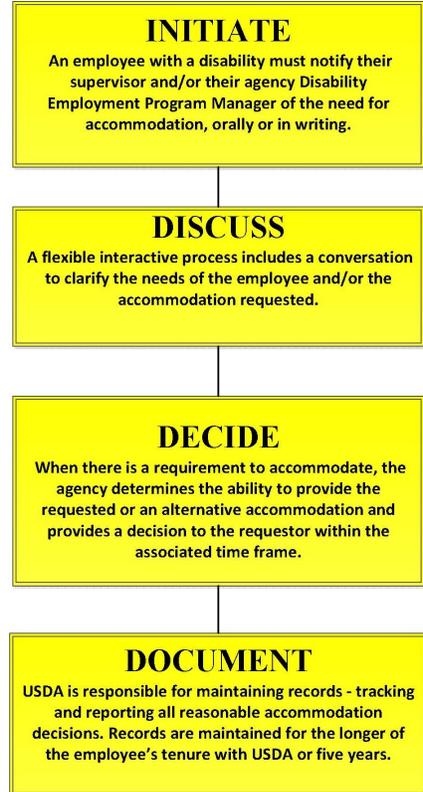
Reasonable Accommodation Examples

There are workplace barriers that keep some individuals from performing jobs which they could do with some form of accommodation. These barriers may be physical or virtual obstacles (such as inaccessible facilities and equipment, web sites, on line learning, or software), or they may be procedures or rules (such as rules concerning when or where work is performed, when breaks are taken, or how functions are performed).

Requesting Reasonable Accommodation

A general overview of the reasonable accommodation process is depicted in the diagram to the right. For more information about reasonable accommodations for specific disabilities, visit the Job Accommodation Network: www.askjan.org.

The Reasonable Accommodation Process



USDA is committed to ensuring our workplace is welcoming and accessible to all employees, including those with disabilities. The Americans with Disabilities Act (as amended) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 require USDA to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified applicants and employees with disabilities when the needs are evident, or made known to managers.

Recent amendments to Americans with Disabilities Act (now referred to as ADAAA) have expanded the definition of disability, favoring a broader coverage of individuals who may not have been previously included. Studies indicate that incidence of disability increases with age. As many as one in seven adult Americans will experience a limiting condition before reaching retirement age. Considering the demographics of our aging workforce, all employees would benefit under-

Natalie Veeney Ford, Diversity & Inclusion Specialist, contributed to this month's column.

As part of the Office of the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO's) Cultural Transformation Plan, the National Finance Center, Information Technology Services Division recently celebrated its fourth annual Diversity Luncheon.

This year's theme was "Diversity is a Family Connection." Each individual was asked to make the family connection by reaching out and sharing this wonderful event with someone

Diversity Is A "Family Connection"



Employees donated a variety of multicultural dishes such as: meats, salads, desserts, casseroles, soups and appetizers. The success of the celebration was measured by the more

from another organization within the OCFO. More than 300 people participated, making it a successful and exciting event.

than 50 different food items representing diverse ethnic groups, cultures, and geographic locations. Following the judging contest, the U.S. Coast Guard Color Guard provided an inspirational posting of the colors, culminating with the Pledge of Allegiance.

Several speakers' comments echoed a single theme -- all individuals share diversity in and out of the workplace and all individuals are unique and special in their own way. OCFO is living proof that "Diversity Is a Family Connection."

By Sylvanta Oliver

BioPreferred® Program Seeking Nominations for Champion Awards

USDA has started a new pilot awards program for BioPreferred program champions, entitled “*Excellence in Bio-based Procurement*.” This is the first year for this award which recognizes outstanding employees within USDA who excel in implementing the Federal initiative of specifying and using biobased products. This includes agency’s micro-purchases or other procurement means that promote the sale and use of USDA BioPreferred program’s designated products.

The USDA BioPreferred program promotes the increased purchase and use of biobased products, thereby creating new jobs and providing new markets for commodities. It reduces petroleum consumption and possible adverse environmental and health hazards.

Biobased products are commercial or industrial products (other than food or feed) that are composed in whole,

or in significant part, of biological products, renewable agricultural materials (including plant, animal, and marine materials), or forestry materials. Products purchased by USDA include cleaning products, lubricants, single use food service items, construction materials, and others. Most purchases are part of service contracts.



This year’s pilot awards program is open to all USDA employees and serves as a model for government-wide BioPreferred program awards in 2013. The awards will consist of

- A \$1,000 monetary award
- A special designed Bio-Preferred program plaque

- Participation in a special awards ceremony, and
- Recognition on the USDA and BioPreferred Web site.

The Awards ceremony will be held October 25, 2012. A minimum of three winners will be announced. Nominations are currently being accepted now through July 31, 2012. Individuals may nominate themselves or others by clicking on the following link: <http://www.biopreferred.gov/bpawardnomination>.

Group awards (with a maximum of 10 individuals per group) will also be accepted. All USDA nominees must be approved by their respective Agency Heads. If you have any questions regarding the Bio-Preferred program or the awards process, you may contact the Bio-Preferred program office at (202) 720-4091.

CODE BLUE: USDA Making a Difference in Remote Alaska

By Lawrence Yerich

The community of Whitestone is located on the Tanana River near Delta Junction, Alaska. It is accessible only by boat in the summer and by vehicle, via ice road, during the winter.

In 2008, no one in the community was trained in Emergency Medical Services (EMS). That year, a \$2,500 “Developmental Mini Grant” was given to the community by the Interior Region EMS Council (IREMSC). Mini Grants are small annual funding amounts awarded to organized ambulance and other EMS services to help support training and operational expenses.

In 2010, Interior Region EMS Council, in partnership with the Alaska Code Blue Program and the USDA-Rural Development’s Community Facilities Program, assisted

the community in obtaining additional funding for patient care, training equipment, and a specially designed and equipped boat for transporting patients.

Whitestone now has a vibrant organized group of highly trained, competent and well equipped responders, many of whom have now received advanced training. Angela Macias, EMS Chief, said, “Today, thanks to the support of the Code Blue grants

and USDA-Rural Development’s Community Facilities Program, the remote Alaskan community of Whitestone has advanced level emergency responders, a first responder squad, including a fully stocked patient transport truck and boat, which gives us the ability to transport a patient in a controlled environment and maintain the highest level of care.”

[Alaska Code Blue project: http://hss.state.ak.us/dph/emergency/ems/programs/code_blue.htm](http://hss.state.ak.us/dph/emergency/ems/programs/code_blue.htm), or contact Merlaine Kruse, USDA-RD AK Community Facilities Director at (907) 761-7778, or: Merlaine.kruse@ak.usda.gov.



Simulated transfer of victim from patient transport boat to vehicle. Photo courtesy of Nannette Timothy.

TELEWORK IN TRANSITION

Now that we're halfway through 2012, it's a great time to take pause and review where we are and where we're headed with the USDA Telework Program. We started the fiscal year with a new and aggressive goal—to reach 45% participation in Core Telework.

Although we still have our work cut out for us, on average, 30% of all eligible USDA employees are teleworking in some form or fashion in any given pay period.

Just think about all the vehicular emissions, pollutants, utilities, commuting costs, time and personal stress our teleworkers are saving for themselves and for the environment that USDA is charged to protect.

But how will we know when we've really hit the mark? Forget Nostradamus, I'd like to share my top personal predictions for what a successful

Telework program will look like here at USDA:

- When there's a need for a last minute afternoon meeting, nobody asks, "Where will it be?"
- The numbers of applications from military veterans, people with disabilities and top college graduates from diverse and prestigious universities significantly increases and positively enhances the diversity of our workforce.
- Employee engagement, satisfaction and morale significantly increase each year as measured by the annual results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.
- Managers no longer have to wonder, "How will I know if teleworkers are actually working?"

By Mika J. Cross,
USDA Work/Life
and Wellness
Program
Manager



By the end of this year, USDA plans a revision of its existing Telework Program Departmental Regulation, along with an updated version of the Telework Agreement Form (AD-3018.)

If you're interested in updates and information about USDA's Telework Program, or if you have a telework success story you would like to share, send an email to telework@dm.usda.gov.

You can join our community on USDA Connect by finding the [Work-life and Wellness](#) community webpage.

Join the "Let's Talk Telework" Town Hall

Don't miss this month's "Let's Talk Telework" virtual Town Hall. Free and open to all employees, the Telework Town Hall will provide you the opportunity to hear from USDA Telework Coordinators, voice your opinions about how we can better expand Telework across the Department and answer your questions about the Telework policy.

Mark your calendars for Thursday, June 28th from 12:30-1:30 EST and be sure to sign up in AgLearn to attend this important webinar, free to all USDA employees. If you have questions, email telework@dm.usda.gov

There are two methods for participating in the webinar. Please select the link below that describes how you will access the webinar.

***Due to a limited number of phone lines, it is highly encouraged to plan your participation as a group:*

Option #1:

[I will view the webinar as part of a group \(in a conference room or co-worker's office\). Someone else will reserve the phone line. I'll listen to the audio through a speakerphone.](#)

Option #2:

[I will view the webinar by myself or will be a group leader and will need to dial-in to a teleconference line to hear the audio.](#)

Questions or technical difficulty with the registration process should be forwarded to your agency's [AgLearn point of contact](#).



TIME TO TELEWORK!

Teleworkers must be sure to code their time correctly within WebTA.

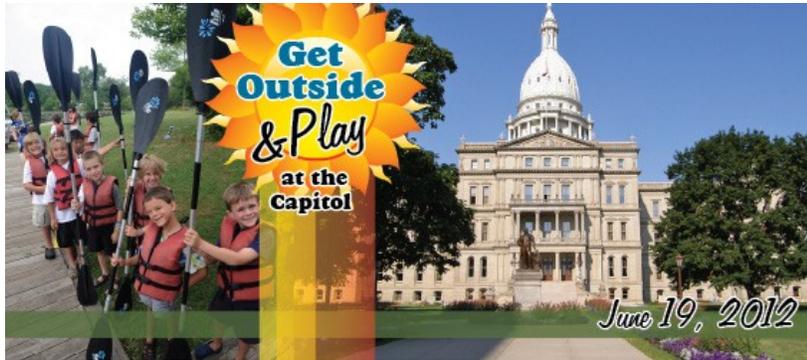
Here's a quick tip on how to code your time:

01-01 Reg Time Telework (Core or Full-Time Telework)

01-01 Telework Other (Ad/Hoc or Unscheduled Telework)

Questions? Contact your Agency Telework Coordinator or send an email to: telework@dm.usda.gov

USDA/Forest Service Reach Out, Encourage Kids to “Get Outside and Play”



Diane G. Gardin, Federal Women's Program Manager for the Forest Service, Northern Research Station, East Lansing, Michigan, joined more than a thousand children as part of the “Get Outside & Play at the Capital in Lansing, Michigan” event. More than two dozen Federal, state, and local agencies took part in the outreach event.

Diane gave presentations on “tree cookies” and taught the children how to determine the age of a tree. She also talked about the importance of knowing directions, and she provided compasses to the children. The event's goal is to celebrate parks, recreation, and to get kids outdoors.

USDA's UPCOMING SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

- **Women's Equality Day event August 28, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium**
- **Hispanic Heritage Month event September 20, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium**
- **National Disability Employment Awareness Month event October 18, 2012, at the Jefferson Auditorium.**

Observances are scheduled to begin at 10:00 a. m. (EST)

IF YOU'RE IN DC, PLEASE ADD THESE TO YOUR CALENDAR

USDA Employees Walk/Run for Charity

By Mary Alvarez



For the past several years, USDA employees, including Consumer Safety Inspectors (CSI) and Enforcement Investigations and Analysis Officers (EIAO) at the Food Safety and Inspection Service in Alameda, California, have participated in the Entertainment Industry Foundation's Revlon Walk/Run to raise money for research and treatment for medically underserved women. Since 1994, the event has distributed \$65 million to worthy organizations.

Pictured: Front Row: Cynthia Campbell, Mary Alvarez-CSI, Maria Salazar-EIAO, Breena Robinson-Verloop-EIAO

Back Row: Rosie Romero-CSI, Justin Tan, Carmencita Tan-CSI, Rosa Aguirre-Rivera-EIAO, Gustavo Valenzuela-CSI

Congressman Barney Frank Keynotes USDA's LGBT Pride Observance



USDA Photo by Bob Nichols

June is Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Pride Month, which is one of the Department's officially recognized Special Emphasis Program observances. At this year's Pride Event on June 7, the Honorable Congressman Barney Frank was the keynote speaker. You may view the event online at [USDA PRIDE EVENT](#).

Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan introduced the Congressman, who is scheduled to retire from the U.S. House later this year. Secretary Vilsack sent a video message to the gathering. The USDA LGBT Special Emphasis Program Managers honored the Congressman as a LGBT Pioneer. The observance theme was "The Sum of Us: LGBT Pioneers."

Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) Special Emphasis Program (SEP): Maintaining An Inclusive Workforce

Since taking office, President Obama has taken numerous administrative actions to advance equality for LGBT Federal employees.

At his directive, the Office of Personnel Management is expanding Federal benefits for same-sex partners of Federal employees to the extent possible under current law, including allowing same-sex domestic partners to apply for long-term care insurance.

The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) prohibits Federal employees from adding their same-sex spouses to their health/medical insurance program.

In July 2011, the White House announced the President's support of the **Respect for Marriage Act**, introduced by Senator Dianne Feinstein and Congressman Jerrold Nadler, which would repeal DOMA and uphold the

principle that gay and lesbian couples should receive the same Federal rights and legal protections as straight couples.

The President has long supported a legislative repeal of DOMA.

Meanwhile, the President's support of marriage equality for all Americans is a significant step toward providing LGBT Americans access to the 1,138 benefits, rights, and protections provided on the basis of marital status in Federal law.

You can learn more about the Obama Administration and LGBT issues at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/lgbt>.

At the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Secretary Vilsack last year amended USDA's Civil Rights non-discrimination statement to include gender expression and gender identity.

A diverse and inclusive workplace is one of the goals of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Initiative.

Additionally, earlier this year, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission unanimously determined that claims of discrimination based on gender identity are recognizable under Title VII's sex discrimination prohibition.

This means that discrimination complaints from transgender employees may now be processed based on sex—which encompasses both the biological differences between men and women—and gender.

One of the goals of the USDA LGBT Special Emphasis Program is to increase awareness among USDA employees that they work alongside a diverse array of people,

including those with a variety of sexual orientations (straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual) and gender identities (transgender).

An inclusive environment in which LGBT employees can be themselves leads to a more enriching and happier work experience, and that makes everyone more productive.

The USDA LGBT Special Emphasis Program exists as a resource to Civil Rights offices, Human Resources managers, supervisors, and employees who have questions about LGBT workplace issues, including the proper response when an employee is undergoing gender transition.

If you have questions about USDA's LGBT Special Emphasis Program or if you would like to be added to USDA's LGBT information distribution list, send an email to the Department's LGBT SEP Manager, Perry Stevens, at Perry.Stevens@dm.usda.gov.

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If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).

Catch Up on Previous Issues of MyUSDA!

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD.)

To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Stop 9410, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call toll free at 866.632.9992 (English) or 800.877.8339 (TDD) or at 866.377.8642 (English Federal-relay) or 800.845.6136 (Spanish Federal-relay)

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MyUSDA Staff

Karen A. Messmore—*Editorial Director*

William P. Milton, Jr.—*Deputy Editorial Director*

Perry Stevens—*Editor-in-Chief*

Mika Cross—*Lead Editor*

Melanie Clemons, Lynne Short, Edwin C. Cierpal, Jr., Adrian Lindsey—*Editors*

Key Contributors:

Karlease Kelly, Monshi Ramdass, Alison Levy, Tina Hoellerer, Wendy Carrasco, Ronald S. James, Zina Sutch, Diane Gardin, Brenda Chapin, Mary Alvarez, Debra Arnold, Susan Siemietkowski, Sarah Buikema, Dora Flores, the AMS Dairy Programs Virtual Internship Team, Larry Yerich, Sylvanta Oliver, Nannette Timothy, Tom Witham, Ron B. Buckhalt, Shirley Hill, Bob Nichols

If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for July submissions is **Wednesday, July 18, 2012.**

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue with an accompanying photo. Send photos as separate attachments and make sure they are high quality.

The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it. Maximum length of articles is 250 words.

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov