



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 2, Issue 10

August 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



As drought continues across America, President Obama and I continue to do all we can to help farmers and ranchers. We'll also continue to call on Congress to pass a Food, Farm and Jobs Bill as soon as possible, to give USDA more tools to help and to give more certainty to producers in this difficult time.

Meanwhile, at USDA we continue our work to help grow the economy and create jobs. This includes our support for innovative producers and rural businesses who are already working hard to boost the emerging bio-economy.

From household products made of homegrown crops, to remarkable advanced bio-fuels that are powering America's ships and aircraft, the biobased economy is strengthening our nation while bringing more jobs and economic security to rural America.

Today, more than 3,000 companies are producing more than 25,000 biobased products made from renewable sources grown here at home, and supporting 100,000 American jobs. These companies are developing a wide variety of products – from cleaners and paints to construction materials – for use at home, at work, and by industry.

USDA has created the "USDA Certified Biobased Product" label to help consumers identify these products – and today more than 700 of them are available in stores.

President Obama also directed the Federal government to increase procurement of biobased products – and USDA has increased the number of biobased products for Federal procurement to more than 9,000 in 77 categories.

We've also continued working to expand the program to even more categories, to support the innovative companies, farmers and communities who are on the cutting edge of the biobased economy.

We've coordinated research centers in every region of the country to research the science needed for profitable, advanced bio-fuels feedstocks.

Through the Biorefinery Assistance Program, USDA efforts have helped provide more than \$700 million for 9 advanced biorefineries across the country.

Under the Biomass Crop Assistance Program, we've incentivized farmers to grow advanced feedstocks on nearly 60,000 acres, helping compa-

nies across the country spur production of new bio-fuels from non-food, non-feed sources.

We're also working with the military to develop the next generation of aviation and marine bio-fuels from advanced feedstocks, helping reduce our military's dependence on foreign oil. In fact, the Navy's "Great Green Fleet" recently ran training exercises in Hawaii, powered entirely by advanced bio-fuels.

President Obama and I know that these advances are just the beginning. With support from USDA, the innovation of producers and rural businesses will continue to set us apart from the world in the decades to come. I'm confident that together we will create more homegrown jobs, and fuel our rural economy to new heights.

You can contact the staff of My USDA via email at: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

AMS Mentors: Imparting Wisdom and Sharing Knowledge

By Sue Bernstein
Agricultural Marketing Service



Throughout our careers, we take training classes, learn by watching how our organization and colleagues operate and, over the years, gain the experience we need to succeed. The Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) has just built a shortcut to that success – the AMS Mentoring Program.

AMS' new developmental program, which is based on the USDA Mentoring Program, is a unique win-win proposition for all. Over the next year, as our mentors share their ideas, expertise, and knowledge, our protégés will become more proficient, confident professionals. Each will benefit from the unique opportunity to be guided, taught, helped, encouraged, and supported by a more experienced colleague. Mentors – as teachers, problem solvers, motivators, coaches,

trusted advisors, and guides – will have the unique opportunity to lay the groundwork for AMS' future as they develop our leaders of tomorrow. AMS will build a staff of engaged, well-rounded, and knowledgeable professionals at all levels of the organization.

On June 12, our 46 protégés and 46 mentors gathered in a virtual conference to kick off the brand new program. While ours is a formal program, we are making it as flexible as possible to balance all of the needs of our multi-tasking participants, many of whom are scattered across the country. Classroom sessions and formal meetings don't fit the schedules of our hardworking participants who are taking part in the program in addition to their normal duties. Instead, our mentors and protégés will be connecting via Live Meeting, Office Communicator,

USDA Connect, telephone, email, and face-to-face meetings – whenever and wherever they choose. By making the AMS Mentoring Program flexible and contemporary, we're helping ensure that our mentors can take advantage of every opportunity to foster the development, expand their knowledge, skills and abilities; and broaden the understanding of our protégés.

We're excited that the AMS Mentoring Program is underway! We'll keep you posted on our progress. For more information on the AMS Mentoring Program, contact Sue Bernstein at 202-720-1862.

USDA Donates to Feds Feed Families Across America



All across the country USDA employees pitched in to support the 2012 Feds Feed Families food drive in order to meet the 2 million pound challenge set by Secretary Tom Vilsack this year.



On par to exceed that goal, employees can read about what USDA Agencies did in their neck of the woods to donate to this year's efforts by visiting

the USDA Feds Feed Families blog page at: <http://blogs.usda.gov/tag/feds-feed-families/>

To learn more about the government-wide campaign visit: <http://www.fedsfeedfamilies.gov/>



Working Effectively with Hispanic Producers

by Jacqueline Padron, OHRM's Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/ Life Division

USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) instructor cadre delivered the course "Working Effectively with Hispanic Producers" to almost 30 employees from July 31 through August 2, 2012 in Washington State. NRCS State Conservationist Roylene Rides at the Door hosted the National Employee Development Center's course, in Pasco, Washington. The two-and-a-half-day course built employees' cultural understanding and competencies and gave them tools to work effectively with the rapidly growing number of Hispanic producers. As part of the course, employees visited local Hispanic producers where they were able to practice the skills they learned in the classroom and gain real-life experience.



Above: Roylene Rides at the Door, NRCS State Conservationist, talks to a local Hispanic organic producer during the course field experience. Left, class participants learn of the local producer's challenges and needs.

"This training was an important opportunity for NRCS-Washington employees to become more familiar with some of our most important agricultural producers," said Rides at the Door. "This course promotes diversity, understanding, and hands-on training. It was time well spent."



Lincoln Tomato Blossoms at Ala Wai Elementary in Honolulu

By Jolene Lau, NRCS Public Affairs Specialist, Pacific Islands Area

On May 15th, the students and faculty at Ala Wai Elementary School in Honolulu helped USDA celebrate the 150th anniversary by planting commemorative Abraham Lincoln tomatoes provided by the Department of Agriculture. During a special assembly, more than 500 students of Ala Wai Elementary heard presentations from various USDA representatives, to learn about programs and services that USDA provides to the community.

Local media representatives captured the special event and photo documented students from all grade levels that partnered with agency representatives to plant the seedlings in their school garden.

Ala Wai School is always open for opportunities to extend the learning beyond the walls of the classroom. Partnering with the USDA office in Honolulu provided students an opportunity to learn about the USDA and the services they provide in the community. In addition, NRCS was able to make a connection with our school garden program and the planting of the Abraham Lincoln tomato seeds. Since the

Ala Wai Elementary students pictured left to right: Mari Collins, Ka`imi Mendivel-Perez, and Daniell Stuhlmeier



USDA provides many services, we also utilized the partnership to teach our students about giving back by helping the USDA celebrate its 150th anniversary.

USDA selected this particular school because of its participation with USDA's free/reduced meal program that serves the limited income community in that part of Honolulu. In addition to being a "Blue Ribbon School," Ala Wai Elementary participates in the "Aina in Schools." Aina in Schools aims to grow school gardens and healthy students.

The Ala Wai area is home to over 31,000 residents. Of those residents, 59% are Asian, 14% are multiracial, 7% are Native Hawaiian, 5% are Hispanic, and 1% is African American.

The median household income is \$33,646 and more than 16% of the population is classified as being below the poverty line. It is because of these statistics that USDA is striving hard to provide programs and services to this community.

USDA was at Ala Wai Elementary when the students were planting the seeds. The students walked away feeling a sense of accomplishment and USDA is humbled that Ala Wai's principal, faculty, and students, embraced the 150th anniversary and helped to commemorate the special event in Honolulu, HI.



USDA Offices in Kentucky Celebrate 150th Anniversary



On May 29th, Kentucky Governor Steve Beshear was joined by federal and state officials in the Governor's office for the ceremonial signing of a proclamation celebrating the 150th Anniversary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). Following the signing, the USDA agencies hosted a reception in the Kentucky State Office in Lexington for staff and USDA partners.

Lexington is home to Kentucky's state USDA offices for the Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Rural Development. Kentucky has USDA Service Centers throughout the state to assist farmers and rural communities.

For more information about the USDA and its mission, visit <http://www.usda.gov>. A fact sheet is also available at <http://www.usda.gov/documents/usda-an-every-way-every-day-department.pdf>.

The following individuals attended Governor Steve Beshear's signing of the proclamation celebrating the 150th year anniversary of the USDA (from left to right): James Wilson, General Field Representative, Rural Utilities Service; Tom Fern, State Director, Rural Development; Leland Brown, Director, National Agricultural Statistics Service; Frank R. Beum, Forest Supervisor, Daniel Boone National Forest; Karen Woodrich, State Conservationist, Natural Resources Conservation Service; John W. McCauley, State Executive Director, Farm Service Agency; Roger Thomas, Executive Director, Governor's Office of Agricultural Policy and Governor Steve Beshear (sitting).

AMS Reaching Hispanic Farmers



Karla Whalen & Christopher Purdy, AMS Fruit & Vegetable Program

The Hispanic community is the fastest growing minority group among American producers. According to the 2002 Census of Agriculture, the number of Spanish, Hispanic, Latino, and Puerto Rican-origin farm operators in the United States increased from 33,450 in 1997 to 50,443 in 2002; more than a 50 percent increase. The Agricultural Marketing Service's (AMS) Fruit and Vegetable (F&V) Program wants to make sure that this community is aware of the many services we provide to help them successfully market their fruits and vegetables.

F&V staff includes bilingual personnel located across the country who love to help our customers in their preferred languages, whether in one-on-one sessions or as speakers at farm community meetings. We are continuously developing new outreach tools to help our staff reach an increasingly diverse farming community. Most recently, to support the growing segment of Hispanic farmers, we developed an extensive array of Spanish lan-

guage brochures and online web content to help farmers and others along the produce supply chain better understand the critically important protections offered under the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act (PACA). *

Last year, we held our first-ever Spanish-language webinar, which attracted more than 100 people, including small to medium-sized farming operators. This year, we will hold two new Spanish-language sessions in October. F&V's Fernando Palmer will discuss the value of the free market information available from our Market News service. Patrick Romero will outline the protections offered to farmers under PACA. To see a complete webinar schedule visit us at www.ams.usda.gov/fv.

Our multi-lingual outreach efforts continue to evolve to meet our customers' needs. Watch for more resources – in more languages – to come online at AMS!



Karla Whalen is the Director of the Perishable Agricultural Commodities Act Division. She can be reached at 202-720-4180 or

karla.whalen@ams.usda.gov



Christopher Purdy is the Business Development Specialist for AMS Fruit and Vegetable Program. He can be reached at 202-720-3209 or

christopher.purdy@ams.usda.gov



* To see these resources, visit the PACA site at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/ams.fetchTemplateData.do?>

NRCS Veteran Portrays 19th Century Visionary Legislator Justin S. Morrill in Celebration of USDA's 150th

In the spirit of Cultural Transformation and in recognition of USDA's 150th Anniversary, Jon Vrana, a 36-year Veteran of USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), through the years has presented a unique historical living interpretation of Senator Justin S. Morrill. Morrill was the primary sponsor of the Morrill Act, which Abraham Lincoln signed in 1862, establishing land-grant universities. This legislation provided grants for states willing to make certain land available for use by the federal government to establish a public university with resources for agriculture education. Known as "land-grant" institutions, these new centers of research, expanded by the addition of historically black and tribal institutions of higher learning, can now be found

in all 50 states. Land Grant Universities provided America's working class and minority citizens the first opportunity to pursue higher education.

Dressed in period attire, calling back to the antebellum period and the American Civil War, Vrana recalls a time of great change, personal and political stress and strain, and turmoil in the United States. Presented in the 1st person, he talks about growing up in the mid-19th century in a simple, conservative family and the time spent in the House and Senate, leading the effort to pass the Morrill Act of 1862 with a vision that farmers would have access to the formal education that he wasn't able to receive.

Volunteering his time from his official duties, Vrana presented the living interpretation of Senator Morrill that was included in USDA's 'Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work Day' and the 2012 Smithsonian Folk Life Festival.



Jon Vrana, Natural Resources Manager, NRCS, as Senator Morrill.

In October, Vrana will bring Senator Morrill and USDA's 150th Anniversary to Cincinnati, Ohio, for the Annual International Conference of the American Society of Agronomy, Crop Science Society of America, and the Soil Science Society of America.



Save the Date!

Department-wide Event

National Hispanic Heritage Month

"Diversity United – Building America's Future Today"

Thursday, September 20, 2012

10:00 ~ 11:00 a.m.

Jefferson Auditorium ~ South Building

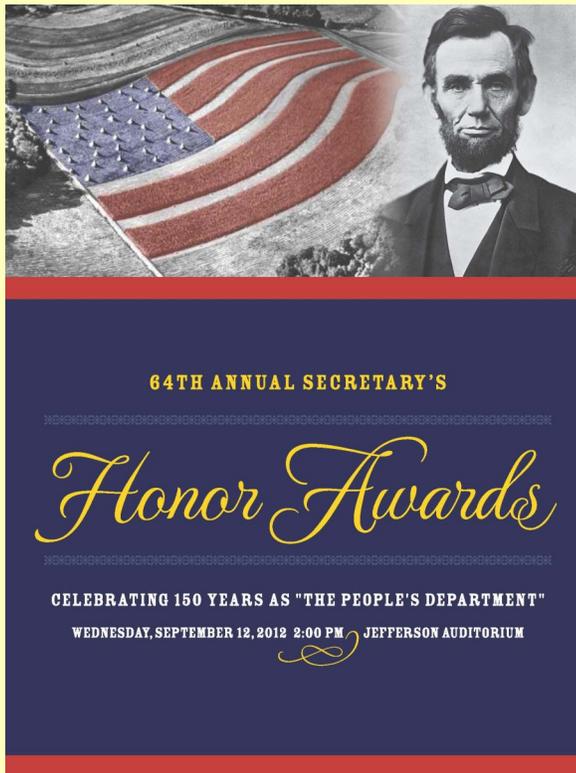
OHRM HOSTS THE 64th ANNUAL SECRETARY'S HONOR AWARDS CEREMONY

*By Anna Johnson-Yeargins
Human Resources Specialist DM/OHRM*

The 64th Annual Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony is fast approaching! The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) cordially invites all agencies and staff offices to attend the ceremony to honor our colleagues and celebrate their accomplishments which have helped USDA meet its missions and goals.

The Secretary's Honor Awards recognizes the highest level of employee achievement—the most prestigious award presented by the Department. Employees at all grade levels are eligible for recognition. This year's theme, **"Celebrating 150 Years as 'The People's Department'"**, reflects President Lincoln's vision for USDA, as well as Secretary Vilsack's goal that the Department's core values be accountability, customer focus, and professionalism. The following 2012 Honor Award categories reflect the Secretary's key priorities:

- ◆ Secretary's Award for assisting rural communities in creating prosperity so they are self-sustaining, repopulating, and economically thriving
- ◆ Secretary's Award for ensuring our National forests and private working lands are conserved, restored, and made more resilient to climate change, while enhancing our water resources
- ◆ Secretary's Award for helping America promote sustainable agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Support Service



- ◆ Secretary's Award for Management Excellence – "Celebrating 150 Years as 'The People's Department'"
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence
- ◆ Secretary's Award for ensuring that all of America's children have access to safe, nutritious, and balanced meals
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Heroism and Emergency Response
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Diversity and Inclusion
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Labor-Management Collaboration

We invite everyone to participate in recognizing this year's honorees.

The ceremony will be held **Wednesday, September 12, 2012 , at 2:00 pm in the Jefferson Auditorium**

Reception to follow in the Witten Patio area

Overflow seating for the ceremony will be available in Rooms 107-A (Whitten Building) and 1605-S (South Building)

AREA OFFICE IN GUAM CELEBRATES CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION DAY

This past month, Cultural Transformation Day for the USDA Rural Development's Area II Office took place at two locations. First, the staff visited the Pacific War Museum before concluding the day at the Latte of Freedom Exhibit.

The site visits provided an opportunity for the Guam staff to obtain a better understanding of Guam Pre- and Post-World War II Era and how this has impacted the community today. The island was controlled by Spain until 1898, when it was surrendered to the United States during the Spanish-American War and later formally ceded as part of the Treaty of Paris.

Moving forward, Guam was captured by the Japanese on December 8, 1941, during World War II, hours after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. After heated battles, Guam was reclaimed over two-and-a-half years later by the United States on July 21, 1944. Accordingly, Guam celebrates its liberation from the Japanese occupation each year on July 21st.

The Pacific War Museum consists of exhibits located in two wings. One wing is dedicated to the U.S. Armed Forces who fought and died on Guam during the liberation of Guam. The other wing is dedicated to the Japanese forces. The staff then proceeded to the Latte of Freedom and Hall of Governor's. Guam's version of the Statue of Liberty, the 65-foot tall latte stone-shaped concrete structure is 20 feet in diameter and has 16-inch thick walls. The Latte of Freedom symbolizes the very proud heritage of the people of Guam. The Hall of Governors commemorates the twelve Guam governors who held office since the

signing of the 1950 Organic Act of Guam until the present day. The Latte of Freedom also hosts the Guam War Survivors Memorial Foundation exhibit, "Real People. Real Stories." The exhibit features accounts of our manamko' (elderly) survivors of the Japanese occupation of Guam.

A wise man once said, "To foretell the destiny of a nation, it is necessary to open the book that tells her past." Liberation Day on Guam is celebrated with an elaborate parade, lots of food, a month-long carnival, and fireworks. By visiting these sites, the staff has a better understanding and appreciation of the true meaning of Guam's Liberation Day beyond the annual festivities.

Most of the staff have never set foot in any of these facilities. The surreal exhibits had such an impact that some of the staff mentioned that they will now be bringing their family over to visit the facilities.

The event afforded staff the opportunity to come together as a group to openly share thoughts, laughter, as well as the opportunity to share ideas with one another to help strengthen our team and build morale.

The goal of Cultural Transformation is ". . . to culturally transform USDA into a high-performing business-oriented workplace where all employees and customers are treated with dignity and respect and provided the opportunity for success." The open communication and camaraderie that the staff was able to enjoy has certainly laid the foundation for a more proficient workplace in support of Cultural Transformation.



Area II Office staff stand in front of two WWI Era Artillery guns at the Pacific War Museum.



Area II Office staff pose at the Latte of Freedom.

UPCOMING ARMED SERVICES BLOOD DRIVES

The Armed Forces and their families need donated blood. The supplies are getting low. If you can make time to donate, The Armed Services Team is very skilled, well-prepared, and organized to facilitate all donations.

Mark your calendars to participate in the last 2 blood drives this year on the Whitten Building patio in Washington, DC:

⇒ **Oct. 24th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

⇒ **Dec. 27th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.**

PLEASE GIVE! – Online Registration Available. Registered donors may log in and new donors may create a profile by visiting: www.militarydonor.com/index.cfm. Enter sponsor code (USDA), and follow the instructions for scheduling an appointment.

For further assistance, contact Charlene Raley, USDA Medical Services, at (202)720-3893 or charlene.raleym@dm.usda.gov. If she is not available, contact Vikki Fernetto, ASBP, at (301) 295-2109 or victoria.fernette@med.navy.mil.

SPECIAL DELIVERY! USDA NURSING MOTHERS PROGRAM UPDATE



USDA rolled out its newly revamped Nursing Mothers Program this August, in recognition of World Breastfeeding Week 2012. The events included a Ribbon Cutting and Re-dedication Ceremony of the recently renovated Nursing Mothers Lactation Room in the South Building of USDA Headquarters in Washington, D.C.

In addition, new and expectant moth-

ers are now able to connect with key information, valuable resources, and success stories from other nursing moms across the Department by visiting the USDA Nursing Mothers sub-community webpage found on the [Work/Life and Wellness](#) online community at USDA Connect. These new resources are designed to help USDA leadership support our working mothers as they transition back to the workplace after the birth of a new baby.

You can learn more about USDA's support for Nursing Mothers by tuning in to Deputy Secretary Merrigan's [story exchange](#) with Cindy Reeves from the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) who discusses NIFA's Nursing Mothers Program and how USDA support for nursing mothers overall, boosts employee morale and retention rates, not to mention the health of children. Be sure to join the [community!](#)

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

worklife@dm.usda.gov



**Are you a current or former
USDA nursing mom with a success
story to share?**

**Send us an email to:
wellness@dm.usda.gov**



DEPUTY SECRETARY MERRIGAN TALKS TELEWORK!



Deputy Secretary Merrigan talks Telework with Morris Tate, a senior manager and longtime Telework advocate at USDA who shares his personal experience about the many benefits of teleworking he's personally seen for both his employees and for the mission of his organization.

From reduced stress and less absenteeism to heightened teamwork and lower transit subsidy costs, everyone wins – including the taxpayer.

Tune in to her [story exchange](#) about how Telework at USDA can save time, money and strengthen work/life balance for USDA employees:

JOIN USDA'S SALUTE TO THE 2012 NATIONAL WORK & FAMILY MONTH

Throughout the month of October, USDA'S [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community is looking for your blog posts, personal photos, stories and testimonials from employees and managers across the Department who have stories to share about the impact Work/Life and Wellness programs have on their ability to successfully balance the demands of career and personal life.

Stay tuned for details about October activities, free webinars and other opportunities to celebrate USDA's support for National Work and Family Month. Be sure to visit often and share your stories and examples on how these programs positively affect your experience as a USDA employee.



SUPERVISOR SHINING STAR AWARD: CALL FOR NOMINATIONS



Do you have a shining example of a USDA supervisor or manager who makes work/life balance a priority? Nominate them today for the Shining Star Award and let's use them as a spokes-model for others to follow!

Send an email to: worklife@dm.usda.gov by **October 1st** with the following details:

1. Your Full Name, Mission Area, Agency, State and Organization
2. Your Supervisor's Full Name, Position Title and Organization
3. How long as a supervisor and how many people he/she currently supervises
4. Description of nomination (You may nominate for one, some or all categories:):
 - a. Telework and Workplace Flexibilities
 - b. Health and Wellness
 - c. General Work/Life Balance
5. Description of the impact this supervisor/manager has had on you, your co-workers or your organization (Please limit to 500 words or less – Photos are welcome too!)

Winners will be posted in upcoming editions of **MyUSDA** and will be featured on the [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community webpage.

ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTIONS PROJECT VTCs & WEBINARS



"MANAGE CHANGE BEFORE IT MANAGES US!"

Secretary Vilsack has challenged every USDA employee to take a close look at the way we do business, partner across agency lines, and share administrative service costs.

The Administrative Solutions Project (ASP) Team will be hosting a series of video teleconferences (VTC) and Webinars with each agency over the next couple months to engage with programmatic and administrative employees across USDA to gather input on how we can improve the ASP process.

Ask yourself these three questions:

Have you ever looked around your office and thought, *"hmm, if we did this differently, we could save money, become more energy efficient, improve customer service, etc."*

Have you ever thought, *"if we could just partner with a neighbor agency, we could save..."*

Have you ever asked, *"Hey, I wonder if any other agency has had to do this before (i.e., new e-system integration or internship programs)"*?

If you answered "yes" to any of the questions above, you will definitely want to hear more about ASP.

Join the ASP Team and Agency leadership for an informal conversation about ASP's commitment to stronger customer service and efficient management of our resources.

Your Agency Leadership will send out specific dates and times, and we will also post them on USDA Connect.

For now, you can read more about ASP through our communication tools below:

USDA Connect: <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/strengtheningservice>

Employee Feedback Mailbox: AdministrativeSolutions@osec.usda.gov

USDA Website: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/asp/>

NRCS Celebrates Very First Diversity Day in Washington State

The Civil Rights Advisory Council (CRAC) is a committee designed to bring people together. Bringing Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees together in Washington State is what they achieved with their first annual "Diversity Day" on July 17, 2012.

The Diversity Day was a concept developed to provide training to NRCS-WA employees on a variety of civil rights topics. Mo Hendrickson, Human Rights, Access and Inclusion Assistant from the University of Idaho at Moscow, kicked off the annual event with training on Safe Spaces and how to be an ally to the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual and Transgender (LGBT) community.

Miles separated over 60 staff members in 15 different locations across the State of Washington, but by using Video Teleconferencing (VTC) technology, all staff had their eyes on Hendrickson. A leader in the LGBT community in the Pacific NW, Hendrickson taught NRCS-WA staff how to become more accepting and understanding when it comes to LGBT issues.

Washington State Conservationist Rylene Rides at the Door and Regional Conservationist Astor Boozer welcomed Hendrickson via VTC with a few words of encouragement and gratitude. Dr. Sharon Nance, NRCS' National LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager, joined the meeting from Fresno, Califor-

nia, also via VTC. Nance highlighted the accomplishments of the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) policy changes affecting the LGBT community, beginning in 1993 with the addition of sexual orientation to the Civil Rights policy by Mike Espy former, Secretary of Agriculture. This change occurred five years prior to the inclusion in the Federal policy by President Bill Clinton.

In 2009, Secretary of Agriculture Thomas Vilsack formally recognized the LGBT community by adding LGBT as a Special Emphasis Program (SEP) and establishing 51 LGBT SEP Managers in each of the NRCS State agencies and Puerto Rico. Then in 2011, Secretary Vilsack added gender identity and gender expression to USDA policy. In 2012, Chief Dave White reiterated this as NRCS policy and also re-issued anti-harassment policy to the Agency's own Civil Rights policy. "Policy without practice is pointless," said Nance in her opening presentation. "Policy only works when supported with actions." Nance went on to clarify that the USDA's goal is not to change people's religious beliefs, but to show compassion, understanding, and support to those we work with and those we recruit, hire, and retain. To drive home this point, Nance shared that NRCS is sponsoring a booth for the first time at the 8th Annual National OUT for Work Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender

College Student Career Conference at the University of Illinois in late September.

Hendrickson's Safe Space and Ally Training was recorded and available for others to view at a later date and time. NRCS-WA employees who attended the training walked away with knowledge of how to become an ally to the LGBT community by taking responsibility for learning, taking risks, speaking out in support, and creating inclusive, welcoming work environments. By following Hendrickson's training, a positive difference can be made.



Pictured (left to right) Mo Hendrickson, Univ of Idaho; Jenifer Coleson, NRCS-WA CRAC Chair; Peter Bautista, NRCS-WA CRAC Manager.

2012 Summer Youth Employment Program a GRAND SLAM!

The District of Columbia Department of Employment Services (DOES) 2012 Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) has come to a positive and productive end. This year approximately 70 percent of DC students aged 14-21 were provided with summer employment opportunities at various employers throughout the metropolitan area. The Federal government provided 851 of these jobs, a substantial increase from 2011 (740) and 2010 (691).

USDA selected 76 students to work for six weeks in various mission area agencies throughout the metropolitan area (an increase of 20% from 2011).

Upon completion of the program, nominations were made from the most outstanding youth participants to be recipients of the **SYEP 2012 Outstanding Youth Award**. Four (4) were selected as the top 100 students to be recognized in a close-out ceremony at DOES HQ on August 3rd. The awardees were presented with a trophy, a certificate, and an opportunity to take a photo with DC Mayor Vincent Gray. Congratulations to Quameisha Staton (DM), Akahlia Thornton (ERS), India Waller (FNS) and Diamond Wren (RD).

DOES has an attainable goal for 1,000 SYEP Federal placements for 2013.

By Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman
OHRM's Diversity, Recruitment, and
Work/Life Division

With support from agencies, USDA can provide even more participation in the Summer 2013 SYEP session. Information on participating in the Summer 2013 SYEP session should be available in early February 2013.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all the USDA mission area agencies for their participation in SYEP and making it a success for 2012.

We look forward to your participation next year.



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](#).

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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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Karen A. Messmore—*Editorial Director*

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

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for September submissions is **Wednesday, September 12, 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