



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

My USDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

May 2011
Volume I, Issue 5

USDA's CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION ACTION ITEMS

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

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A Message from USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack

It took more than half the fiscal year, but we are now operating under a Congressionally approved FY 2011 budget. The uncertainty and worry that preceded a possible government shutdown have now subsided, but we are still working in a fiscally challenging environment. I want to assure you that no matter what happens with the budget, our mission and work continue. That includes my continued commitment to achieving cultural transformation throughout USDA. We will continue to do our jobs, partnering and collaborating in innovative and effective ways to ensure we persevere through these challenging times.

Can you feel the changes? I hope you are taking full advantage of your flexible work hours. Having a say about when your workday begins and ends gives you much-needed flexibility when it comes to important life issues including childcare and elder care.

We have the technology for telework, so I hope that more and more of you will take advantage of that opportunity.

We have a renewed commitment to a diverse and inclusive work-

force, and that's why we are bringing onboard more minorities, veterans and persons with disabilities.

I am proud to work at USDA, and I hope you are, too. That's why I encourage you to make your voice heard if you are selected to complete the OPM FedView Survey (see below). It's an opportunity for you to share how you are benefitting from the cultural transformation.

Are you taking advantage of AgLearn and the new USDA Virtual University? Have you focused on your career development by completing an Individual Development Plan? Do you feel that USDA has a more inclusive atmosphere as a result of the cultural transformation? Let us know via FedView.

We are undergoing many changes throughout the Department, but I want you to know that they are designed with you in mind. The American people receive the best service from Federal employees who know they're making a positive



difference. We are doing that at USDA.

An inclusive and improved workplace allows us to be more responsive to our customers and provide them even more effective service.

I know that a satisfied worker in an inclusive work environment is a much more productive worker. That's my goal for USDA employees and also for the taxpayers we serve. Thank you for the hard work you perform for the American public.

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

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Did You Receive a 2011 FedView Survey? Don't Forget to Fill It Out!

The 2011 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FedView) was emailed to randomly selected Federal employees last week. If you received an invitation to complete the survey from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), take the opportunity to make your voice heard. FedView measures how Federal agencies are managing and engaging the employees who carry out their agency missions. Your response is very important to help USDA meet its Cultural Transformation goals toward becoming an inclusive and high performing organization.

A PROCESS TO RESOLVE DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINTS OF HISPANIC AND WOMEN FARMERS AND RANCHERS: ANOTHER SIGN OF REAL CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION

Under the leadership of Secretary Vilsack, USDA is addressing civil rights complaints that go back decades. Another major step towards achieving that goal occurred in February when the Department announced the establishment of a process to resolve the discrimination claims of Hispanic and women farmers and ranchers. The



Deputy Undersecretary for Rural Development Victor Vasquez

program provides up to \$50,000 for each Hispanic or woman farmer who can show that USDA denied them a loan or loan servicing for discriminatory reasons for certain times between 1981 and 2000.

The claims process offers a streamlined alternative to litigation and provides up to \$1.33 billion in compensation, plus up to \$160 million in farm debt relief, for eligible applicants.

Deputy Undersecretary for Rural Development Victor Vasquez says the initiative is an example of cultural transformation in progress. "In order to transform an organization, you have to look at where we were in the past, where we are in the present, and where we're going in the future. We have to look at the process and re-tool those systems

that promote the current culture, redesigning them into systems that promote the cultural environment we want to have in place.

"The initiative is an alternative and voluntary process that encourages people who feel they've been discriminated against to enter into a process that would allow them some recovery. It's also an acknowledgement from the Secretary that if there was in fact discrimination, we need to correct it and ensure it doesn't continue," Vasquez said.

Individuals interested in participating in the claims process can do so by visiting www.farmerclaims.gov. Participation is voluntary, and individuals who opt not to participate are not precluded by the program from filing a complaint in court.

FNS SNAP ESTABLISHES CULTURAL TRANSFORMATION "SUNSHINE" COMMITTEE

In November 2010, the staff from the FNS Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formed a Cultural Transformation action group called the Sunshine Committee. The Committee was established to plan various employee focused activities including professional development on a monthly basis.

On February 9, the Sunshine Committee hosted a brown bag peer training session as part of the professional development initiative. The session was facilitated by the SNAP Associate Administrator, Jessica Shahin, and focused on "Improving Your Writing." All SNAP employees in the area were invited. Approximately 40 staff participated. The session proved to be a great success. SNAP staff learned specific writing techniques and identified additional writing tools and resources all could utilize. An interactive approach to the learning process allowed participants to share strategies, technical tools, and peer review success stories as well as express challenges they face.

By Jackie Windfeldt



The Sunshine Committee also organized a continental breakfast hosted by the SNAP Associate Administrator's Office on March 24. As the largest program within FNS, SNAP recognizes that each employee has unique talents and abilities. This event, part of the talent management initiative, provided an informal forum for SNAP staff to learn more about one another and the work done across the program. Staff members contributed homemade breakfast treats and were asked to share something unique about themselves.

The Sunshine Committee has additional leadership, professional development, and talent management activities on the horizon. These activities target specific areas of interest that staff members have identified and will be additional meaningful steps toward Cultural Transformation.

WHAT DO YOU THINK? MESSAGES FROM USDA EMPLOYEES

HOW YOUR WORK MAKES A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIVES OF EVERY AMERICAN

By Perry Stevens

A prominent article in the April 11, 2011, edition of the *Washington Post* featured public reaction to a possible government shutdown. In the story, an Oklahoma attorney said the idea of a shutdown didn't bother him because "I'm not sure what they do has a big impact on my life."

Reading that was frustrating because it appears to be the attitude of many Americans, and I know that it's a serious misconception. The U.S. Government represents the American people, and we as civil servants are committed to serving them well. The comment bothered me so much that I was compelled to make a list—a partial list—of just what kind of impact we at USDA have on the lives of ordinary Americans.

- ◆ We can all go to work or school every morning secure in the knowledge that our breakfasts, like all our other meals, are safe to eat because their ingredients have been inspected by Federal employees at the Animal Plant and Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS).
- ◆ 31 million children would go hungry each school day without USDA's School Lunch Program, which provides some children the only meal they will get for the day. Hungry kids are able to get free or reduced price (40 cents) lunches. It takes the pinch off a family's budget and the child gets good nutrition—and it's not just the School Lunch Program. USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) also has School Breakfast, Afterschool Snack, the Child and Adult Care Food Program, and the Summer Food Program for Children.
- ◆ Nearly ten million women have healthier babies each year thanks to the Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC). New moms are getting the proper nourishment along with nutrition counseling, breastfeeding counseling, and referrals for pre-natal visits, food pantries, fuel assistance, drug and alcohol counseling, and numerous other health resources. WIC's tremendous impact on ordinary Americans cannot be underestimated. One out of every two babies born in the US is a WIC baby.
- ◆ The supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly known as "Food Stamps," is helping millions of Americans in a difficult economy. Although SNAP provides an important support for working families, the working poor has participated at rates that are substantially below those for all eligible persons, so we could be helping even more, and that's why we have implemented an outreach program to increase program participation.
- ◆ The USDA provides loan assistance through the Farm Services Administration (FSA) to pay expenses such as the upfront cost of the planting cycle (seed, fuel, labor). Without these loans, many producers would be unable to plant their crops. Reduced

crop acreage would lead to reduced production. Reduced production would lead to higher prices for commodities. Higher commodity prices would result in higher prices for commodity processing and for livestock feed. Our work makes a difference, and if it stopped, we would all notice, and most Americans' lives would be much more difficult without USDA.

- ◆ Hundreds of communities around the nation directly benefit from USDA's administration of Public Law 566, which provides dam structures that were built for flood protection, water supply, and, in some cases, recreation. With the recent flash flooding in several parts of the country, these structures have silently functioned to reduce or prevent damage to property and prevent the loss of life caused by rapidly rising water. You can thank USDA's Natural Resources and Conservation Service (NRCS) for keeping these communities safe.

And this is just a partial list. I didn't even touch on the millions of acres protected by Forest Service firefighters, or the National Finance Center's (NFC) operation of the insurance program that covers federal employees who leave federal service along with their non-federal spouses and children.

I didn't talk about how the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) researches different markets for agricultural products and enterprises or how Rural Development (RD) provides financing opportunities for rural communities to expand and develop, making sure that rural people have the same options found in larger cities. There are so many examples that I can't list them all.

So be proud that you are an employee of the United States Federal Government and of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. When you come to work and do your job every day,

know that you are directly improving the lives of your fellow Americans—even if they don't always recognize it.



Perry Stevens is the Editor-in-Chief of My USDA. Special thanks to Ralph Smith, Carter Harris, Ed Peterman, Roseanne Luvisi, Karlease Kelly, Patricia Bachemin, Larry Durant, Anita Adkins, Mika Cross, Bill Aley, and Monshi Ramdass for contributing to this article.

Share your pride in USDA with a message of your own to fellow employees. What do you think? Send an email to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov and let us know.

¿Qué Pasa? NRCS Recruits at Hispanic Serving Institutions

By Jacqueline Padrón, National Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, NRCS

In an effort to actively seek the best talent from the diverse communities that we serve and increase Hispanic representation at NRCS, we have partnered with several Hispanic Serving Institutions. These are universities with a high percentage of His-



A student enters background information into the database.

panic and minority students, and strong agriculture, engineering, science, and technology programs.

NRCS' Hispanic recruitment cadre contin-



The NRCS recruitment cadre visits with students during a classroom visit.

ues to gain success through utilization of strong ties to campus involvement. Our established relationships with the universities allow NRCS to have a presence in classrooms while on campuses for recruitment fairs. Classroom visits were arranged prior to the campus career fairs. Recruitment teams also hosted events for Ag related student groups such as Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences (MANRRS), so that students would have additional access to staff members. This year, over 1,000 students met with NRCS staff during the fall career fairs.

Based on the visits to these universities, we created a database with 195 qualified students, including minorities and women. Students listed on the database were interviewed and recommended by NRCS recruitment teams. Students' resumes, interview score sheets, and transcripts are scanned and available for review by selecting officials. The Fall Career Fairs Student Database was shared with NRCS leaders and other relevant areas of NRCS.

Already this year, 14 students have been offered internship positions and six students from the databases have been hired as permanent employees. An analysis of the FY 2010 career fairs revealed that 61% of the Hispanic Career Intern Program (CIP) students hired, 50% of the Hispanic Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) students hired, and 41% of the Hispanic Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) students hired can be directly traced back to



Erasmus Montemayor (left), NCRS-TX HEPM, talks with Julian Vela (center), hired as a SCEP, and Ruben Riojas (right) a permanent hire.

the career fair databases and HEPM efforts.

Moreover, of the 68 Hispanic new hires (permanent and temporary) in FY 2010, 38% can be directly traced back to the career fair databases and HEPM efforts. Of the Hispanic permanent new hires, 45% were from the databases, and 25% of the temporary employees were from the databases. An additional 16 new hire employees identified as non-Hispanic can also be traced back to the career fair databases.

The databases proved to be excellent sources to recruit and hire new employees. If you would like more information about this initiative, please contact Marvis Montesano, Director, Talent Management at marvis.montesano@wdc.usda.gov or Jacqueline Padron, National HEPM at jacqueline.padron@wdc.usda.gov.



One of NRCS' Recruitment Teams

NRCS was a major sponsor at the National American Indian Science and Engineering Fair (NAISEF) that took place in Albuquerque, New Mexico, March 24 through March 26, 2011. NRCS is both an Amber and Circle of Support Partner sponsor for the American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) NAISEF event. Other sponsors at the event included Navy, 3M, IBM, Intel, Central Intelligence Agency, Chevron, and American Honda Foundation.

NRCS Participates in the National American Indian Science and Engineering Fair

Two-hundred fifty eight 5th grade through 12th grade students participated in the NAISEF. Fourteen states were represented at the conference. Ninety nine volunteer judges reviewed subject disciplines that included Animal Sciences, Environmental Management, Environmental Sciences, Plant Sciences, and several others.

AISES is a national, nonprofit organization which nurtures community development by bridging science and technology with traditional values. Through its educational programs, AISES provides opportunities for American Indians and Alaska Natives to pursue studies in science, engineering, and technology arenas. AISES' ultimate goal is to be a catalyst for the advancement of American Indians and Native Alaskans as they become self-reliant and self-determined members of society.

NRCS sponsorship for this science fair helps provide the support AISES needs as they move forward to provide educational and career opportunities for American Indians and Alaska Native students across the Nation.



Ron Hilliard, NRCS State Conservationist for Oklahoma, was a Special Awards judge.



Carol Crouch, NRCS-OK (left) visits with students at the NRCS booth.



NRCS-UT Engineer Nathaniel Todea and his judging team at work



NRCS-TX Engineer Johnny Green (left) was the lead Engineering Judge.

Team Judge Roger Ford of NRCS-NM makes final judging calculations.

The entire team of NRCS judges after a job well done!



Cliff Sanchez with NRCS-NM was the lead judge for Environmental Sciences.



USDA Recruits DC Youth from Summer Youth Employment Program

By Lina Woo and Michelle Jordan

The District of Columbia Office of Employment Services (DOES) hosted a Career Exploration Fair for DC Mayor Vincent Gray's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) on April 20-22, 2011. USDA Diversity and Recruitment staff along with ambassadors from throughout the Department shared materials and information with about 12,000 students aged 14-21. The 2011 SYEP Career Fair provides host employers with an opportunity to screen, recruit, and interact with youth participants in person, and to provide additional information about their agency/organization.

USDA staff shared information with DC Youth aged 14-15 about the vast USDA student opportunities they will be able to apply for when they turn 16. Youth aged 16-17 were informed of the USDA employment opportunities that are currently available to them after their SYEP experience at USDA throughout the calendar year. Due to the extra background requirements of the DC Metropolitan Police Department for working with youth under 18 years old, USDA elected to recruit from the pool of youth ages 18-21 for

Summer 2011. Host supervisors will be surveyed at the end of the summer to see if they would be willing to take students younger than 18 years old for Summer 2012. All students were given the USDA Student Employment Opportunities Fact Sheets, USDA Agency Descriptions List and a list of Federal Jobs By College Majors. Youth ages 18-21 were also given a takeaway document that summarized the 65 USDA vacancy announcements/job descriptions that were submitted by the USDA host supervisors on March 18, 2011.

This locally funded initiative is administered by the District of Columbia Office of Employment Services. The Summer Youth Employment Program was well received by a record number of USDA-wide host supervisors (45) who will employ approximately 65 students at a cost savings of \$85,000 in wages to the Federal government. The Summer 2010 campaign had a total of ten students working throughout USDA. As an employer of choice, USDA will provide meaningful internship experiences to DC Youth who will be exposed to the myriad of ways in which USDA touches lives every day in every way.

ANSWERING QUESTIONS ABOUT THE 2011 FedView Survey

By Mary Jo Thompson

As
Secretary

Vilsack mentioned on page one, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) has begun administering the 2011 Federal Employee Viewpoint (FedView) Survey to approximately 26,000 permanent full-time USDA employees. If you were selected to participate, please complete the survey by Tuesday, May 31, 2011.

FedView focuses on employee perceptions regarding critical areas of their

work life, areas which drive employee satisfaction, commitment and, ultimately, retention in the workforce. Employees who receive an invitation to participate are encouraged to take the survey – **your responses are IMPORTANT!** Employee feedback is an essential component in continuing the momentum already achieved through USDA's Cultural Transformation Initiative.

There are 84 basic questions, 11 demographic questions and three USDA-specific questions on the

survey, which takes about 25 minutes to complete. Electronic versions of the survey include the three USDA specific questions, but the paper surveys that are sent to employees without electronic access will not be individualized.

OPM will distribute the government-wide survey results to Departments and Agencies at the end of September 2011. USDA agencies will publish summary USDA results and specific agency results within 120 days of receiving them from OPM.

Do you have more questions about the 2011 Fed View? Contact Mary Jo Thompson at maryjo.thompson@dm.usda.gov or your agency contact below:

Marcus Brownrigg (DM) – marcus.brownrigg@dm.usda.gov
 Joe Miyganka (FAS) – joseph.miyganka@fas.usda.gov
 Keisha Valentine (FSA) – Keisha.valentine@wdc.usda.gov
 Joanna Barlow (FSA) – Joanna.barlow@wdc.usda.gov
 Laree Edgecombe (FS) – ledgecombe@fs.fed.us
 Leslie Violette (NRCS) – leslie.violette@wdc.usda.gov
 Cecilia Matthews (FSIS) – cecilia.matthews@fsis.usda.gov
 Geoffrey Gay (FNS) – Geoffrey.gay@usda.gov
 Nancy Varichak (MRP) – nancy.c.varichak@aphis.usda.gov

If you haven't read previous issues of MyUSDA, here's your chance!

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MyUSDA Column

Diversity & Disabilities

By Alison Levy

USDA Disability Employment Program Manager

Welcome to the new "Diversity & Disabilities" column. A cornerstone of our USDA Cultural Transformation effort is to increase employment of individuals with disabilities. This column will include information, resources, and success stories from throughout USDA that will be shared to support this initiative.

USDA Plan to Increase Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

The USDA Plan is designed to achieve the following five core goals as required by Executive Order 13548. Each goal includes individuals with disabilities, and those with targeted disabilities.

- ◆ Increase the use of the Schedule A Hiring Authority and the number of new hires who have disabilities.

- ◆ Increase the number of student interns with disabilities.
- ◆ Improve and expand professional development and advancement opportunities that are accessible and include employees with disabilities.
- ◆ Increase retention rates of employees with disabilities
- ◆ Expedite the return to work of seriously injured and ill employees

Reporting Requirements

Secretary Vilsack is closely monitoring USDA's progress through weekly reports on the hiring of student interns with disabilities and through bi-weekly reports on permanent hires of individuals with disabilities. The

following two resources may help you in achieving our collective goals.

USDA Goal: 2% of Our Interns will be Students with Disabilities

The Federal Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) is a free database of pre-screened, rated, and interviewed students from across the United States. Visit the web site to request a password and to select from over 2,300 students currently enrolled in undergraduate or law school programs.

Office of Personnel Management's Shared List of Applicants with Disabilities

Hiring Managers and Human Resources Staff now have access to a free list of applicants with disabilities who are eligible for hire using the non-competitive Schedule A hiring authority. To access the list:

- ◆ Visit the MAX Portal at: <https://max.omb.gov/community/x/SpEZIQ> and register for a MAX ID.
- ◆ To find the list, after logging in, type in the search box, OPM Shared List of People with Disabilities. Then save the page as a favorite for future use.

The list includes applicants from a range of professions. For more information on how to access or use the list, contact your Agency Disability Employment Program Manager or contact me at the email address below.

We Need You!

Please email your questions, success stories, and resources to the USDA Disability Employment Program Manager, Alison Levy at alison.levy@dm.usda.gov by the second Monday of each month.

SUCCESS STORY: Disability Awareness Training in Arizona

By Janice Hahn, State Administrative Officer, NRCS-Arizona

In an effort to help our employees in Arizona understand disabilities and how to interact with those with disabilities, we hosted a training with a local disability consultant on December 1, 2010. The trainer educated us on the correct terminology to use when referring to those with a disability. She taught us that we should always put people first: the correct terminology is "people with a disability" or people who are blind or people with autism or a person who uses a wheel chair.

We watched a great video called "The Ten Commandments of Communicating with People with Disabilities" by Irene M. Ward and Associates. These are just a few of the points taken from the video:

- ◆ Speak directly rather than through a companion or interpreter who may be present.
- ◆ Always identify yourself and others who may be with you when meeting someone with a visual disability.
- ◆ If you offer assistance, wait until the offer is accepted.
- ◆ Treat adults as adults.
- ◆ Never patronize people in wheelchairs by patting them on the head or shoulder. Do not lean against or hang on someone's wheelchair. Place yourself at eye level when speaking to someone in a wheelchair.
- ◆ Listen attentively when talking with people who have difficulty speaking. Never pretend to understand, instead repeat what you have understood and allow the person to respond.

We all got the message to treat people with disabilities with respect. In addition, we learned that a high number of people have disabilities and others may not be able to discern that the person has a disability. We had a life-enriching experience. Our job now is to share and apply what we learned.

An Important Partnership: Civil Rights and OHRM

Annually, all federal Agencies must report their accomplishments for establishing and maintaining effective affirmative programs of equal employment opportunity under Section 717 of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, (Part A), and Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, (Part B). Agency accomplishments are reported to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) through the MD-715 Report.

The overriding objective of the MD-715 report is to ensure that all employees and applicants for employment enjoy equality of opportunity in the federal workplace regardless of race, sex, national origin, color, religion, disability or reprisal for engaging in prior protected activity.

In 2010, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR), which has the responsibility for preparing USDA's MD-715 Report and its submission to the EEOC organized in cooperation with the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) and each of the USDA Agencies and Staff Offices, the MD-715 Working Group. The MD-715 Working Group is comprised of civil rights practitioners, human resources personnel, and special emphasis program managers. Together the Working Group is committed to enhancing

human resource policies and practices to develop USDA's workforce into becoming more representative of the national population with the necessary skills to ensure continued and improved delivery of service to the American public. The mission of the Working Group is consistent with Secretary Thomas Vilsack's Cultural Transformation initiative to recruit, hire, and promote a diverse and high-performing workforce that leads to the transformation of USDA into a model EEO organization.

Members of the MD-715 Working Group meet once monthly with the USDA, EEOC Liaison to discuss the various challenges to making USDA a model EEO employer as outlined by MD-715's six essential elements of a model EEO program:

1. Demonstrated Commitment From USDA's Leadership;
2. Integration of EEO into the Agency's Strategic Mission;

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and the Office of Human Resources Management Partner on MD-715 Working Group

By Ali Muhammad

3. Management and Program Accountability;
4. Proactive Prevention of Unlawful Discrimination;
5. Efficiency; and
6. Responsiveness and Legal Compliance

Currently, the MD-715 Working Group has two standing committees: Disability and Best Practices. The Best Practices committee has identified through departmental agencies some best practices for developing a model EEO program. The MD-715 Working Group has also provided the membership with key presentations by the OHRM's Disability, Veterans and Recruitment Program managers. To more effectively understand the challenges of establishing USDA as a model EEO employer, the EEOC liaison has provided the Working Group with training on barrier analysis and barrier elimination.

The new partnership between the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights and the Office of Human Resources Management has resulted in a combined working group devoted to ensuring Management Directive 715—which is designed to make sure the Federal workforce looks more like America—is achieved throughout the Department.



What Is the Employee Assistance Program?

By Gerry Nagel

An employee assistance program, or EAP, is an employer-sponsored service that helps employees deal with emotional, behavioral and well-being issues that may affect their work. These services are offered free of charge on a short-term basis to the employee and the employee's immediate family members who reside in the household of the employee (spouse, children, domestic partner, legal dependents) and children who are students away at school but are dependents.

The EAP objectives are:

- ◆ Consultation to managers, supervisors and labor representatives to improve employee job performance affected by personal problems, challenges or behavioral health issues.
- ◆ Provide high quality assessment, short-term problem solving, referral and follow-up services for employees and family members (where appropriate) covered by the EAP.

◆ Empower employees to resolve personal problems that impact or may impact conduct and work performance in the quickest, least restrictive, most convenient and cost-effective manner possible.

- ◆ Provide comprehensive EAP services that deliver short-term, problem-focused counseling along with a variety of services using professional counselors.

EAP services are:

Counseling – Licensed/certified counselors with a master's degree or higher and current State license/certification to practice as a mental health counselor. Access is available 24 hours per day/7 days a week.

Risk Management Consultation – Consultation and guidance to assist in constructively confronting employees regarding job performance, attendance, and/or behavioral problems, and in referring employees to the EAP.

EAP Orientation – On request, provide employee orientation about range of services and access to the EAP.

Health Promotion and Education – On request, EAP will conduct programs of health promotion and education with emphasis on job performance issues and problems.

Critical Incident Stress Management – EAP will provide consultation to management officials in the development of plans for handling and responding to traumatic events. They will provide counseling services to employees who have experienced a traumatic event to decrease emotional stress and increase overall employee functioning.

Legal Services – Licensed attorney, who practice in the applicable state, will provide consultation and referral services for a wide range of legal issues: healthcare power of attorney; Living Wills; housing or real estate matters; estate planning; Family law, divorce, child custody/support; identity theft; car accidents; consumer concerns; criminal matters; small claims court issues; and traffic violations.

Financial Services – Qualified financial consultants provide telephonic consultation on general financial issues: tax information; credit card debt management; family budgeting; college planning; home buying; setting financial goals; debt consolidation; savings and investment strategies; and retirement planning.

Further information on the EAP specific services provided by each Agency can be requested by contacting your respective Human Resources Office and asking for the Employee Assistance Coordinator.

TAKE YOUR CHILD TO WORK DAY EVENT DRAWS HUNDREDS

More than 300 children participated in this year's Take Your Child to Work Day event held on April 28, 2011 at the Whitten Patio in Washington, DC. Dozens of exhibitors from throughout the Department allowed the children to get a



sense of what it is their parents do at work. At the GIPSA booth, Joseph (center) along with his mom, Jennifer, (who works at FAS) gets a hands-on demonstration while his friend Leonard (whose mom works at FSA) waits for his turn. More than 30 exhibitors and six farmers market vendors participated in the successful event.



USDA Agencies Requested to Submit Nominations for the 2011 Secretary's Honor Awards

By Anna Johnson-Yeargins

The 63rd Annual Secretary's Honor Awards Ceremony is coming up, and the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) is encouraging agencies and mission areas to participate. The ceremony is one of the best ways to recognize employees and celebrate their accomplishments for helping USDA meet its missions and goals.

The Secretary's Honor Awards recognize the highest level of employee achievement, which is why they are the most prestigious awards presented by the Department. Employees at all grade levels are eligible for recognition. The theme this year is "A Modern Workplace with a Modern Workforce" which represents and ensures USDA attracts and retains a high-performing workforce, well-equipped for today's mission, and well-prepared for tomorrow's challenges.

Secretary Vilsack invites agencies to submit nominations for the 63rd Annual Secretary's Honor Awards. The ceremony will be held late summer, in the Jefferson Auditorium, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW., Washington, DC. The official date will be announced soon.

The 2011 Honor Award categories reflect the Secretary's key priorities:

- ◆ Secretary's Award for assisting rural communities to create 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 helping America promote sustainable agricultural production and biotechnology exports as America works to increase food security
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Management Excellence – A Modern Workplace with a Modern Workforce
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Personal and Professional Excellence
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Support Service
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Heroism and Emergency Response
- ◆ Secretary's Award for Diversity

Nomination process:

Each Agency may submit four nominations, and Departmental Staff Offices may submit two nominations. Group nominations are

limited to a maximum of 35 employees. The instructions and Honor Award Nomination form AD-495 (used for submitting an Honor Award nomination) are available online at http://www.ocio.usda.gov/forms/ocio_forms.html.

All nominations are due no later than May 23, 2011, to:

*Office of Human Resources Management
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Jamie L. Whitten Building
Room 302-W
Washington, D.C. 20250-0103.*

For additional information, contact Anna Johnson at (202) 690-5991 or email at Anna.Johnson-Yeargins@dm.usda.gov.

If you'd like to share your feedback about the Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of worklife 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 Connect.

My USDA Staff:

Karen A. Messmore—Editorial Director

William P. Milton, Jr.—Deputy Editorial Director

Perry Stevens—Editor-in-Chief

Mika Cross—Lead Editor

Melanie Clemons, Robin DeCecco, Zina B. Sutch—Editors

Key Contributors:

Jacqueline Padron, Karlease Kelly, Jackie Windfeldt, Frank Clearfield, Janice Hahn, Michelle Jordan, Lina Woo, Mary Jo Thompson, Gerry Nagel, Anna Johnson-Yeargins, Ali Muhammad, Monshi Ramdass, Anita Adkins, Alison Levy, Bonnie Fauber

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



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