



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

**USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items**

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

**Inside this issue:**

**Feds Feed Family Volunteers Hard at Work 2**

**AMS Interns Take Taste Test 3**

**A Perspective on Leadership Training 4**

**ARS and FSIS Have "Grizzly Run" 4**

**USDA's Summer Youth Employment Program 5**

**Monarchs in the Cotton Patch 6**

**HR Quick Facts: Mentoring 7**

# MyUSDA

## A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 6, Issue 11

August 2016

### **USDA Response to FEVS Much Greater Than Government-Wide Average**

By Ingrid Burfurd, Office of Human Resources Management

The 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) closed to USDA employees on June 8, 2016. Because of the great participation by USDA employees, we responded at more than 15% above the government-wide average with a response rate of 61.3%!

Your feedback and input will help to build an even stronger People's Department and ensure USDA continues to be one of the best places to work.

If you have any questions, please contact James Brent at [James.Brent@dm.usda.gov](mailto:James.Brent@dm.usda.gov) for more information.



### **2016 Feds Feed Families Campaign Wraps Up**

By Chelsea L. Buckley, Food Safety and Inspection Service

The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Denver District collected 1,310 pounds of non-perishable food donations in June and 708.4 pounds in July for the 2016 Feds Feed Families campaign. They were among the many USDA offices who volunteered to glean or donate food to help feed children and families during the summer.



Pictured left: Feds Feed Families donations from FSIS inspection program personnel in Schuyler, Nebraska. (Photo by Dennis Houghtelling)

Pictured right: FSIS Consumer Safety Inspectors Michael Trimmer (left) and Richard Jackson (right) with donations for FFF in Nebraska City, Nebraska. (Photo by Chelsea Buckley)

## USDA Employees Have Shown Great Commitment to FFF

Dozens of USDA employees joined with fellow volunteers from the General Services Administration and other Federal agencies last month to glean at the Mid-Atlantic Gleaning Network (MAGNET) in Cheltenham, MD.

Assistant Secretary for Administration Dr. Gregory L. Parham (pictured far left in the first image below) worked alongside dozens of USDA employees, including 2016 FFF Campaign Chair Sabrina Ferguson-Ward (first image, center), to help MAGNET make food available to hungry and food insecure families.



Do you have an article to submit to *MyUSDA*?

You can email [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov) with submissions. They may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity or event demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items.

- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Recruitment & Retention
- ◆ Talent Management
- ◆ Employee Development
- ◆ Customer Focus & Community Outreach

## Shaping New Leaders: A Trainee's Perspective

By Sharon Peredis, Food Safety and Inspection Service



Sharon Peredis

Imagine that, for whatever reason, you're watching your life pass by before your eyes. Is it worth watching? That is the question I left with from the 2016 Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Leadership Exploration and Development Program Pilot. This is a question I will now always ask myself as I progress within FSIS and my personal life. Ninety applicants throughout FSIS competed for thirty positions. Attendees were chosen by an independent contractor based on answers to essay questions pertaining to leadership. The first non-supervisory leadership conference for GS 8, 9 and 10s was held July 25-29, 2016, in Alexandria, Virginia. It's just a twenty minute subway ride to our nation's capital, Washington DC!

Kimberly Mounce and Adrian Vaughan, Training and Program Analysis Specialists, were just as excited hosting the conference as all of us were to be there. The conference gave us a boost that was greatly needed and provided helpful, enlightening strategies. One of the strategies I learned was to examine myself first. The training was unlike any I have received so far. It was engaging, challenging, and thought provoking. I will continue to use and develop the skills I learned not only at work but also in my personal life. The experience, memories, and moments shared with fellow employees will never be forgotten. I left the conference wanting to be a better person. That says it all.

## AMS Interns Take Taste Test

By Charles W. Parrott, Agricultural Marketing Service



Richard Boyd gives AMS interns a "taste" of what he does as Contract Services Branch Chief with Specialty Crops Inspection Division. One of his duties involves tasting and testing food that will be used in Meals-Ready-to-Eat (MREs) for troops around the world as well as food humanitarian assistance work. Richard described the process of testing the food and how they have changed the menus based on feedback from their end users.

Specialty Crops Inspection Division Contract Services Branch Chief Richard Boyd explains the process behind inspecting MREs to AMS Interns Souhair El-Omari, center, and Ariel Zagala.

*(Photo by Ken Melton)*

### Upcoming Observance at USDA

#### National Disability Awareness Month

**Tuesday, September 27, 2016**

**10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, DC**

**View recordings from many of USDA's Special Observances at**

**<http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.htm>.**

***Employees receive one hour of diversity training for each USDA Special Observance attended.***

## ARS and FSIS Employees Enjoy “Grizzly” Walk/Run

By Vincent Marquez, Food Safety and Inspection Service

In celebration of “Employee Wellness Day,” a group of Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) employees in Albany, CA, participated in the “19th Annual Grizzly Peak Walk/Run” last month.

The 2.7 mile course starts at the Albany ARS Western Regional Building and has an elevation climb of 963’ up to the Berkeley Hills.

This annual event is sponsored by the Albany USDA Club. Vince Marquez, Western Region Director of the USDA Running/Walking Club (RWC), said, “It was a very challenging event, given the elevation gain, but the thrill was the spectacular San Francisco/Bay area views from the top of Berkeley Hills.”

A special congratulations to our senior participants, FSIS Resource Management Analyst Ms. Joan Wu, 69, and ARS Research Chemist Mr. Kahlon Talwinder, 71, who came in first in his category beating his last years’ time of 42:26. As next year is the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, we look forward to more employees participating in this walking/running challenge.

USDA RWC was founded by employees to connect colleagues from across all USDA agencies. The RWC is a USDA Welfare and Recreation Organization and its mission is to promote the benefits of running and walking for health, recreation and competition to all members of the USDA family.

USDA RWC holds monthly meetings, training activities, and other events that are conducive to a healthy lifestyle.

If you want to receive additional information about the RWC and its events, please contact RWC President Dora.Flores@ams.usda.gov, or visit the RWC’s USDA Connect page (e-Auth or LincPass required) at <https://connections.usda.gov/communities/community/usdarunningandwalkingclub>



## Forest Service Employees Celebrate Multiculturalism

By Nicole Ebberhart, U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service Civil Rights DC Service Team and the Albuquerque Service Center Special Emphasis Program Managers hosted the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Multicultural Event in Albuquerque, presenting 40 tables representing countries from around the world. The event celebrated diversity and inclusion by bringing employee awareness to different countries, traditions, and food, and through cultural awareness tables, live music, and food tasting. Over 275 employees attended from various local Federal agencies and local cultural groups.

So that we can better enjoy the diversity of our workforce, the team looks forward to hosting the event again next year to provide more insight into the variety of customs and traditions that are practiced around the world.



## USDA Supports Local Youth Summer Employment

By Michelle Jordan, Office of Human Resources Management

USDA continues to provide summer career exploration opportunities that directly link students with academic and occupational learning. From the end of June through early August, diverse students aged 16-24, many of whom are pictured below, worked 25-40 hours per week at USDA offices throughout Washington, DC and Maryland.

For the past six years, the majority of the students were hosted from the DC Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). For the last three years, the USDA has been the only Federal department to host students from the Prince Georges County Youth@ Work – Summer Youth Enrichment Program (PG-SYEP). Those students have conducted their learning experiences in both our Riverdale and Beltsville offices. The partnership was forged two years ago to host students from the Montgomery County Summer Youth Connect Internship Program (MC-SYCIIP).

Approximately 120 summer youth employment programs have been identified as being in the local commuting area of USDA Mission Areas, Agencies, and Offices throughout the United States. There is little to no cost for participating as a host worksite.

For more details on utilizing these programs in Summer 2017, please contact the DM Recruitment Program Manager, Michelle Jordan at [students@dm.usda.gov](mailto:students@dm.usda.gov).



# Monarchs in the People's Garden

By Jeffrey Carnahan, Agricultural Marketing Service

The Agriculture Marketing Service (AMS) Cotton and Tobacco Program's USDA People's Garden project has responded to the nationwide call to action to restore the Monarch butterfly habitat in Memphis, TN.

This season, in addition to the main crop of sweet potatoes, several milkweeds and other assorted flower species were planted as part of our plan to establish an oasis for Monarch butterflies and other pollinators. Our initial goal to assist those in need in our community now extends to creatures that help beautify the world around us. Since its inception in 2012, our community garden effort has resulted in the delivery of a total of 1,958 pounds of fresh produce to the Mid-South Food Bank. A total of 58 volunteers (24 AMS employees and 34 community members) have participated in various activities in support of the People's Garden.

Click the link for more information on U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's "Save the Monarch Butterfly" campaign:

<https://www.fws.gov/savethemonarch/>.



## Forest Service Outreach and Teamwork: Hearing from a Partner

By Beth Pfeiler, President of United Trail Maintainers of California

United Trail Maintainers of California (UTMC) and the Los Padres National Forest have partnered to support the USDA's Cultural Transformation Initiative by implementing a new program in volunteering aimed at increasing diversity in the USFS volunteer workforce. Non-governmental organizations that work with the Forest Service have a shared responsibility with their agency counterparts in striving to create an environment in which all employees and volunteers are treated with dignity and respect. By doing so, partner organizations can help the Forest Service eliminate discrimination against minorities, women, and people with disabilities in employment and other agency programs.



Michael Spalding, a volunteer from the United Trail Maintainers of California, uses a grip hoist to pull a tree off a trail.

UTMC partnered with the Lancaster Outreach Center, a local Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) community non-profit organization as well as Gay/Straight Alliances in high schools that serve LGBT youth and their supporters. The Center formed the "GET OUT!" program, hosting outdoor events such as hiking and camping while making time to include trail maintenance.

UTMC and Los Padres then teamed up to become co-sponsors of the local LGBT Pride event for 2016. Pride events are special observances that promote the self-affirmation, dignity, and equal rights of the LGBT community while increasing their visibility as a social group.

The theme of the event was "Glow with Pride." Glow in the dark camping tattoos were given to children visiting the UTMC/USFS booth.

Sunscreen and water bottles were distributed to the public as well as free Off-Highway Vehicle trail maps donated by the California Trail Users Coalition.

UTMC implores other USFS partners to think about how they can engage the LGBT community in ways that encourage more volunteer efforts. Demonstrate your support by communicating a commitment to inclusion, perhaps by participating in or co-sponsoring LGBT events. We recognize that helping to create diversity in the workforce is critical to generating new ideas and inspiring innovative solutions to the many challenges the USFS faces today.

## Mentoring Facts from the Office of Human Resources Management

### HR Quick Facts:



#### **What is mentoring** and why is it important?

Information and Eligibility:

- Mentoring is an exchange of knowledge and information from an experienced employee to one who wants to learn and grow. All employees are eligible to be a mentor or a protégé.

Mentoring is important because it:

- Transfers learning quickly.
- Provides guidance and history about complex processes.
- Helps employees develop as professionals and increases their effectiveness.
- Builds and expands an employee's career networks.

Source: Federal Workforce Flexibility Act of 2004, Public Law 108-411, Department Regulation 4740-001, and

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/mentoring.htm>

For more information contact your Mentoring Coordinator or the USDA Virtual University at:

[Virtualuniversity@dm.usda.gov](mailto:Virtualuniversity@dm.usda.gov)

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](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov) or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



Catch Up On Recent Issues of MyUSDA!

To see previous issues of MyUSDA, please visit:

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/newsroom.htm>



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and, where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) 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)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or participating in a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. Information about how to file a discrimination complaint is at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and is available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.*

## MyUSDA Staff

**Roberta Jeanquart—Editorial Director**

**Marsha Wiggins—Deputy Editorial Director**

**Perry Stevens—Editor-in-Chief**

**Dr. Karlease Kelly, Hillary Caron, Lynne Short, Faith Rogers, James Brent—Editors**

### Key Contributors:

**Susan Siemietkowski, Bonnie Fauber, Natalie Veeney, Sabrina Ferguson-Ward, Dora Flores, Vincent Marquez, Chelsea L. Buckley, Thevee Gray, Beth Pfeiler, Jeffrey Carnahan, Michelle Jordan, Ingrid Burford, Nicole Ebberhart, Charles W. Parrott, Sharon Peredis, Ken Melton, Dennis Houghtelling**

**If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov)**

## Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The monthly deadline for submissions is the end of the first week of each month.

### **Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA**

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the event. The ideal word count for articles is 150-200. All submissions are subject to editing and Departmental review.

Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity, event, or observance demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

Email submissions or further inquiries to [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov).