MyUSDA

Volume 1, Issue 1 February 2017

Keeping USDA Employees Informed About

- LEADERSHIP
- EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT & RETENTION
- DEVELOPMENT & TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH
- WORK/LIFE

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Engagement Matters!

By Ayana Bailey, Office of Human Resources Management

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is a tool provided by the Office of Personnel Management that is distributed to Federal employees once a year, but the effect of survey results extend far beyond the April – June time period of survey distribution. The FEVS is a tool that measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agencies—all year round—using the Employee Engagement Index (EEI). The results are not intended to discourage, instead they are meant to encourage organizations to identify areas of strength and improvement which facilitate the maintenance of a positive work environment for all.

Put the FEVS report to work for you because employee engagement matters every day at USDA. If you have any questions on the FEVS or employee engagement, please send an email to VirtualUniversity@dm.usda.gov.

Tornado Hits USDA's National Financial Center

By Perry Stevens, Office of Human Resources Management

The USDA's National Finance Center's Primary Business Center in New Orleans, LA, was hit by a tornado on February 7, 2017. There were no reports of injuries, but NFC, which handles USDA payroll among other financial tasks, was forced to temporarily suspend its operations.

The good news is that they were able to successfully continue the critical support of processing payroll due to the dedication of their staff—and the fact that the staff had regularly practiced their continuity of operations plan.

The tornado was one of 12 reported in a line of severe storms that touched seven states throughout the southeast, including Louisiana.

FNS Helps Find Jobs for SNAP Recipients

By Susan M. Siemietkowski, Food and Nutrition Service

You might think the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) just deals with food, but in San Francisco's Mission District, the result of one FNS program is resulting in more people getting jobs.

JOBS NOW! is a nationally recognized Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) program. The program includes introducing jobseekers to employers who interview them at a job fair.

One recent Jobs NOW! recruitment event saw more than a 100 participants meeting potential employers who were waiting to interview them. The SNAP E&T program has successfully moved participants into unsubsidized employment, most with incomes in the $25/hour range. They overcame barriers ranging from alcohol and drug abuse to incarceration and homelessness prior to enrollment in the program. They credit SNAP E&T with changing their lives. Eighteen months after exiting the program, 53 percent of participants no longer required SNAP benefits, according to JOBS NOW!

The program includes interview preparation, training, work experience opportunities, and supportive services such as clothes, tools, and transportation.

The E&T program is centered on seven intensive components that provide employment opportunities to participants at every level of job readiness. It simultaneously, creates a new, untapped talent pool for San Francisco area employers struggling to find workers.

The E&T program's goal of self-sufficiency means that JOBS NOW! works to move people into job opportunities that pay more than minimum wage. The SNAP E&T program is demonstrating, throughout the nation, how quality training and work readiness programs can achieve exactly that result. In San Francisco, JOBS NOW! is one of the programs leading the charge.

Food and Nutrition Service Employees in Boston Help Those Less Fortunate Fight Winter's Chill

By Susan M. Siemietkowski, Food and Nutrition Service

In December, employees from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in Boston collected coats, hats, gloves and scarfs for distribution to the homeless through the Boston Medical Center.

January temperatures in the City typically range from 22 and 36 degrees, and these employees wanted to do something to protect those who had little to no shelter.

FNS employees Debra Roveto, Beth Lopez, Pam Griffin (pictured left to right) were among the North East Regional Office employees who took part in the clothing drive.

Thanks for providing warmth to homeless people in your area!

My USDA Winter Olympics Journey

By Elida Monroe, U. S. Forest Service

I had an issue with my left knee and joined the Winter Olympics in 2016 to keep me focused on participating in Bikram Hot Yoga sessions. Since starting these 90 minute yoga sessions, my knees are in great condition. Yoga is now a part of my lifestyle. The Olympics and these sessions conditioned me to push myself to accomplish more in other aspects of my life. I strongly believe good health and work performance go hand-in-hand. One must be healthy to perform well and be productive.

My overall experience in the USDA winter Olympics was very rewarding as I had the opportunity to diversify my work out activities. Most of my Olympic minutes were accumulated in hot yoga, swimming, and weight training. I included other activities such as hiking, treadmill, biking, water aerobics and combat training. I was also fortunate enough to have wonderful weather during February to go horseback riding which is normally done more in the later part of spring through the beginning of winter.

Through the Winter Olympics connection, I have met so many people and learned how they have changed their lifestyle, balanced work-life and reached a healthier state of being. I had great support from my family, friends and co-workers. A special thank you to my Acquisition Management (AQM) co-workers who also participated in this challenge; Rachel Shively, Sarita Fryer, Fay Teng, and Leah Largaespada. And, our greatest supporter, Charles Hill, Director of AQM!

USDA Work/Life and Wellness Programs— "When Work Works" Finalist

By Debra Arnold, Office of Human Resources Management

USDA is a finalist for the prestigious 2016-2017 "When Work Works Award." To reach this stage, applications were measured against nationally representative data from the Families and Work Institute and the Society for Human Resource Management's National Study of Employers; applicants had to score in the top 20% – at or above the 80th percentile of employers nationally – to move forward in the award process.

The final step in the application process is the Employee Survey, which asks employees about their access to flexibility programs and the overall workplace culture. A random sampling of employees have received emails asking for their response.

If you received this email, you are encouraged to respond. Employee feedback counts for two-thirds of the final score and no employer can win without the feedback of their employees. Responses will be collected by the Society for Human Resource Management and requires a minimum of 40% response rate.

Survey recipients received the email from **"**When Work Works" survey **via** **noreply@qemailserver.com.** All the surveys will be kept confidential so we ask that you complete the survey honestly and promptly. It will take approximately 25 minutes to complete and you may use duty time for completion.

For more information contact Debra Arnold, USDA's Work/Life and Program Manager, at debra.arnold@dm.usda.gov. Thanks for supporting Work/Life and Wellness at USDA!

Active Shooter Awareness & Preparedness

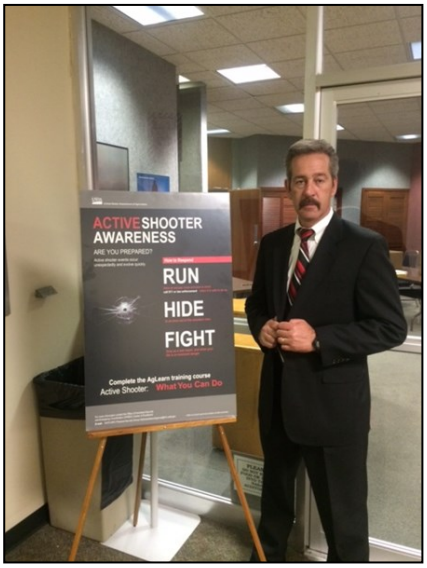
By J.T. Stroud, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination

The occurrence of active shooter events are so prevalent, they have almost become a part of our daily lives. Since they are unpredictable, evolve quickly and most incidents are over within minutes, we must be prepared to respond until law enforcement arrives.

As a result, the USDA Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination (OHSEC), in collaboration with the USDA Security Council launched an Active Shooter Program. The intent of this department-wide initiative is to promote increased employee awareness and preparedness. Additionally, this program brings USDA into compliance with a Federal mandate that all Executive Branch departments with non-military facilities provide training for their employees as well as institute and exercise response plans for each facility.

One critical facet of USDA's Active Shooter Program is training, which is available to all employees and contractors. This course provides guidance to individuals, including managers and employees, so they can prepare to respond to an active shooter situation. It is offered in three formats:

- AgLearn Training Course
  "Active Shooter: What You Can Do"
- AgLearn Training Course
  "Active Shooter: What You Can Do" (pdf version)'
- OHSEC Instructor-led on-site **(Live)** training with AgLearn credit for completion



J.T. Stroud of USDA's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination provides training on the appropriate response to an active shooter in the workplace. He is seen here in a 2016 photo at the National Finance Center in New Orleans, LA, where OHSEC delivered active shooter training over a two-day period to approximately 550 employees and contractors.

USDA Seeking Hosts for 2017 DC Summer Youth Employment Program

By Michelle Jordan, Office of Human Resources Management

Departmental Management will coordinate a centralized effort to offer career exploration opportunities via the SYEP-DC beginning on Monday, June 26, 2017 and ending on Friday, August 4, 2017. The purpose of the SYEP-DC is to expose District youth and young adults ages 14-24 to various career fields and introduce them to the dynamics of working in a professional and positive work environment.

Since 1979, this locally funded initiative is managed by the DC Department of Employment Services (DOES) and as the oldest SYEP in the country, it is often modeled by other county, city and state programs. The District government will pay six weeks of salaries and also provide transit subsidies to enable students to get to host worksites in the Metro DC area.

Effective usage of SYEPs nationwide are essential to building a strategic pipeline to promote an alternative pathway for youth and young adults to explore careers that may interest them to pursue entry level federal employment opportunities in the future. The SYEPs are also a great way to get intern support despite current hiring and budget constraints while still providing career exploration opportunities to millennials throughout USDA mission areas, agencies and offices nationwide often at no cost to the Department. If you elect to participate as a SYEP-DC host employer, please contact, Roseal Fowlkes via email roseal.fowlkes@dm.usda.gov no later than March 17, 2017.

For more details on exploring the possibilities of partnering with various county, city and state employment programs for summer or year-round, please contact Michelle Jordan via email recruitment@dm.usda.gov no later than April 14, 2017.

USDA Hosts Presidential Management Council Program for Flash Mentoring Event

By Janine Gillis, Office of Human Resources Management

On February 15, 2017, USDA hosted guests from the Presidential Management Council (PMC) rotation program for a Flash Mentoring event. Dr. Karlease Kelly of OHRM, Virtual University, Robert Huttenlocker of APHIS, and Michael Valivullah of NASS were among the senior executives who participated.

The PMC rotation program was launched in 2011. It enables emerging federal leaders to expand their leadership competencies, broaden their organizational experiences, and foster networks they can leverage in the future.

The program aims to: develop a collaborative, cross-agency effort to reduce barriers to interagency mobility; provide each participant with a six-month developmental interagency rotation assignment either within or outside their current area of expertise; and offer engaging and insightful interagency cohort events allowing each participant to network and interact with other PMC participants, federal government employees, and senior executives. If you are interested in learning more about this program, please see https://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/pmc-irp.htm or you can contact Janine Gillis (janine.gillis@dm.usda.gov), our USDA PMC representative.

Mark Your Calendar for this Upcoming Special Observance at USDA

Women's History Month
Thursday, March 23, 2017

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*.**

If you have an article for MyUSDA, you can email submissions to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov. They may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity or event, particularly those focused on Leadership, Employee Engagement & Retention, Development and Training Opportunities, Customer Focus & Community Outreach, and Work/Life. Please keep submissions to fewer than 250 words. Photos and images are always welcome! If you have questions, please contact MyUSDA Editor Perry Stevens at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.

HR Quick Facts:

When and how can I make changes to my Health Insurance coverage?

During the annual Federal Benefits Open Season (mid-November through mid-December) you may change plans, options, or type of enrollment (Self Only, Self Plus One or Self and Family). You also may make a change upon experiencing an FEHB-specific Qualifying Life Event (QLE), such as marriage, birth/adoption of a child, death of spouse, or divorce. The QLE determines what type of enrollment change is permitted. The enrollment change must be consistent with the QLE.

You may be able to make the enrollment change using the Health Benefits Election Form (SF 2809), which can be completed at: *www.opm.gov/forms*, or through an agency self-service system, such as your Employee Personal Page (EPP). Contact your human resources office for details. If you don't know where to find your Human Resources Office, see your supervisor.

An Open Season enrollment change is effective the first day of the first full pay period that begins in January of the following year. An enrollment change based on a QLE is generally effective the first day of the first pay period that begins after your enrollment request is received.

Source: CFR, Title 5, Part 890

For more information contact your HR Office.

OHRM 6/2016

If you'd like to share your feedback about 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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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at 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* are welcome. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the news story, achievement, experience, or 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 Workplace Leadership; Employee Engagement & Retention; Employee Development/Training Opportunities; Customer Focus & Community Outreach; and Work/Life.

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