



Keeping USDA Employees Informed About

MyUSDA

Volume 1, Issue 2

March 2017

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

Engagement Matters!

By Ayana Bailey, Office of Human Resources Management

USDA is one of the top 10 places to work in the Federal Government according to the responses received from the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) results. What can we do to keep the momentum going? Here are tips for managers.



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Communication: Communicating regularly with employees helps reduce anxiety, prevents rumors from spreading, and keeps employees focused while encouraging flexibility. Remind employees how their day-to-day work contributes to the mission fulfillment and serves the public. Remember, communication is appreciated even when there is no new news to report!

Suggestions: Schedule All-Hands meetings and encourage open door policies.

Develop Action Plans: Review and analyze your FEVS results and share them with your employees. Use the results to promote enthusiasm and engage employees in the development of solutions for areas identified for improvement.

Suggestion: Involve your Employee Advisory Council (EAC) and FEVS Points of Contact to lead the action planning.

Hold Employee Appreciation Events: Hold events throughout the year (as feasible).

Suggestion: Use these events to foster teambuilding, introduce new employees, and to show appreciation for time and service of your workforce.

Maintain Work-Life Balance: Continue to encourage eligible employees to telework and support employee needs to balance work and life responsibilities.

Suggestion: Ensure every eligible employee has an up-to-date telework agreement where applicable.

Establish IDPs: Individual Development Plans (IDPs) represent a commitment to career growth. Work with eligible employees to put an IDP in place with training to promote development for today and tomorrow. If you need help on ideas for training, contact the Virtual University at virtualuniversity@dm.usda.gov.

Be on the lookout for the 2017 FEVS this May! If you have any questions on the FEVS or employee engagement, please send an email to VirtualUniversity@dm.usda.gov.

RPCVs & Friends at USDA Celebrate Peace Corps Week

By Bridget McElroy, Agricultural Marketing Service

On March 2, the employee resource group, Returned Peace Corps Volunteers (RPCVs) and Friends at USDA, held a luncheon at the USDA People's Buffet to commemorate President Kennedy's establishment of the Peace Corps on March 1, 1961, and to celebrate the ways that the Peace Corps makes a difference at home and abroad. More than 40 Peace Corps Volunteers participated.

Observing the theme of this year's Peace Corps Week, Hospitality, guest speakers told stories of generosity and kindness that they experienced during their Peace Corps service. Their stories had the group laughing, tearing up, and reflecting on how their Peace Corps service has enriched and inspired the work that they do at USDA.

Returned Peace Corps Volunteers work throughout USDA. Some are just beginning their careers and others have been with the USDA for decades; all of these employees share a sense of pride in their Peace Corps service and their service to the American people through their work in agriculture, the environment, nutrition, and rural development at USDA.

RPCVs & Friends at USDA was established in 2016 to bring this community together, and foster connections with newly returned Peace Corps volunteers interested in a career in public service. The group meets monthly to organize networking and career development, community service, and social activities. For more information about membership or participation in RPCVs & Friends at USDA, send an email to PeaceCorps@USDA.gov.



(Pictured Above Left) Liz Mayhew, currently serving with USDA as the Latin America Program Coordinator of the U.S. Forest Service International Programs and previously a Peace Corps volunteer in Guatemala 1986-1988, shares reflections on how her office provides hospitality to visitors and receives it from hosts around the globe.

(Pictured Above Right) Meleia Egger, Peace Corps Headquarters' RPCV Group Liaison, a Third Goal Program Specialist and RPCV Malawi '07 - '09, presents the theme of *Highlighting Hospitality* for this year's Peace Corps Week.

(Pictured Left) Members of RPCVs & Friends at USDA, an Employee Resource Group, pose for a group photo after their luncheon celebrating 56 years of the Peace Corps.

Photos by Stephen Pope, Foreign Agricultural Service, RPCV Mozambique '13-'16

AMS Dairy Employee Takes Helm at HACE

By Becky Unkenholz, Agricultural Marketing Service



On Jan. 24, 2017, Agricultural Marketing Service Compliance and Analysis Deputy Administrator Sonia Jimenez swore in the Dairy Program's Benny Seda-Galarza (pictured left) as president of USDA's Chapter of the Hispanic American Cultural Effort (HACE).

HACE is a voluntary, non-profit organization, dedicated to the employment, development, and advancement of current and aspiring Hispanic professionals in USDA.

As president, Seda-Galarza hopes to strengthen the Hispanic community in USDA by developing a solid network among employees, and by offering resources that support professional development.

His main goal is for HACE to be recognized as a platform that promotes better employment opportunities for Hispanics in USDA and the Federal government.

USDA Employees Feed the Hungry for the MLK Day National Day of Service

By Charmin Rickards, Agricultural Marketing Service

On January 26, 2017, the Civil Rights Program and Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Black/African American Employment Program Manager, Yvette Percell, coordinated a volunteer opportunity at the *So Others Might Eat* (SOME) organization. AMS volunteers loaded bags of food and sorted crates of non-perishable food items, while building camaraderie and giving their time to a great cause.

SOME is an interfaith, community-based organization that exists to help the poor and homeless in our nation's capital. The organization meets the immediate daily needs of the people they serve with food, clothing, and health care.

SOME helps to break the cycle of homelessness by offering services, such as affordable housing, job training, addiction treatment, and counseling to the poor, the elderly, and individuals with mental illness. Each day, SOME works in restoring hope and dignity, one person at a time.

The AMS volunteers were shown a video overview of the history outlining the inception of the organization. They were also given a tour of the dining and health facilities. This event was coordinated to commemorate the 2017 MLK Day National Day of Service.

Agricultural Marketing Service employees pause during their MLK Day National Day of Service activity with the *So Others Might Eat* organization.



Active Shooter Awareness & Preparedness

Last month's article about Active Shooter Awareness and Preparedness for employees omitted the link for more information. Thanks again to J.T. Stroud of USDA's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination for providing training on the appropriate response to an active shooter in the workplace.

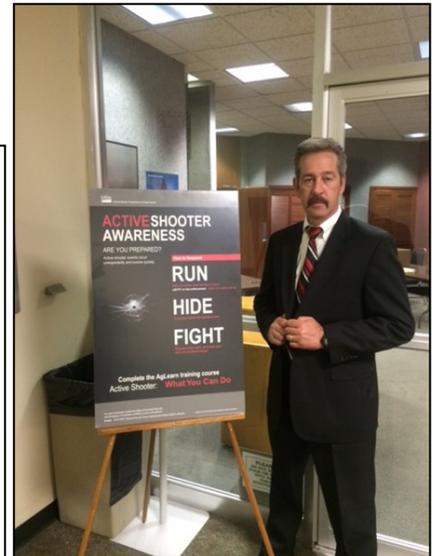
"Awareness, preparedness, and training are the keys to helping protect employees, visitors, and ourselves. Furthermore, it is highly recommended that all employees be familiar with their facility's Occupant Emergency Plan (OEP) and Active Shooter Plan, and voluntarily participate in scheduled exercises and drills.

Our hope is for employees to be engaged in discussions and training on decisions they may have to make in an active shooter situation."

—J.T. Stroud of USDA's Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.dm.usda.gov/ohsec/ActiveShooter.htm>



Celebrate USDA's Unsung Heroes

As part of Public Service Recognition Week in May, the Organization of Professional Employees of the USDA is accepting nominations for the 2017 Unsung Hero Award. USDA's Unsung Heroes are employees who go above and beyond every day. If you have a colleague who deserves special recognition, nominate them by the April 7th deadline. The Unsung Heroes Awards will be announced in a ceremony Thursday May 4, 2017, on the Whitten Patio in Washington, DC.

For more information, email to Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov

Mark Your Calendar for this Upcoming Special Observance at USDA

Asian Pacific American Islander Heritage Month
Thursday, May 25, 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.

Women's History Month Flash Mentoring Event

Nearly 100 participants took part in the Women's History Month Flash Mentoring Event on March 23, 2017. USDA's Flash Mentoring Events are held on the Whitten Patio in Washington, DC, with several mentoring events occurring in conjunction with USDA's special observances throughout the year.

At the Women's History Month Flash Mentoring Event, keynote speaker Angela Coleman of the U.S. Forest Service spoke to participants about the importance of her mentoring experience.

A dozen mentors prepared for several topics, including Work/Life Balance and Charting a Career Path. They engaged protégés for 20 minutes and then rotated to four different groups of protégés. Participants had an opportunity to ask questions, receive advice, and learn about resources to improve their job performance and overall work/life.



(Left) Angela Coleman, Chief of Staff at the U.S. Forest Service, is pictured delivering the keynote address to participants of the Women's History Month Flash Mentoring Event on the Whitten Patio.

(Below) Organizers of the Women's History Month Flash Mentoring Event included:

(Top Row): Sonia Jimenez (Agricultural Marketing Service); Ray Payton (Office of the Chief Information Officer); Rose Satterfield (Agricultural Marketing Service); Allison Thomas (Foreign Agricultural Service)

(Bottom Row): Elizabeth Dann (Office of the Chief Scientist); Emilee Blount (U.S. Forest Service); Dr. Johanna "Jeleen" Briscoe (Departmental Management/Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration); Dr. Neena Anandaraman (Office of the Chief Scientist); and Gayle Barry (Natural Resources Conservation Service.)



President Proclaims March 21 as National Agriculture Day

NATIONAL AGRICULTURE DAY, 2017

BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

A PROCLAMATION

America's farmers and ranchers help feed the world, fuel our Nation's economy, and lead global markets in output and productivity. The efficiency of American agriculture has provided this country with abundance our ancestors could not have imagined.

The agriculture sector of the United States is endlessly innovative. It continuously builds on its centuries of progress through advances in science, research, technology, safety, production, and marketing to meet the demands of changing consumer needs and complex world markets. The agriculture sector provides jobs across our Nation, not just for farmers and ranchers, but for foresters, scientists, processors, shippers, firefighters, police, and retailers.

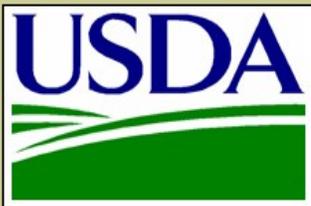
American agriculture is the largest positive contributor to our Nation's net trade balance, generating 10 percent of our exports and millions of American jobs. America's farmers and ranchers provide a safe and plentiful domestic food supply, which is vital to our national security. Moreover, they safeguard our sustainable resource base for future generations. As my Administration fights for better trade deals, agriculture will be an important consideration so that its significant contributions will only increase in the years ahead.

American farmers and ranchers are the heart and soul of America and they represent the determined, self-reliant character of our Nation. We are proud of American agriculture and we recognize agriculture's critical role to our Nation's bright future.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, DONALD J. TRUMP, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim March 21, 2017, as National Agriculture Day. I encourage all Americans to observe this day by recognizing the preeminent role that agriculture plays in Americans' daily life, acknowledging agriculture's continuing importance to our country's economy, and expressing our deep appreciation of farmers and ranchers across the Nation.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of March, in the year of our Lord two thousand seventeen, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-first.

DONALD J. TRUMP



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.