



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

**USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items**

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

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# MyUSDA

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

Volume 3, Issue 5

May 2013

### FedView Surveys Are Out—Have You Responded?

By MaryJo Thompson

The Office of Personnel Management is administering the 2013 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FedView) from now through early June to a sample of USDA's permanent full and part-time employees. FedView surveys are sent via email directly to employees.

FedView includes 84 government-wide questions and 17 demographic questions. It takes about 25 minutes to complete. Please help USDA by completing the survey and letting your opinions be heard!

The survey is voluntary and your responses are confidential, used only for identifying ways to improve the USDA work environment and gauge your perceptions of USDA as a whole.

You can be an important part of bringing more positive changes to USDA by completing the survey. If you have any questions about FedView, please contact your Mission Area or Agency Point of Contact (POC) listed below:

- Thevee Gray, **FSA**, [Thevee.gray@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Thevee.gray@wdc.usda.gov)
- Joe Migyanka, **FAS**, [joseph.migyanka@fas.usda.gov](mailto:joseph.migyanka@fas.usda.gov)
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- Leslie McMullen, **NFC**, [leslie.mcmullen@nfc.usda.gov](mailto:leslie.mcmullen@nfc.usda.gov)

If your Agency POC is not listed above please contact Mary Jo Thompson at [maryjo.thompson@dm.usda.gov](mailto:maryjo.thompson@dm.usda.gov) or Ed Cierpial at [Edwin.cierpial@dm.usda.gov](mailto:Edwin.cierpial@dm.usda.gov). Thank you for your time in completing the survey - You count!



You can contact the staff of MyUSDA via email at [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov), and don't forget to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

# Take Our Daughters & Sons to Work Day a Success

USDA's observance of the 2013 Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day on the Whitten Patio in Washington, DC was a success with more than 25 exhibitors and hundreds of employees and their children.

By Debra Arnold

If you're interested in organizing an event in your location at next year's event, please contact your Agency Work/Life Coordinator or send us an email to: [worklife@dm.usda.gov](mailto:worklife@dm.usda.gov)

Becca Frank (seated left) and Amanda Eamich (standing right) from the Office of Communications, meet with children on the Whitten Patio to demonstrate USDA's Social Media websites such as Twitter and Facebook.



## USDA Supports "Suiting Youth Empowering Professionals" Clothes Drive (May 24-June 14)

OHRM is seeking clothing donations from Mission Areas, Agencies and Offices located in Metropolitan Washington, DC area. All former and current host supervisors, administrative and payroll liaisons of the Mayor Vincent C. Gray's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) are encouraged to participate. Your support of the clothing drive will prepare DC youth ages 14-21 to be well suited year-round for future interviews, summer, fall, and spring workplace assignments.

Detailed information on donation collection items and drop box locations will be advertised on flyers, posters and digital media. For more details, please contact, Recruitment Program Manager, Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman at [students@dm.usda.gov](mailto:students@dm.usda.gov).

## UPCOMING USDA SPECIAL OBSERVANCES

- Asian Pacific American Heritage Event, Thursday, May 23, 2013
  - LGBT Pride Event, Thursday, June 6, 2013
- Observances begin at 10:00 (EST), Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC**

**USDA MYUSDA**  
United States Department of Agriculture

11:30 a.m. Cultural Exchange at Whitten Bldg. Patio

Thursday, May 23, 2013  
10:00 a.m. (EDT)  
Jefferson Auditorium - South Bldg.  
Washington, DC

**2013 Asian Pacific American Heritage Month**

*"Building Leadership: Embrace the Cultural Values and Inclusion"*

**Keynote Speaker**  
The Honorable Judy Chu  
U.S. Congresswoman

Sponsored by Departmental Management, Office of Human Resources Management, Diversity Program Office, Food Safety and Inspection Service, & Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

For reasonable accommodations and website please contact: Patrick Cheng at [patrick.cheng@aphis.usda.gov](mailto:patrick.cheng@aphis.usda.gov)

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**USDA**  
United States Department of Agriculture

Thursday, June 6, 2013 10:00am EDT  
Jefferson Auditorium  
South Building  
Washington, D.C.

**USDA Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) Pride**

**2013 USDA LGBT Pride Observance**

**Featuring The Fabulous Beekman Boys!**

Josh Kilmer-Purcell and Dr. Brent Ridge left their home in New York City to start the Beekman Farm in upstate NY five years ago. Now, they have a hit TV show on the Cooking Channel, bestselling books, product lines in leading retailers, a massive social following, and a James Beard nominated lifestyle website. Earlier this year, they won \$1 Million dollars on CBS' The Amazing Race, in which they beat ten other teams on a race around the world. Come hear Josh and Brent talk about their life on the farm as USDA celebrates LGBT Pride!

## Farm Service Agency (FSA) Loans at Work—Profile

By Tina Hoellerer

Like many now tilling the soil, Sam Pesina ([samuelpesina@sbcglobal.net](mailto:samuelpesina@sbcglobal.net)) grew up on a farm. He helped his Dad care for the family's crops and animals in Orange Cove, CA. Now Sam has his own farm in Selma, CA, Sugar Delight Farms. He concentrates on two marketable commodities: peaches and sugar cane. Sugar cane is an essential ingredient in Hispanic markets' traditional drinks, El Punche or Calinto.

Since 2003, Sam keeps it growing by focusing on two additional commodities—land and capital. Last year, FSA was able to assist with the capital using a FSA Farm Operating Loan. Sam paid off that loan and obtained another Operating Loan to expand his operation. This year, Sam learned about the streamlined FSA MicroLoan through the Fresno FSA office and realized it could work for him. The lower \$35,000 ceiling amount and reduced paperwork fit an immediate need to acquire a larger forklift for loading and field transport.

In ag lending, business works best when both borrower and lender have a close relationship and open communication. Sam's success verifies that. "All along the way, with the Operating Loans and the MicroLoan, the FSA staff in Fresno has shown me they really care," Sam said. The future holds promise for Sugar Delight Farms. Watch for trucks with the Sugar Delight logo on Western highways soon.

Pictured left to right: Sam Pesino, Fresno Farmer and first MicroLoan recipient in California; Chantal Haun, FSA Farm Loan Officer; and, Val Dolcini, FSA, State Executive Director, California.



## FNS Northeast Regional Office Launches "I Love My Heart" Campaign

By Susan Siemietkowski

The Northeast Regional Office (NERO) of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, based in



Boston, recently kicked off its "I Love My Heart" campaign to create awareness about heart disease. Events included a health fair where staff learned about the importance of being active and good nutrition as well as a 3-mile Walk/Run along the Charles River to demonstrate employees' commitment to improved heart health. Health and wellness are important to employees and consistent with the goals of Cultural Transformation. Activities such as NERO's "I Love my Heart" Walk/Run have the added benefit of promoting team-building as well.

## USDA Forest Service at National Environmental Justice Conference

By Patricia Jackman

The 2013 National Environmental Justice Conference and Training Program took place on April 3 - 5, 2013, in Washington DC. This year during the 3-day event, hundreds of attendees including Federal and state agencies, local governments, tribes, community groups, large and small businesses, public interest groups, academia and other entities united to share and discuss views, challenges and solutions for environmental justice; building healthy and sustainable communities; and other related topics. Training programs and

networking opportunities were paramount. The Forest Service delivered four presentation panels that highlighted Agency efforts to ensure environmental justice in our programs.



The Forest Service Environmental Justice Board, which represents all four Deputy Areas, coordinated agency participation. The board is advised by Tony Tooke, the Director of Ecosystems Management Coordination, and the Civil Rights, Diversity and Outreach Branch. More details about the conference and photographs of activities are located at <http://thenejc.org/>.

Conference participants included (top row, L-R) Pamela Williams, Fred Clark, Michelle Tamez, Tamberly Conway, and (bottom row, L-R) Estelle Bowman, Arthur Bryant, and Cheryl Bailey.

## Step Up for Wellness! Join USDA for National Employee Wellness Month



National Employee Wellness Month is an annual initiative (now in its 5<sup>th</sup> year) that occurs each June. It's designed to help leaders from both private and public sectors learn how successfully engaging employees in healthy lifestyles

**Mika J. Cross, USDA**  
**Work/Life and**  
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can benefit the organization. Through online learning activities, employee testimonials and work group initiatives, USDA supervisors and managers can learn how prevention, coupled with supportive social communities in the workplace, can improve employee health and productivity, lower employee healthcare costs, reduce sick leave usage and absenteeism, and create a healthy workplace culture.

Learn more about what USDA is planning throughout National Employee Wellness Month this June by frequently visiting the [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community webpage on USDA Connect, contacting your Agency Wellness Ambassador or Wellness Coordinator, and by sending an email to: [wellness@dm.usda.gov](mailto:wellness@dm.usda.gov)

## Star Supervisors Shine On

**Christina A. Cook** “shines” because she recognizes that a healthy cohesive team is key to effective mission accomplishment. It’s a constant balancing act, with having her employees working in multiple Forests, but she allows them to balance the distance and location of their duty stations with the locations of the worksites in their forests. And when they have had team members in crisis, Ms. Cook works to make necessary adjustments to take care of both the team member and the customer.

Ms. Cook also provides a personal example of health and wellness by pursuing physical fitness in her own lifestyle, and she assists her team with developing their own wellness plans. When her employees’ workload is extreme, she checks up on them frequently to ensure that they are balancing their work/rest ratios. Ms. Cook recognizes when her employees become stressed and provides a resolution even if they don’t ask. She is said to have the ability to engage her team such that they work together like an orchestrated concert.



**Edward Slaga** is recognized as a “Supervisor Shining Star” for his support of work-life balance. He has impacted many of his employees by encouraging them to take advantage of Telework and flexible work schedules. Recently, he helped an employee transition back to work after maternity leave. Mr. Slaga ensured that she knew the location of the nursing mothers’ room and gave her adequate time to express milk. This flexibility and workplace accommodations enabled her family to better transition to their new schedule, and alleviated a lot of stress.

Mr. Slaga, also serves as a role model for his employees, by participating in both Telework and a flexible work schedule to better balance his own work-life obligations. When his employees see him effectively Teleworking, it empowers them to use Telework as well without detriment to their professional careers. His employees use these flexible workplace tools to better balance their own responsibilities outside of the workplace, resulting in an environment where they feel they can deliver their best to the mission each and every day. USDA applauds you, Mr. Slaga, on setting such a shining example.

## USDA TeleWork Week Numbers Are In!

USDA employees participated in the 2013 TeleWork Week at a much higher rate than last year. Our individual pledges jumped from 7,516 in 2012 to 9,750 in 2013. We saved \$1.34 Million in commuting costs compared to \$1.07 Million last year. The pollutants saved increased from 454 tons in 2012 to 514 tons this year. If all 2013 pledges teleworked this way for an entire year, they could save more than \$56 Million.

## FSA Holds Flash Mentoring Event Based On FedView Survey Results

The Farm Service Agency (FSA) recently held its first Flash Mentoring Event. Participants gathered to discuss five topics which were created as a result of the 2012 Federal Viewpoint Survey (FedView). FedView measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions characterizing successful organizations are present in their agency. The event allowed participants to hear leaders discuss agencies goals regarding Mentoring and Cultural Transformation.

Topics covered included: Career Development; Crucial Conversations; Work/Life Balance & Current Events; Fostering an Environment of Creativity and Innovation; and, Customer Service. The mentors included Deputy Administrator of Management Mark Rucker; Emergency Preparedness Acting Director Robert Haughton; Economic Policy & Analysis Director Joy Harwood; Commodity Operations Division Director Jose Gonzalez (pictured talking with participants) and, Outreach Division Acting Deputy Latrice Hill.

FSA Mentoring Program Manager Shirene Warner plans quarterly mentoring events to bring members of our workforce together, including State and County offices. FSA has just concluded its first nine month Pilot Mentoring Program with a 93% completion rate. Shirene is excited about beginning another nine month mentoring program in late summer FY 13.

Special thanks to Roderick Mance from The Virtual University and Stephanie Brown, Acting Branch Chief of the Leadership and Employee Development branch for their guidance in planning this event. For questions, contact Shirene Warner at [Shirene.warner@wdc.usda.gov](mailto:Shirene.warner@wdc.usda.gov).



## USDA FSIS Participates in DEA's Take Back Prescription Drugs Seminar

USDA Food Safety and Inspection Service employees recently participated in the Drug Enforcement Administration's (DEA) nationwide effort to Take Back Prescription Drugs. A lunch time seminar was offered by Department of Justice Officer Chris Kober on April 18<sup>th</sup> explaining the programs to the audience and cases he had worked on involving prescription drug-abuse. Arrangements were made for collection of all unwanted prescription drugs so they could be turned over to the DEA Special Agent.

Pictured (L-R): Peter Duryea, USDA Health & Wellness; Bonnie Riley, FOH (Federal Occupational Health); and Dr. Ilene Arnold, FSIS PDS (Policy Development Staff).



## NIFA's New Employee Overview Features Cultural Transformation

By Sylvia Montgomery



Photos by Stephanie Engle

The National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) celebrated the roll out of its Cultural Transformation (CT) Action Plan on April 2. In a room filled to capacity, the celebration included a declaration of NIFA's commitment to Cultural Transformation by NIFA's Director, Dr. Sonny Ramaswamy (upper left). The Associate Assistant Secretary of Administration, Dr. Alma Hobbs (lower left), discussed the importance of CT throughout USDA.

NIFA's Cultural Transformation Leadership Team (CTLT) showcased their video highlighting what CT means to them ("*The Heart of Cultural Transformation*") and launched their CT site on NIFA's intranet. CTLT coordinates and facilitates the work of four task forces: Best Place to Work, Human Capital Development, Diversity, and Continuous Process Improvement.

NIFA's Action Plan includes quarterly informational sessions by the CTLT, a cultural shift learning transfer, development of an employee development handbook, enhancing the mentoring program, conducting employee appreciation workshops, hosting professional networking events, and developing a grant processing model to schedule workload while optimizing workflow and reducing bottlenecks.

## USDA Highlights StrikeForce at SD Indian Business Alliance Conference

**By Christine Sorensen** South Dakota USDA officials recently highlighted the StrikeForce initiative at the bi-annual South Dakota Indian Business Alliance Conference held in Rapid City, SD. The conference theme, “Building Opportunities in the New Native America,” was a perfect opportunity to announce South Dakota USDA’s focus on increasing partnerships and leveraging resources on South Dakota tribal lands.



(L-R) USDA-Farm Service Agency Area District Director Dan Whetham; USDA NRCS Assistant State Conservationist Michael A. Combs; Rural Development State Director Elsie Meeks; and, South Dakota Indian Business Alliance President and Four Bands, Inc. Executive Director Tanya Fiddler.

“We are working to build new partnerships to create jobs and improve the economic vitality of rural communities in South Dakota,” Elsie Meeks, Rural Development State Director said.

“The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) works directly with individual producers and Tribal entities to help them conserve, maintain, and improve their natural resources.” said Jeff Zimprich, NRCS State Conservationist.

“Through the Farm Service Agency’s (FSA) Farm Loan Programs we serve as the lender of first opportunity for many tribal members who are starting or growing their individual ranching and farming operations,” said Craig Schaunaman, FSA State Executive Director.

StrikeForce is a USDA initiative to increase partnerships with rural communities and leverage resources in targeted, persistent poverty areas. South Dakota was recently added to the initiative’s list of targeted states.

## Armed Forces Blood Drive June 25— Please Sign Up to Donate!

**By Jane Roth**

In support of our American troops, the National Institute of Health’s Special Armed Forces’ Medical Services will be holding a June 25<sup>th</sup> blood drive from 9am – 1pm in the Whitten Patio, D.C. You can schedule your appointments online right now. Just click on [www.militarydonor.com](http://www.militarydonor.com), insert sponsor code “USDA,” and then select your time and day. If you need assistance at making any changes to these times, please don’t hesitate to call Vicky at 301-295-2109 or email [Victoria.fernette@med.navy.mil](mailto:Victoria.fernette@med.navy.mil).

We also want to remind you of a few things to make your donation go smoothly. Please bring your ID and list of any current medications. Drink plenty of water and eat a good meal prior to coming. We will move you through as quickly as possible. Thank you for your support! Our troops thank you! For any questions please feel free to call Vicky at 301-295-2109 or email her at [Victoria.fernette@med.navy.mil](mailto:Victoria.fernette@med.navy.mil).



## New Newsletter: “Success Stories of Engagement & Empowerment FSA Employees Invited to Submit Articles

**By Vilma Alejandro**

The Farm Service Agency’s Human Resources Division has developed a quarterly newsletter titled, “*Stories of Engagement and Empowerment.*” FSA employees can submit stories of how their jobs, co-workers, supervisors, or a situation engaged them to perform their jobs better or to be more innovative. We ask them to share how an FSA program or activity empowered them to go further and reach higher.

We remind employees that these are their stories, their experiences, and their successes; how they not only set goals, but achieved them, whether in the workplace or in their community. These short stories engage and empower others to explore the inner recesses of their minds to access the many accomplishments they’ve made in their careers. These stories help employees see how others apply themselves in their work environment and how they empower themselves by being innovative and self-assured on their jobs. They will be able to identify with many of the stories, and some will even motivate them to rise above difficult on-the-job challenges. We want them to know that “**they**” can be a success story.

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](#).



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**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 deadline for June submissions is Monday, June 17, 2013.

### **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](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov).