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Departmental FOIA Officer
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
South Building
Room 4104
Washington, DC 20250-0706
Email: USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov

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United States Department of Agriculture

United States
Department of
Agriculture

August 31, 2018

Delivered via Electronic Mail

Office of the Chief
Information Officer

1400 Independence
Avenue SW
Washington, DC
20250

**RE: Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Request 2018-DA-04175-F
Final Response**

This is the Departmental final response to the May 18, 2018, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request you submitted to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department FOIA Office (DFO). You requested the following:

“[A]n electronic or digital copy of each MyUSDA monthly Newsletter during the time period January 2014 to present.”

Some of the records you have requested are publicly available at the following USDA website: <https://www.dm.usda.gov/newsroom.htm>. My USDA editions available at the above site date back to 2011 (see “Newsroom Archive”). The last edition available at that site is the April 2017 edition.

The remainder of the records you are seeking, specifically editions from May 2017 onward, have been processed under the FOIA, 5 U.S.C. § 552.

A search was conducted by USDA’s Departmental Administration (DA), Office of Human Resource Management (OHRM). OHRM located five publications of the My USDA newsletter totaling forty (40) pages of responsive records. These editions were circulated to USDA employees, but were not posted to the above website. According to OHRM, there was not a September 2017, My USDA issue.

Following a review of the responsive records, the DFO is releasing the July 2017, August 2017, and October 2017 editions to you in full. The DFO has determined that the May 2017 and June 2017 editions should be partially withheld pursuant to FOIA Exemption 6 U.S.C. § 552(b) (6). Below is an explanation of the information that has been withheld.

FOIA Exemption 6

Exemption 6 generally is referred to as the “personal privacy” exemption. It provides that the disclosure requirements of FOIA do not apply to “personnel and medical files and similar files the disclosure of which would constitute a clearly unwarranted invasion of personal privacy.” Application of the exemption involves balancing the public’s interest in disclosure against individuals’ privacy interests.

The information withheld under Exemption 6 consists of: USDA employees’ narratives containing significantly personal matters. Specifically, the DFO withheld the names and photographs of USDA employees and their family members, and any identifying information that could lead to disclosure of those individuals’ personal information. This information qualifies as “similar files” because it is information in which individuals have a privacy interest. Moreover, releasing the information could subject the individuals and their families to unwarranted invasion of personal privacy or unsolicited communications. Since there is a viable privacy interest that would be threatened by disclosure, Exemption 6 authorizes this office to withhold the information. Accordingly, the DFO has determined that the public interest in the information’s release does not outweigh the overriding privacy interests in keeping it confidential.

You may appeal this response by email at USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov, or by mail to the Assistant Secretary for Administration at 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Whitten Building, Room 209-A, Washington, D.C. 20250-0103. Your appeal must be in writing, and it must be received no later than 90 calendar days from the date of this letter. The DFO will not consider appeals received after the 90 calendar day limit. Appeals received after 5:00 p.m. EST will be considered received the next business day. The appeal letter should include the FOIA tracking number listed above, a copy of the original request, the DFO’s response to your original request, and a statement explaining the basis of your appeal. For quickest possible handling, the subject line of your email, the appeal letter, and its envelope, if applicable, should be marked “Freedom of Information Act Appeal.”

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Ms. Sarah A. Scharf at 202-694-5982 or electronically at Sarah.Scharf@ocio.usda.gov or USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov.

You may seek dispute resolution services from the DFO’s FOIA Public Liaison, Ms. Ravoyne Payton at USDAFOIA@ocio.usda.gov.

Additionally, you may contact the Office of Government Information Services (OGIS) at the National Archives and Records Administration to inquire about the FOIA mediation services they offer. The contact information for OGIS is as follows: Office of Government Information Services, National Archives and Records Administration, Room 2510, 8601 Adelphi Road, College Park, Maryland 20740-6001; email at ogis@nara.gov; telephone at 202-741-5770; toll-free at 1-877-684-6448; or facsimile at 202-741-5769.

The DFO Team appreciates the opportunity to assist you in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Alexis R. Graves".

Alexis Graves
Departmental FOIA Officer
Office of the Chief Information Officer

Enclosures: Responsive records (40 pages)



Keeping USDA
Employees Informed
About

- LEADERSHIP
- EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT &
RETENTION
- DEVELOPMENT
& TRAINING
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MyUSDA

Volume 1, Issue 3

May 2017

June 14 Deadline to Complete FEVS

By Ayana Bailey, Office of Human Resources Management

The Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) was administered to USDA employees beginning on Wednesday May 3rd and will go to Wednesday, June 14th. Check your email for it as “2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey.” It only takes a few minutes to complete, and you can save it as you go along and come back to it. The message will provide you with the survey URL: <https://feedback.opm.gov>. Here are some frequently asked questions:

Who is eligible to take the survey?

Employees that are full or part-time permanent, and non-seasonal employees on-board as of October 2016 are eligible to receive an invitation to participate in the survey.

Employees are randomly selected by the Office of Personnel Management to participate.

How long does it take to complete the survey?

You should be able to complete the survey in approximately 20-30 minutes. If you do not complete the survey, your response will be saved and you will receive reminders to complete it.

Why is this survey important to me?

The survey gives employees a voice to provide their opinions of their current work environment, which includes collecting information about leadership, management practices, agency and job satisfaction, supervisors, their work unit, and work life balance. It's an employees' opportunity to influence change in the agency.

How do I know that my responses will remain confidential?

Results reported are confidential and no Personal Identifiable Information is allowed. Any data that could be used to identify specific individuals within a group will not be reported.

Thanks so much for your feedback. We look forward to making USDA a great place to work! If you have any questions regarding the survey please contact Ayana Bailey at

Ayana.Bailey@dm.usda.gov.

RD Kicks Off Employee Learning Month

By Robin Talmadge, Rural Development

In April 2017, Rural Development's (RD) Office of Human Resources Training Branch (HRTB) kicked off RD's Employee Learning Month (ELM) to infuse a culture of learning throughout the workforce. Employees participated in a learning challenge to determine their learning style, communication with co-workers, and conducting an informational interview. In the “Learning from RD Leaders” segment, senior managers shared their career trajectories, insights on learning and principles for success.

Engaging and developing a high performing workforce is one of RD's top priorities as we rely on a competent, engaged and productive workforce to enable a bright future in rural America. RD's ELM campaign enables RD to prepare for its purpose and maximize its mission.

Secretary Perdue Announces Organizational Changes



Secretary Sonny Perdue has announced a reorganization of the Department to improve accountability and customer service. In a message to employees, the Secretary noted that Congress provided direction for USDA in the last Farm Bill to examine options for reorganizing the international trade functions at USDA and potentially creating a new Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs.

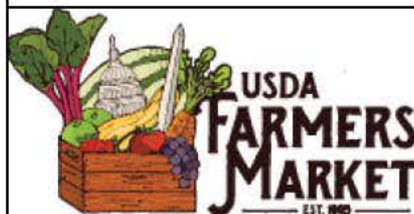
In order to advance agricultural trade, USDA intends to create an Undersecretary for Trade and Foreign Agricultural Affairs and realign the Foreign Agricultural Service to report to the new

Undersecretary. In addition, to create a customer-focused culture of public service and improve service delivery to agricultural producers, USDA intends to create an Undersecretary for Farm Production and Conservation and realign the Farm Service Agency, the Risk Management Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to report to the renamed Undersecretary. USDA also intends to realign the Rural Development agencies to report directly to the Secretary to provide additional visibility for the investments being made in rural America.

Under the reorganization plan, the Undersecretary for Natural Resources and Environment will retain supervision of the U.S. Forest Service. A reduction in USDA workforce is not part of the reorganization plan.

These changes will have a number of positive effects, including an improvement in customer service, a greater focus on managing our national forests, and using new administrative initiatives to focus on infrastructure investments in rural America.

USDA Farmers Market Kicks Off 22nd Season



The USDA Farmers Market opened its 22nd season on May 5th. This year, shoppers can find organic produce, fresh cut flowers, homemade breads, and locally made foods - from cheeses to dog treats. Breakfast and lunch options are plentiful, too. More than 30 farmers, ranchers, and small food businesses from across the Chesapeake Bay region will sell products.

[VegU](#) is back by popular demand to teach shoppers how to grow, pick, prepare, and store 26 different fruits and vegetables. Come get a "VegU-cation" by attending short 10-minute classes in the VegU tent between 11:30 a.m. and 1 p.m. VegU will be all about salad greens on opening day. New this year is the "Fresh This Week" tent - a space to feature a different business, exhibitor, or entertainer each week. Be sure to stop by the adjacent [Headquarters People's Garden](#) and enjoy a picnic on the lawn, listen to music, and attend morning yoga classes (coming soon).

USDA's [Agricultural Marketing Service](#) (AMS) operates the market, which is held every Friday from May to October from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. on the corner of 12th Street and Independence Ave, SW. Special evening hours will be added on June 23rd for National Pollinator Week and August 11th for National Farmers Market Week from 4 p.m. to 8 p.m.

For updates about the USDA Farmers Market, including the schedule for VegU classes, follow us @USDA_AMS on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#) using #USDAFarmersMkt or visit www.usda.gov/farmersmarket. Sign language interpreters are onsite in the yellow information tent.



ASA Office Volunteers Recognize Public Service

By Jay Coleman, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration

On Wednesday, May 10, 2017, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration celebrated Public Service Recognition Week by packing lunches and heading to Union Station to aid in the fight against hunger and hand the lunches out to the homeless. Hunger is a major problem in the Washington D.C. Metropolitan Area; for every 10,000 residents of the Washington Area, about 124 are homeless and hungry. The ASA's Office plans to feed the homeless again, and to participate in a drive collecting feminine products for homeless women in the month of June.



Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration employees celebrated Public Service Recognition Week by providing lunches to the homeless at Union Station.

(Far Left) Irayia Shaw, Jeleen Briscoe, and Jay Coleman shown with some of the bagged lunches.

(Left) Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration employees, clockwise, Jeleen Briscoe (red scarf), Ebony Moore, Sean McLeod, Irayia Shaw, Angela Cruz, and Jay Coleman.

Creating a Friendly Work Environment

By Jacob Aguer Ajang, Food Safety Inspection Service

I am pleased about USDA ranking #9 in 2016 for Best Places to Work in the Federal Government. I enjoy reading our action plans that have been implemented to help increase our Friendly Working Environment for Coworkers (FWEC).



Jacob Aguer Ajang

I joined the USDA/Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) in 2015. I witnessed the resilience of the FSIS employees who ensure public health is always our top goal. The FSIS is one of the most diverse agencies at USDA. Several nationalities and people of various backgrounds make up the FSIS working team.

The characteristics of providing FWEC is to ensure each worker takes responsibility to make his/her day at work a good day. Be at your best:

- Each morning greet and smile at your coworkers
- Speak in a friendly and respectful way
- Respect every person of any type
- Look your best at all times

Supervisors know workers' day-to-day moods and are often the first to see the impact of creating a friendly working environment for coworkers. Being kind and friendly helps create and maintain that environment.

A smile makes a good first impression, and it helps eliminate rudeness. Ignoring these characteristics of a friendly workplace creates doubts and an unpleasant work environment.

National Inventors Hall of Fame Honors ARS Scientist

Article courtesy of the Agricultural Research Service Office of Communications

An Agricultural Research Service (ARS) chemist has become the newest member of the [National Inventors Hall of Fame](#) during ceremonies at the National Building Museum in Washington, D.C. She is receiving the award posthumously.

Dr. Allene Rosalind Jeanes, who died in 1995, used her background in carbohydrate chemistry to save countless lives on the battlefields of Korea and during the years that followed. Jeanes studied how bacteria could produce polymers in corn, wheat and wood. Her research led to the discovery of ways to mass-produce dextran, a type of polymer, for use as a blood volume



"expander" to sustain accident and trauma victims suffering from significant blood loss. The methods Jeanes developed led to commercial-scale production and use of dextran during the Korean War.

Jeanes also developed xanthan gum, a sugar synthesized by bacteria. Approved in 1968 by the Food and Drug Administration as a food additive, xanthan gum is widely used today in products such as toothpaste, egg substitutes, ice cream and some gluten-free foods.

"Dr. Jeanes' contributions show the lasting value of ARS research," said [Chavonda Jacobs-Young](#), ARS administrator. "Every day, our scientists are making a difference for Americans and are adding to the proud legacy of the researchers who preceded them—like Rosalind Jeanes."

Jeanes, who worked in Peoria from 1941 to 1976, was elected to the ARS [Science Hall of Fame](#) in 1999 and was the first woman awarded the USDA Distinguished Service Award. She also received the Federal Woman's Service Award from President Kennedy in 1962.

Dr. Allene Rosalind Jeanes

Research in the 1940s showed that dextran had the potential to help accident and trauma victims suffering serious blood loss by restoring lost electrolytes and maintaining blood pressure. Jeanes was interested in dextran for years, but couldn't find quantities large enough for meaningful research.

That changed when a soft drink company in Peoria sent her a sample of its product. The company wanted to know why its product had become thick and gooey. Jeanes learned that the root beer was contaminated with a bacterium that produced dextran. The discovery of this dextran-producing microbe meant Jeanes could produce all the dextran she needed.

When the Korean War broke out in 1950, Jeanes and her colleagues were able to make a dextran-based blood volume expander that the Army put to immediate use. The blood volume expander lasted longer than blood plasma without refrigeration. Sterilized to prevent infections, it was one-third the cost of plasma and remained viable long enough to keep patients alive until they could get a transfusion.

A YouTube video about Jeanes is available at <https://youtu.be/tgAkIsUoaNA>.

For more information visit [National Inventors Hall of Fame](#) or contact [Dennis O'Brien](#), ARS Office of Communications.

USDA National Hispanic Heritage Month Observance to Be Held in September

By Tessie G. Acosta-Williams, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

This year's *USDA National Hispanic Heritage Month* observance event will be held on September 14, 2017 at 10:00 a.m. in the Jefferson Auditorium of the USDA building in downtown Washington D.C. Please join us as we recognize the contributions of Hispanics to the fabric of America.

For more information, please contact Wendy Carrasco, USDA Diversity and Inclusion Program Manager for Hispanic Employment Program, Department Management, Office of Human Resources Management – Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/Life Division at (202)-260-8335 or via email at wendy.carrasco@dm.usda.gov.

USDA Employees Are Finalists for SAMMIE Awards

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

Dr. Jitender P. Dubey, a Microbiologist from USDA's Agriculture Research Service, and Sarah Jovan, Research Ecologist and Geoffrey Donovan, Research Forester, of USDA's Forest Service are finalists for the Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medals (SAMMIEs).

The awards are provided by the Partnership for Public Service. During a 30-year government career, Dr. Jitender Dubey identified and has led the fight to control three harmful parasitic diseases in farm animals and pets, curtailing the transfer of these diseases to humans, saving tens of thousands of lives and reducing human disabilities. Here are some details about his work on one of those diseases. Much of his groundbreaking work has centered on *Toxoplasma gondii* (*T. gondii*), one of the most widespread parasites in the world. Infection from this parasite can occur when humans and animals are exposed to contaminated soil, water, food, or used cat litter. Infection also can take place when people consume undercooked meat containing the parasite. Toxoplasmosis, the disease caused by the parasite, can cause mental retardation and blindness in humans and cause pregnant sheep and goats to lose their young.

Until Dubey's discovery, no one knew how the infection was transmitted. Dubey developed safety guidelines that are used by food safety authorities throughout the world, and his work led to warning labels being placed on cat litter to prevent the spread of the disease. Dubey has trained researchers from more than a dozen countries and is the author of, or contributor to, some 1,400 publications. Yet those who have worked with Dubey said he is never too busy to help a colleague solve a problem or to be a mentor.

Sarah Jovan, a Research Ecologist, and Geoffrey Donovan, a Research Forester at USDA's Forest Service were nominated for their work that explored how moss can be used to detect air quality problems in forests. They applied this novel concept for the first time in a city. Their collaboration led to startling results. The moss from tree trunks and branches was used as a test bed at 346 sites throughout Portland, allowing Jovan and Donovan to produce maps showing heavy metals at a level of detail never seen before. The tests revealed numerous hot spots in residential neighborhoods near two stained glass manufacturers that had high and potentially dangerous levels of cadmium and arsenic, both of which can cause cancer. The disclosures led to follow-up air quality testing by Oregon's environmental department that found cadmium 49 times and arsenic 155 times above acceptable health levels. Although the heavy metals are used in stained glass, a loophole in state and federal regulations had allowed the emissions to go unchecked. The revelation led to tighter monitoring and regulation of glass manufacturers in Portland and the state. Factories installed new filters, and the two companies emitting the air pollution stopped working with cadmium. The moss study was a "tipping point" that led to more state funding to conduct extensive air quality monitoring. In addition, the Portland experience has led to interest by Cincinnati, Seattle and other cities, in using this technique to monitor their air quality because of its effectiveness and low cost. The award winners will be announced at the end of September.

Health Benefits of Meditation and Yoga at USDA

(b) (6)

(b) (6) has been seen around USDA headquarters (South and Whitten buildings) wearing a variety of hats she knit for stress relief and to cover her cold head, as she lost her hair due to chemo side effects. Her current news is that after surgery and chemotherapy, her cancer is in remission & her hair is growing back too.

By (b) (6)

Not all stress is bad, but continual stress can be detrimental to our health. Last September, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer – stage 3A. Doctors highly recommended reducing stress. So following this guidance, I set aside the things that I couldn't change, trusted my medical team, and reached out for moral support. I participated in meditation and yoga sessions, which were offered as part of a USDA's workplace wellness program. This gave me the opportunity to hear good tips on reducing workplace stress and using yoga to reduce physical stress, including a focus on small stretches to do easily in the office. It allowed me time away from my desk to be with other people focusing on something positive. Both the variety and the repetition of the sessions have helped me reduce stress and relax. If you want to join future sessions or need more information, email wellness@dm.usda.gov. There is one session per month, but the date, time, and location are subject to change.

2017 USDA Unsung Hero Award Winners

By Dana Manning, Organization of Professional Employees of USDA

On Thursday May 4, 2017, the USDA, with leadership of the Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA), honored eleven employees as Unsung Heroes. USDA Secretary Sonny Perdue greeted the 2017 Unsung Heroes in his office. Mr. Louis Iacoletti, OPEDA, Executive Vice President, provided opening ceremony remarks. Mr. James Brent, Master of Ceremonies, commented on the specific outstanding performance as each Unsung Hero accepted a citation signed by the Secretary. Acting Deputy Secretary Mike Young noted the many contributions the USDA employees made and their service to the public. Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration Malcom Shorter closed the ceremony, by celebrating the service of these 2017 USDA Unsung Hero Award Winners during National Public Service Recognition Week.

The 2017 USDA Unsung Heroes were: Rupert Richards, AMS; Tinene Frazier, APHIS; Colleen McMahan, ARS; Karen Malkin, FSA; Tifanii Dahl, FSA; John Froehlich, FSIS; Jill Snyder and Kelly Clines, FSA; and Charles Jackson, GIPSA. Kimberly Lightley, US Forest Service; John Piche, US Forest Service.

US Forest Service Forest Service Region-4 Law Enforcement Team: Jarvis Alexander, Larry Hall, Don Harris, Brandon Robinson, and Ira Smith.

The 2017 Unsung Hero Award Program can be viewed in more detail at www.OPEDA.org.

Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue meets with the 2017 Unsung Hero Honorees and OPEDA leadership at the U.S. Department of Agriculture in Washington, D. C.

Photo by Lance Cheung



Mark Your Calendar for this Upcoming Special Observance at USDA

LGBT Pride Month
Thursday, June 8, 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.

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

By Lisa M. Mason, Office of Human Resources Management

On April 27th, 2017, the Jamie L. Whitten Patio was filled with fun and excitement during the annual *Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day*! Children experienced the great work of USDA employees from the inside by participating in interactive and educational activities and shadowing their parents during the workday. They learned about the many different career paths available at USDA as varied as agricultural science, technology, IT/computer, wildlife biology, and many other fields.

Children beyond the families of our USDA employees also attended, including youth from two local schools. Departmental Management sponsored 46 girls and boys from Malcolm X Elementary School in Washington, DC and the National Christian Academy from Ft. Washington, MD. The students' first stop was a photo shoot with Food Safety Inspection Service mascot, Thermy the Thermometer, Agricultural Marketing Service mascot Milkshake, and Forest Service mascot Woodsy Owl. Next, they attended a special presentation with Mr. Malcom Shorter, Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration (ASA), who gave a very motivating speech on the next generation of leaders and the diversified careers at USDA. Student interns from the ASAs office assured the students that anything is possible. Students then reunited with USDA employees and families on the Whitten Patio to enjoy the many interactive activities.

The USDA opens its doors every year to our employee's children in recognition of this day. The children are given a valuable and positive educational experience, along with mentorship and career ideas. Twenty exhibitors were onsite for this year's activities representing USDA agencies, with over 800 employees and youth participating.



The children got to meet USDA mascots, Milkshake (AMS), Thermy the Thermometer (FSIS), and Woodsy Owl (FS).



Dozens of children participated in the annual Take Your Daughters and Sons to Work Day on the Whitten Patio.



Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination (OHSEC) Women in Leadership Program passed out superhero themed goodie bags.



The OHSEC Women in Leadership Program received 70 girl-power themed book donations from ladies across USDA to hand out at the event.



Girls posed for "You the Riveter" pics after receiving girl-power books.

Food and Nutrition Service Employees Get Healthy

By Kimone Paley, Food and Nutrition Service

On April 26, 2017, to kick-off the revamp of the USDA/Food and Nutrition Service Southwest Regional Office (SWRO) Wellness Initiative, the SWRO Wellness Committee arranged a Lunch and Learn. Regional staff members participated by

- 1.) Building their own salad-style and/or
- 2.) Learning about some healthy eating and workout tips from the trainer at the gym in another nearby federal building.

Altogether, it was a nice event to encourage SWRO staff to eat healthy and stay active. The Wellness Committee will continue to promote a positive work/life balance by arranging activities and events to encourage healthy eating habits and an active lifestyle.

Employees at the Food and Nutrition Service (right) learn about healthy eating and the importance of exercise as part of the Southwest Regional Office Wellness Initiative Lunch and Learn.



Seeking Employee Volunteers for SYEP

By Michelle Jordan, Office of Human Resources Management

USDA is gearing up to host a record number of students from DC, VA, and MD for the Summer Youth Employment Programs (SYEP) on June 26th. The core purpose of all of the county and city programs is to expose young people ages 14-24 to various career fields and introduce them to the dynamics of working in a professional and positive work environment.

During the course of six weeks of career exploration, the youth and young adults will also receive soft skill training on topics such as business etiquette, customer service, time management, budgeting, banking, resumes, how to navigate USAJOBS, Pathways, volunteering, Federal jobs by college major search, ethics, disability, and LGBT awareness.

We are seeking USDA employees that are willing to volunteer to participate in on-boarding orientation, job shadow experience, or soft skills training sessions as guest speakers to talk about their personal experience as a participant in a summer youth employment program and how it prepared them for college or career path.

If any USDA employee has the ability to be available for up to one hour to share their testimony or success story on how the summer youth employment program may have been their first working assignment, please send your name, title, mission area, agency or office and name of SYEP to the attention of the USDA Recruitment Program Manager, Michelle Jordan, at students@dm.usda.gov before June 16, 2017.

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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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).

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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.



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MyUSDA

Volume 1, Issue 5

June 2017

2017 Feds Feed Families Kickoff

By Betty-Ann Bryce, Rural Development

The 2017 Feds Feed Families (FFF) campaign runs through August 31, 2017. The FFF food drive has become the critical means by which food banks fill their shelves during the summer. In 2016, it brought in over 12 million pounds of food, 600,000 pounds of which went to people across Washington, D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

This year's theme is *Feds Unite Against Hunger*. The national campaign kickoff was held at the Capital Area Food Bank on Wednesday, June 7, 2017. Many federal agencies showed their support by bringing a food donation to start the campaign.



Employee participation is crucial to the success of the campaign. The employees participate by attending Feds Feed Families sponsored events; bringing in non-perishable food items and depositing them in collection bins at their respective agencies; and joining a field or warehouse gleaning event. The 2017 FFF National Program Manager is Betty-Ann Bryce and the USDA FFF Chair is Carl Mayes.



Above: Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration Malcom Shorter opens the Feds Feed Families Kickoff.

Left: Department of Homeland Security 2017 Chair Vice Admiral Sandra Stosz speaks to participants about the teamwork needed to reach FFF goals. The 2017 Feds Feed Families National Kickoff Event was sponsored by the USDA.

FFF USDA Photos by Preston Keres

USDA Commemorates Asian American Heritage

USDA held its official Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month Observance on May 25, 2017, with keynote speaker Dotti Li, Managing Director of Transpacific Communications. Participants then took part in a cultural exchange celebration on the Whitten Patio in Washington, D.C.



Asian American Pacific Islander Observance keynote speaker Dotti Li (far left), the Managing Director of Transpacific Communications, addressed participants.

Agricultural Research Service Associate Administrator Dr. Simon Liu (above left) delivered opening remarks.

National Institute of Food and Agriculture's Institute of Bioenergy, Climate, and Environment Deputy Director Luis Tupas (below left) delivered closing remarks.

USDA Celebrates LGBT Pride

On Thursday, June 8, 2017, USDA officially recognized June as Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Pride Month. Employees gathered to hear from keynote speaker Commissioner Chai Feldblum of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (below right.) This year's theme celebrated the Colors of Pride and was marked by a tribute to Gilbert Baker, creator of the iconic Rainbow Pride flag. Click here to view "How the Rainbow Pride Flag Came to Be:" https://youtu.be/S_bzpr2jalQ

The employee resource group, Equality USDA (formerly known as USDA GLOBE), also honored retiring APHIS employee William Aley (below left) for his 32 years of federal service, and in particular for his work to improve the workplace for USDA's LGBT employees.



USDA Photos by Lance Cheung



A Mom's Story

By (b) (6) (b) (6)

As we observe Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month in June, I thought I would take a moment to share my personal story: (b) (6)

(b) (6), I have always been excited to have an outlet for my passion for animal welfare, and I welcome an opportunity to be an advocate of civil rights for all people. As an undergraduate in my Women's Studies 101 course, we were told "The Personal is Political!" – so here goes:

I feel very fortunate to be back (b) (6) where LGBT visibility and acceptance is more common. And the national milestones that have been accomplished within the past few years, with regard to marriage equality are so encouraging! But exactly one year ago this month, the Pulse Gay Nightclub shooting occurred in Orlando, an event that caused me to relive some of my worst fears. When I read about the mother whose son called her from his hiding place in the club, and her frantic terror trying to learn whether he had survived the attack (he did not), it provoked strong emotions for me.

I spent twenty years living (b) (6), and that is where I raised my two children. At the age of 14, my son told me that he was gay, and that he did not want anyone beyond our family to know this, until he was safely off to college, and out of (b) (6). Over the next four years, we did a delicate dance; he went to proms and late night bonfires, and deflected the suspicions and accusations of his classmates. I lived in fear that he would be "outed," beat up, or worse. I lived in fear of bad news arriving at my doorstep...or that late night call from the police.

For all those other 14 years olds out there who are lesbian, just trying to figure out who they are while living in a place that is not accepting and tolerant – please join me in saying – We Have Your Back! Things are getting better every day! You not only have rights and legal protections, you have a place at the table. Happy Pride Month!

Update on USDA's Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

The FEVS officially closed for USDA on June 14, 2017. Our unadjusted response rate for USDA is 57.6%. This is .6% higher than last year's unadjusted response rate. Last year, 37,310 employees received the survey, and we had 22,878 employees complete the survey. This year, improvements were implemented to allow more groups at lower levels in the organization to participate. The results that are generated will help guide them to make improvements in the workplace.

This year, our sample size more than doubled to 82,388 employees. As the survey closed, 47,477 employees completed the survey! This success is due to our collective efforts. The Office of Personnel Management will share the official response rate report later this summer. The results of the survey will be used to help us continue our positive progress to improve the USDA.

AMS Holds Leadership Conference

By Summer Butler, Agricultural Marketing Service

On May 17, 2017, the Agriculture Marketing Service's Acting Chief Information Officer, Michael Durando, and leaders from the Information Technology Services Program and the Specialty Crops Program's Marketing Order & Agreement Division (MOAD) participated in the 8th Annual Key Executive Leadership Conference at the American University.

With the theme "Journey through Transition in Turbulent Times," the conference provided more than 200 attendees with the opportunity to explore leadership principles, government trends, and best practices in executive management.

The three sessions covered the tracks Change as Opportunity, Embracing Fear, and Humble Leadership. The leadership conference gave everyone the opportunity for a mid-week recharge, time to reflect, and the opportunity to network with other government leaders.

A powerful lunchtime plenary presentation on "Leading Across Generations" was one of several highlights, along with a closing panel on ways to manage transition. MOAD's managers, pictured right, also had the chance to take part in the Federal Executive Institute's Executive Forum on the preceding day.

Both worthwhile events gave everyone the opportunity to sharpen and gain new skills, hear ideas from leading experts, and be reminded of important leadership principles.



Mark Your Calendar for this Upcoming Special Observance at USDA

National Hispanic Heritage Month Thursday, September 14, 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.

USDA Welcomes 2017 Interns

On June 5, 2017, USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach welcomed interns and scholars participating in the USDA Thurgood Marshall, 1994, and Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities summer internship programs. Office of Advocacy and Outreach Director Carolyn Parker welcomed summer interns on the Whitten Building Patio in Washington, D.C.

USDA Photographer Preston Keres



Red-Tailed Hawks Make a Home at USDA

A family of red-tailed hawks has made a home on the roofs and ledges of USDA headquarters at 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. Employees have noticed the hawks for quite awhile, and in the past few weeks, USDA photographer Preston Keres has been following them.

To see all of Preston's photos, go to the USDA Flickr page at:

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/usdagov/albums/72157681011727944/with/34458707364/>



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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Key Contributors:

Betty-Ann Bryce, Ayana Bailey, Debra Arnold, Tessie G. Acosta-Williams, Lance Cheung, Preston Keres, Callihan M. Dice, Pamela L. Smith, Summer Butler, Benny Seda-Galarza

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MyUSDA

Volume 1, Issue 6

July 2017

FFF Campaign Focuses on Gleaning

The Feds Feed Families food drive is in full swing, and July focuses on gleaning. Gleaning is critical to the success of the campaign. We are asking federal employees across the country to get out and glean in support of Feds Feed Families!

To support this focus, the National Program Office hosted a series of gleaning events in the DC Metro Region in July. At the first event on July 1st, a group including representatives from the National Program Office along with the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Federal Bureau of Investigation, and The Smithsonian Institution (SI) gleaned collard greens and kale.

It was a family affair with the DHS and SI delegates bringing their children, all of whom gleaned enthusiastically. The group gleaned 1,306 pounds of produce that was picked up by the Oxon Hill Church of Christ. The church runs a food pantry that serves 140 people and they include fresh produce when it's available.

On Friday, July 7th, employees from the National Program Office, USDA, DHS, the Department of Defense (DoD), and the Department of Education (ED) sorted corn at the Capital Area Food Bank (CAFB). The group of 22 included ten participants from ED led by Holly Ham, Assistant Secretary for Management. The group sorted a whopping 13 bins of corn that amounted to over 6100 pounds! The sorted corn was distributed through CAFB's mobile market program to families, individuals and food pantries.

The next day, a group of 25, including the Department of Housing and Urban Development, USDA, DHS, and DoD, went to Parker Farms in Colonial Beach, Virginia and harvested over 2900 pounds of corn for the Northern Neck Food Bank.

It is not too late to participate, so consider participating in a gleaning event near you!

Contact fedsfeedfamilies@usda.gov for more details. Stay connected with the campaign's gleaning activities by checking out www.usda.gov/fedsfeedfamilies and following FFF on Twitter, Instagram@fedsfeedfamilies, and Facebook.

Also, please view this short [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eydApEDCs3E&feature=youtu.be) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eydApEDCs3E&feature=youtu.be>) about the Feds Feed Families campaign.



USDA's Family Day Picnic

Secretary Sonny Perdue and Mrs. Mary Perdue hosted USDA's Family Day picnic on Saturday, June 24, 2017 in Beltsville, MD. The Perdues joined employees, families and friends at the picnic, held on the grounds of the George Washington Carver Center.



The day included activities on the grounds—including a bounce house, tailgating games like bag toss, competitions to watch, our favorite pie eating contest, and – a newly added Selfie with the Secretary Station! – and many more.



Food, Fun, and Games!



Secretary Announces World Food Prize Laureate

Dr. Akinwumi Adesina, President of the African Development Bank, is the 2017 World Food Prize Laureate as announced at a USDA ceremony. Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue (right) gave keynote remarks and applauded the selection. Awarded by the World Food Prize Foundation, the \$250,000 prize honors Nigerian Dr. Adesina for his leading role over the past two decades in: significantly expanding food production in Nigeria; introducing initiatives to exponentially increase the availability of credit for smallholder farmers across the African continent; and, galvanizing the political will to transform African agriculture.



"As someone who grew out of poverty, I know that poverty is not pretty," said Dr. Adesina. "My life mission is to lift up millions of people out of poverty, especially farmers in rural areas of Africa. We must give hope and turn agriculture into a business all across Africa to create wealth for African economies. The World Food Prize gives me a greater global platform to make that future happen much faster for Africa."

-- Dr. Akinwumi Adesina



USDA Photo by Preston Keres

NRCS Advancing Pollinator Species

By Ed Nilson, Agricultural Conservation Experience Services Program, NRCS

My mother's farm in Nebraska had a pivot corner that I wanted to devote to wildlife habitat.

In 2016, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) had a wonderful Environmental Quality Incentives Program which assisted me in planting native grasses and wildflowers to establish pollinator species benefitting honeybees and monarch butterflies.

This was of special interest to me because I have started beekeeping in the last two years and was concerned about declining monarch butterfly populations.

I applied for the program, and my application ranked high enough for funding. I had this corner of my mother's farm lightly disked last fall and I broadcast the grass and seeds for wildlife species purchased from Pheasants Forever, one of USDA's partners.

The resulting stand is tremendous and both NRCS and my family are pleased with the results. Pheasants and bobwhite quail are beginning to return to this area for nesting and habitat cover.

Thanks to USDA for your assistance!

Photo by Joshua Langholdt, NRCS



USDA Hosts E. Kika De La Garza Fellows

By Jacqueline Padrón, Office of Advocacy and Outreach

Office of Advocacy and Outreach's (OAO) Hispanic-Serving Institutions National Program recently hosted the 20th class of the E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship. The E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship Program provides faculty and staff from Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) with the opportunity to work collaboratively with USDA to gain insight and understanding of the Federal Government. This year's class of 18 fellows was selected based on the compatibility of their interests with USDA mission areas, as well as the value their experiences would add to their institutions' educational capacities. Through partnerships fostered by the fellowship program, USDA and HSIs are better prepared to address educational challenges and to promote services and employment opportunities offered by USDA agencies. The fellowship's USDA agency briefings culminated in a recognition ceremony on the Whitten Patio. The Fellows had the opportunity to hear from Carolyn C. Parker, Director of the OAO; Christian Obineme, Associate Director of the OAO; and Cyrus Salazar, the Director of the Early Resolution and Conciliation Division for the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.



Front Row: Evelyn Young Spath, California State University, Bakersfield, CA; Christopher D. McCraw, Bakersfield College, Bakersfield, CA; Eduardo A. Araujo-Pradere, Miami Dade College, Homestead, FL; Christian Obineme, Associate Director, USDA OAO; Jacqueline Padron, Program Director, OAO Hispanic-Serving Institutions National Program; Carolyn C. Parker, Director, USDA OAO; Dan Wueste, Program Analyst, OAO Hispanic-Serving Institutions National Program; John A. Unruh, California State University, Chico, CA; Michael G. Kanyi, Imperial Valley College, Imperial, CA; John McMillan, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA

Back Row: Anthony S. Marin, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM; Gabriela Alberola, California State University, Monterey Bay, Seaside, CA; Briana McCarthy, Los Medanos College, Pittsburg, CA; Bonita de Leon, San Antonio College, San Antonio, TX; Amanda Ripstra, Maricopa County Community College District, Tempe, AZ; Robin L. Cotter, Phoenix College, Phoenix, AZ; Johana Meléndez, Hillsborough Community College, Plant City, FL; Joanne Rampersad-Ammons, The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, Edinburg, TX; Norma Olvera, University of Houston, Houston, TX; Olgaly Ramos-Rodríguez, University of Puerto Rico at Utuado, PR; Edgardo L. Sanabria-Valentin, John Jay College of the City University of New York, NY; Efren Delgado, New Mexico State University, Las Cruces, NM

AgLearn Upgrades System for Better Learning

By Gabe Martinez, Office of the Chief Information Officer

In the 13-years of AgLearn's service to the USDA, there have been nearly 10 million online courses completed. All of us at AgLearn are proud of this feat, but we're also looking forward and see a diverse and progressive workforce with the need of a learning management system to match their drive.

To meet your needs AgLearn is implementing the Next Gen AgLearn in October 2017.

What Next Gen Learning Management System Means for You:

- **Mobile Friendly** – Responsive design allows access to AgLearn across a wide variety of mobile devices, laptops, and desktop PC's.
- **Usability** – Eliminates Java and Flash, minimizing end-user issues, and thus allows you to focus on the course instead of technical troubleshooting.
- **Simple to Administer** – Get courses up and running quickly so users can complete training, shortening lead times.
- **More Flexible using Open Source Software** – Allows AgLearn to grow and change with the dynamic needs of an evolving workforce.
- **Accessibility** – Since it adheres to open standards, it's much easier for accessibility tools to work with Next Gen AgLearn and its features and functions.
- **External Training** – Your integrated training from Skillsoft, DMason Financial, Lynda.com, Rosetta Stone, and Skillsoft Books will remain.

For updates and more information, follow our Next Gen AgLearn [blog](#)

Mark Your Calendar for this Upcoming Special Observance at USDA

National Hispanic Heritage Month Thursday, September 14, 2017

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

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NRCS Assists American Indian Students

By Deborah Clairmont, Natural Resources Conservation Service

The American Indian Science and Engineering Society (AISES) held its annual Leadership Summit in April, bringing students as far away as Alaska and Hawaii to the Summit held in Chandler, AZ.

Deborah Clairmont, the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager, met and congratulated the NRCS Travel Scholarship recipients. The three student recipients were:

- Tanya Harrison, University of Hawaii at Mania, Major—Natural Resources
- Sara Kroening, University of Minnesota, Major—Environmental Science
- Miranda Felix-Buckley, Cal Poly Pomona, Major—GIS and Plant Science

The NRCS Travel Scholarship recipients were selected through an AISES and NRCS Sponsorship Agreement. All three of the students say if it not been for the scholarship, they would not have been able to attend the conference. “I have learned more than I imagined about myself and how to be a better leader,” Kroening said.

“Attending the leadership summit was a life-altering experience for me,” said Felix-Buckley. “I now carry with me the lessons I learned from professionals and experts on how to be an effective leader. The leadership methods I was taught explained how to view myself, others, and the problems I aim to address in a holistic way.”

NRCS Utah State Hydraulic Engineer Nathaniel Todea supported Clairmont in encouraging students, helping them with career choices, and understanding the Pathways Program. “I am so thankful for the networking event because I was able to meet Nathaniel Todea who gave me insight as to what jobs are out there. I learned I do have the potential to get an internship still, even though summer is approaching quickly,” said Kroening.

Tribal Students from across the nation met to learn leadership skills and professional networking with public and private agencies, participating in several workshops during the three day event. The summit is a much smaller event compared to the AISES National Conference coming up in September 21-23, 2017 in Denver, Colorado. The national conference will focus on educational, professional, and workforce development. An expected 1200 attendees will include American Indian high school and college students, educators, professionals, Tribal Nations and Tribal Enterprises, universities, corporations and government agencies.



Deborah Clairmont, the NRCS American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager (left) with the American Indian Science and Engineering Society Leadership Summit NRCS Travel Scholarship Students (L to R) Tanya Harrison, Sara Kroening, and Miranda Felix-Buckley.

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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MyUSDA

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August 2017

USDA Employees Respond to FEVS

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

USDA's final response rate to the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) is now available, and the results are very positive!

For the FY 2017 FEVS, USDA's response rate is 63.6%. This is 18.1% higher than the government-wide average, and 2.3% higher than our response rate last year, which was 61.6%.

There were 48,953 employees who responded to this year's survey, representing an increase of more than 50% in 2016 when we had 22,878 employees responding. The response rate tends to reflect our level of employee engagement.

We will continue to stand by as we get the government-wide results and more details about the survey are shared.

USDA Trains Employees on Next Generation AgLearn

By Gabe Martinez, Office of the Chief Information Officer

The Next Gen AgLearn coming October 2017 has Team AgLearn focused on preparing training for all users. One of the challenges of preparing users is the various levels of engagement AgLearn has within USDA. For instance, Team AgLearn works with agency-level leads, administrators, and course creators in developing processes and courses. To support these administrator-level users, AgLearn has implemented an approach to train them by offering instructor led trainings (ILT). AgLearn's Senior Training Specialist Dana King (pictured below) is the natural fit to lead these five-day intensive training courses.

To assist Dana with the ILTs, AgLearn is also sending Next Gen AgLearn specialist David Newcomb, whose experience includes implementing the same learning management system for sporting goods giant Nike. This training team has mapped out their plan, covering four training sites over eight weeks, to maximize the availability of training and topics covered for administrators and course creators.

Training sessions occurred in July and August.

If you were unable to attend, Dana King is also preparing a virtual session, which AgLearn will notify users of upon its availability. Computer based training modules are also being created to assist all levels of users in using Next Gen AgLearn. As training becomes available, AgLearn will communicate the information to all employees. For more information on Next Gen AgLearn, follow [AgLearn's Blog](#).



Gleaning for Feds Feed Families

By Alexandria Smith, Agricultural Marketing Service

On July 15, Livestock, Poultry and Seed Quality Assessment Division's Mark Lobstein took part in one of the many Feds Feed Families gleaning events going on this summer across the country. He was part of a team of 11 USDA employees who visited the Capital Area Food Bank where they tackled a massive donation of field harvested sweet corn and got it cleaned up and packaged for household use. First, volunteers removed all the unnecessary husk leaves. Then, they packed eight ears to a bag, and placed the bags into packages for distribution. Their final tally? Twenty bins at 12,500 pounds—that's over 170 bushels!—of fresh sweet corn, ready to be handed out to families and individuals throughout the region!

Mark was joined in this fun and productive gleaning effort by Specialty Crops Program's Fiona Pexton, as well as representatives from Food Safety Inspection Service, the Office of the Secretary, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. The Feds Feed Families Initiative runs through August 2017, with plenty of opportunities in the D.C. area and across the country to support those in need through food donations and gleaning events!



Mark Lobstein (grey shirt, middle in the far back row) smiles with Fiona Pexton (navy shirt, third from the right in the middle row) from the USDA gleaning team and volunteers at the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, DC.

FSA Employees in Pennsylvania Support FFF

By Callihan M. Dice, Farm Service Agency

The Adams County, Pennsylvania Farm Service Agency (FSA) Farm Program staff recently helped the South Central Community Action Plan's Gleaning Project bag 1,200 pounds of gleaned potatoes for the Feds Feeds Families campaign. The potatoes were generously donated by Irvin Orchards, a local producer. FSA employees gathered around bins of potatoes (below), got to know other volunteers, and learned more about food insecurity in the community, all while working together to get rejected food onto the plates of those in need! Any potatoes deemed unfit to be distributed to families were placed in buckets to be given to local farmers to feed their livestock – nothing goes to waste!

Adams County, PA is one of the top five fruit-producing counties in the nation, and neighboring Franklin County is the second most vegetable-producing county in Pennsylvania, so the area is abundant with fresh, local food! The Gleaning Project's mission is to connect the community, make good use of agricultural excess, and reduce hunger and improve nutrition in Adams and Franklin County, PA. Once food is gleaned and brought to the project's headquarters in Gettysburg, PA,

it is displayed or repackaged from its bulk form so that needy families can come and "shop" for it in the Project's food pantry located on the property.

FSA staff got to meet a few of the patrons that stopped by for food – it was a great experience being able to support multiple wonderful causes!



WIA Chapter Forms at FNCS

By Michelle Johnson-Weider, Food and Nutrition Service

A new chapter of the Women in Agriculture (WIA) employee group has been established in the Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services (FNCS) mission area. Part of the USDA Women in Agriculture Initiative, WIA supports women in agriculture internally at USDA, domestically across the country, and internationally around the world. WIA provides a forum for both women and men to elevate women's roles in agriculture from farm to fork to boardroom - while identifying leadership opportunities within USDA for women to grow.

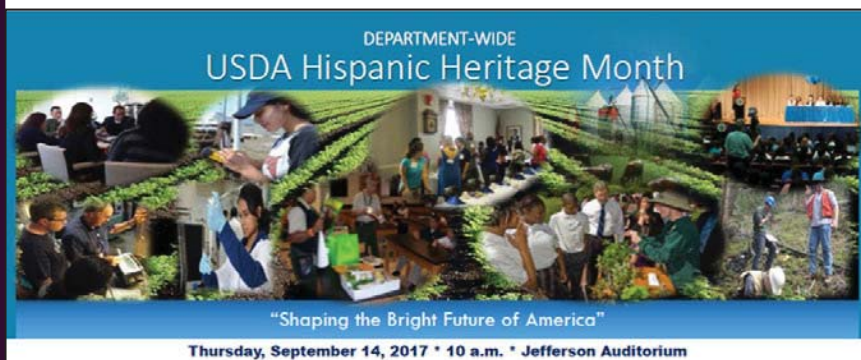
The new WIA@FNCS chapter focuses on issues relevant to women and men at the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) and the Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion. Since its establishment in February 2017, WIA@FNCS has grown to nearly 150 members! The group is led by a leadership council comprised of 12 FNCS employees, who take turns organizing membership events that facilitate communication, networking, and career development. WIA@FNCS partners with other FNCS groups to support diversity and inclusion and employee engagement.

So far, WIA@FNCS has hosted presentations and panel discussions on mindfulness in the workplace, ways to effectively moderate webinars and conference calls, leveraging Federal data tools as work resources, and effective interviewing strategies. Events are made available to all WIA@FNCS members, whether they work at the FNCS National Office in Alexandria, Virginia, one of the seven FNS Regional Offices, or remotely. Interested FNCS employees can email WIA@fns.usda.gov for more information about becoming a member of WIA@FNCS.

USDA To Celebrate Hispanic Heritage Month

By the USDA Hispanic Heritage Month Communications Committee

This year's *USDA National Hispanic Heritage Month* observance theme is "**Shaping the Bright Future of America**". This theme embodies the ideal that Hispanics shape the bright future of America through our contributions to all aspects of America's daily life and national endeavors. Whether it be defending our nation or exploring the universe, conducting scientific research or providing services, in the law or in the arts, in community leadership, finance, sports, or in any other activity, Hispanics enrich the fabric of America to make it brighter, more just, and stronger!



During **National Hispanic Heritage Month** (September 15 to October 15) we recognize the contributions made and the important presence of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the United States and celebrate their heritage and culture.

Hispanic Heritage Month, whose roots go back to 1968, begins each year on September 15, the anniversary of independence of five Latin American countries: Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and

Nicaragua. Mexico, Chile and Belize also celebrate their independence days during this period and Columbus Day (Día de la Raza) is October 12.

The term Hispanic or Latino, refers to Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race. Today, 55 million people or 17% of the U.S. population are of Hispanic or Latino origin. This represents a significant increase from 2000, which registered the Hispanic population at 35.3 million or 13% of the total U.S. population. We invite you to celebrate the Hispanic Contributions at USDA on September 14, 2017 at the Jefferson Auditorium of the USDA building in downtown Washington D.C.

For more information, contact Wenndy Carrasco at (202)-260-8335 or via email at wenndy.carrasco@dm.usda.gov.

48th Annual Federally Employed Women's Training

By Lisa Mason, Office of Human Resources Management

In partnership with the National Federally Employed Women's (FEW) Organization, USDA sponsored its annual Agency Pre-Conference forum on July 17, 2017, in New Orleans, Louisiana. The theme for this year's Forum was "Investing in Our Future." FEW reported that USDA had the largest agency participation with close to 80 participants. USDA received two awards, one for outstanding dedication and commitment to training and public service, and another for USDA continuous outstanding support.

The forum focused on "Developing Your Personal Strategic Plan", "Lean In – The Will and Mind to Lead," and a roundtable discussion. Presenting agencies included senior executives and managers from by Karen T. Comfort, Deputy Associate Administrator, AMS, Cristina Chiappe, Deputy Administrator for Management, FNCS, Phyllis Holmes, Acting Director, 1890 National Program, OAO, Kenya Nichols, Program Director, 2501 Program, OAO and Dr. Vivian Chen, Deputy Assistant Administrator, FSIS.

In addition, USDA and FSIS hosted an exhibit booth which provided an opportunity to promote and feature USDA as a provider and employer of choice. An estimated 500 participants visited the exhibit booth.

Nevada RD Builds Disability Awareness

By Kelly Clark, Rural Development

Will Mitchem of USDA Rural Development Nevada planned his Disability Awareness Project at the state office in Carson City, Nevada, to make people more sensitive to the needs of those in wheelchairs. As a veteran himself, with buddies who have spent time in wheelchairs, and as an assistant to his mother, who was once wheelchair-bound, he knows the difficulties of maneuvering in small spaces.

"With my mom, it was always a challenge, getting her into the right spot, and many times we just had to give up. I thought it might be an eye opener for my office mates here to experience the wheel chair for themselves for a day." As a member of Nevada's Employee Engagement Team, Will is responsible for both the Veterans and Disabled Persons Special Emphasis Programs. The Employee Engagement Team supported the idea.

Will set up the event to allow staff to voluntarily sign up to use a wheel chair for a day, and then give him feedback on the experience. He sent wheel chairs out to area offices that did not have access to one. He created a calendar for sign ups, and announced the project at the monthly All-Hands meeting. His supervisor Jim Park --who is the agency's Administrative Program Officer and was one of the first to try the chair --applauded the project. "This activity really gave me firsthand knowledge, not all of it good, about how our office does and does not work for folks in wheelchairs," Park said.

Most people really appreciated the experience, but it was not easy. "I think all of us came away from it with a newfound appreciation for the strength and determination of those folks who use wheel chairs every day," said Mitchem.

Employee Engagement Team members said the activity led to lots of discussions about the struggles others endure, and that creates empathy." If you are interested in holding a Disability Awareness Project with staff in your state, and have any questions for Will, you can contact him at (775) 887-1222, Ext. 100.



USDA RD Nevada Administrative Programs Officer Jim Park uses a wheelchair at his computer as part of a Disability Awareness activity sponsored by Nevada's Employee Engagement Team.

USDA Encourages Employee Veterans

By Stefanie Pidgeon, Risk Management Agency



Christopher Adams (left) spent eight years serving as an Explosive Ordnance Disposal Technician on the U.S. Air Force's bomb squad and now works as a Compliance Investigator for USDA's Risk Management Agency. Adams, who joined RMA in January 2017, says he applies the skills he learned in the military on a daily basis. "I frequently reflect on where I was in the past and how I have grown and matured in my career," he said.

Adams is from Milwaukee, Wisconsin and comes from a military background. During his time with the Air Force he was stationed at Air Force bases in Missouri and Alaska and deployed three times, two of which were combat deployments to Afghanistan. He says that the military taught him the values of teamwork, integrity, respect, loyalty, sacrifice, and duty, and believes all military Veterans have these skills and ability to adapt to the federal workforce.

According to USDA's Office of Human Resources Management more than 13 percent of USDA's workforce are Veterans (as of 2nd quarter FY17). The Department has a target that 25 percent of all new hires in the overall USDA workforce be Veterans. Adams joined the federal workforce when he left the service in 2009. He spent eight years with the Department of Homeland Security before coming to USDA and believes the traits he and his fellow Veterans bring to government agencies can add value to any team. "Veterans are skilled in many different arenas," Adams said. "Many Veterans are natural problem solvers, know how to work under stressful conditions, and understand the importance of working together for a common cause."

Adams encourages Veterans who are new to USDA to talk to other Veteran employees, noting that "USDA has many Veterans on the staff that would be a great resource for questions." To his colleagues and leaders Adams wants them to know that the Veterans he's served with are eager to learn, well respected, and intelligent, and says, "These traits are important to any business and bodes well for future USDA Veterans."

For more information about the employment of Veterans within USDA, Veterans' Preference, and other Veterans services, visit USDA's Veterans Employment Program Office at <https://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vepo/>.

Tips for Writing Your Annual Accomplishment Report

By Joanna Barlow, Office of Human Resources Management

You are encouraged, but not required in USDA-wide policy to provide an accomplishment report to your supervisor in late September or early October. Your agency might require one, so be on the lookout for guidance on it. This is your opportunity to document what you did to meet the expectations in your performance plan.

There is no "right" way to format your report, and the degree of detail you include is up to you and your supervisor. Here are a few content recommendations:

- ◆ Summarize your most important contributions
- ◆ Describe the outcome of your efforts toward meeting the expectations in your performance plan
- ◆ Give specific examples
- ◆ Describe the value of your contributions, particularly in terms of how they support organizational goals
- ◆ Highlight the ways you exceeded the "meets fully successful" expectations in your plan.
- ◆ Talk about any challenges you faced, and how you dealt with them
- ◆ Don't exaggerate, even a little bit! But don't undersell your contributions, either.

This is also a great opportunity to be thinking about your 2018 performance plan, so keep that in mind as you write your accomplishment report.

USDA Celebrates Women's Equality Day

By Derric Cushman, Risk Management Agency

Employees from across USDA came to the Whitten building to attend the 2017 Women's Equality Day Training on August 16, 2017. Sponsored by the Office of Human Resources Management and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR), the event included classes on resume writing with Dr. Wanda Bryant and Dr. Gladys Vaughn.

The training was designed to give attendees a better understanding of the application process, effective writing, and showcasing unique skills in resumes.

Dr. Wanda Bryant (pictured below), USDA's Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program manager, is an expert in executive, employee, and workforce development. Her background includes a PhD in Professional Studies Education. She demonstrated how to build what she calls "winning federal resumes."

"I'm here today to give those tips on how to develop a winning resume," said Bryant. "It has worked for me and I have had many candidates who have come back to me and said, 'Wow, this was definitely worth it!'"



Attendees also listened to Dr. Gladys Gary Vaughn's presentation on Identifying and Strengthening Transferrable Skills. Vaughn (pictured above), Chief of the Training and Cultural Transformation Division in the Office of Compliance Policy Training and Cultural Transformation in OASCR, talked about transferrable skills and being an engaged employee.

"Once they understand resume development and skill transfer they can actually start looking at who they are, what it is they are doing, and what they need to move forward," said Vaughn.

Attendee Lucrecia Rodriguez, a museum specialist with Agricultural Research Service found the training to be a big help. "I really believe I will have a better chance if I follow the instructions," said Rodriguez. "A lot of times it's not just everything you know, it's also how you present yourself and that's part of the teaching today that I will take with me."

Mark Your Calendar for this Upcoming Special Observance at USDA

National Hispanic Heritage Month

Thursday, September 14, 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.

FNS Encourages Healthy Lifestyles

By Lashonda Walker, Food and Nutrition Service

The Southwest Region Health and Wellness Committee hosted a Smoothie Tasting event on July 19 at the Earl Cabell Federal Building in Dallas. The event was hosted as part of the committee's efforts to encourage healthy lifestyle choices through nutritious eating and physical activity.

The event kicked off with a special presentation by guest speaker Ben Clark. Clark is a life and wellness coach and provided attendees information on small changes they can make to improve their health and wellness while at work. He demonstrated several stretching exercises employees could do while sitting at their desk, and instructed attendees on different breathing exercises they could do to improve posture and circulation.



Life and Wellness Coach Ben Clark (above left) demonstrates leg stretches employees can do at their desk.

More than 40 federal employees from a variety of agencies attended. They sampled four different, easy-to-make smoothies and everyone was given the recipes to try at home. Kimone Paley, the committee chairperson, said the committee hosted the event in order to share the importance of healthy eating and physical activity. "We thought this was a fun way to teach the importance of eating to live and not living to eat," said Paley.

SNAP Branch Chief Vernzel Byrd (right) practices breathing exercises that can be done while sitting at your desk to increase circulation.



Kimone Paley (above) serves green smoothie samples to attendees.



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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.

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.



Keeping USDA
Employees Informed
About

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- EMPLOYEE
ENGAGEMENT &
RETENTION
- DEVELOPMENT
& TRAINING
OPPORTUNITIES
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MyUSDA

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October 2017

USDA Strategic Goals

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

Secretary Perdue has shared video messages on the first two of our seven USDA Strategic Goals.

Strategic Goal 1: Ensure USDA programs are delivered efficiently, effectively, with integrity and a focus on customer service (click [here](#) to watch the video.)

Strategic Goal 2: Maximize the ability of American agricultural producers to prosper by feeding and clothing the world (click [here](#) to watch the video).

Each one is full of helpful information and details about how we can fulfill our new motto, "Do right and feed everyone." Watch for future videos to learn about each of our remaining strategic goals.

USDA Top Contributor to 2017 FFF

By Betty-Ann Bryce, Rural Development

The final tally for the 2017 Feds Feed Families campaign is in. In all, Federal employees collected an astounding 10,437,623 million pounds of food this summer. USDA gathered the highest total of collected pounds government-wide and also was recognized as the number one leader among all large agencies. Recognition awards were as follows:



Edna Primrose, the Deputy Administrator for Operations and Management at USDA's Rural Development presents the Large Agency Award to Mark Stout, USDA's FFF 2017 leader.

Agency with the highest total collected pounds

Department of Agriculture

The extra-large agency award

Department of Defense

The large agency award

Department of Agriculture

The medium agency award

Social Security Administration

The small agency award

Environmental Protection Agency

The petite agency award

Small Business Administration

To learn about a few organizations that benefited from your gleaning efforts locally, you can find the

video here: <https://www.usda.gov/our-agency/initiatives/feds-feed-families>. This video was shown at the closing ceremony. More pictures from the closing ceremony are at <https://www.flickr.com/photos/156737104@N04/albums/72157686898564033>.

USDA Hosts Summer Youth Workers

By Michele A. Jordan, Office of Human Resources Management

For the 4th year in a row, USDA hosted a record 24 students from the Prince George's County Youth @ Works program in its Riverdale and Beltsville offices from June 26 – August 4, 2017.

The Summer Youth Enrichment Program (SYEP) is a collaborative partnership of business stakeholders for youth ages 15 – 19 who reside in Prince George's County, Maryland. Students received five weeks of work and one week of job readiness training at Prince George's Community College. The program is free to USDA as Prince George's county government pays the youth and provides transit subsidies.

The Department also hosted 55 students ages 14-24 from the Mayor Marion S. Barry Summer Youth Employment Program. The 55 students worked for 17 USDA agencies and mission areas as well as the Organization of Professional Employees of the USDA, the People's Garden, the USDA Gift Shop and our D.C., Maryland, and Virginia offices.

The Marion Barry SYEP closeout program was held at Eastern High School on the evening of August 4, 2017. USDA had ten students selected among 300 honorees receiving Outstanding Youth Award plaques.



Students from the Prince George's County Youth@Works—Summer Youth Enrichment Program gained five weeks of summer work experience in various agencies through USDA.



Michelle Jordan, USDA's Recruitment Program Manager (far right), with some of the students selected to receive Outstanding Youth Awards.

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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.

Hispanic Heritage Month Focuses on Career Success

By Derric Cushman, Risk Management Agency

The Risk Management Agency's (RMA) Office of Civil Rights observed Hispanic Heritage month from September 15 to October 15. This year's theme was "Shaping the Bright Future of America." Attendees were treated to a four person panel of leaders from various agencies throughout USDA presenting on the topic of "Becoming Your Own GPS: Navigating Your Career to Success!" The panelists shared first-hand accounts of their personal career journeys, with stories about their Hispanic roots, to give attendees insight on how to best navigate their own.

RMA Equal Opportunity Specialist Ron Brown spoke about how shaping a brighter future through career navigation aligns with the themes of 2017's Hispanic Heritage month. "Hopefully the sharing of the panelists' personal and career stories helped to show the importance and significance of Hispanic Heritage, culture, and career success, causing others to learn and enhance their own efforts when navigating their career paths into the future," said Brown.

Panel moderator Olga Morales gave a personal account of how she managed her career, stressing an important key to career navigation: self-assessment. Morales says that self-assessment, preparation, and being able to reroute or redirect one's career are essential keys to finding your own GPS for career navigation. "When we are planning our career, we need to think about what our interests are and what are our professional strengths and weaknesses," said Morales. "As we are moving in our careers, we need to stop and ensure that we have that career development and that we get the skills and knowledge necessary to make it to that final destination."



Hispanic Heritage Month panelist from L-R: Olga Morales, Team Lead Compliance Specialist, Enforcement and Litigation Division, Food Safety and Inspection Service; Richard Fierroz, Program Specialist, Departmental Management; Margo E. Emy, Chief Financial Officer, Risk Management Agency; and Manuel Ramirez, Diversity Program Manager, Food and Nutrition Service.

Hispanic Heritage Month Panelist Margo Emy, Chief Financial Officer at USDA Risk Management Agency, echoed Morales' sentiments when discussing another important key to career navigation: resiliency. She says that people should expect obstacles and left a bit of advice that she has given to members of her own staff about how to recover from potential pitfalls in their careers. "The most important thing is not that you make a mistake but how you recover from it," Emy explained. "You are your own best advocate, you are the expert at your job and no one is coming to save you. Do the research, do the analysis, do the hard work, and you will be successful."

2017 FEVS Results Released

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University

The Office of Personnel Management has released the government-wide results of the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS). The survey was administered from May 3 to June 14, 2017, to a sample of permanent full and part-time USDA employees, totaling 76,964 employees. USDA's response rate was 64%, 18 percentage points above the Government-wide response rate! Thank you to all the USDA employees that participated in the survey. The survey provides a measure of employee engagement which is defined as the willingness of employees to devote extra energy to achieve the organization's mission. The USDA 2017 FEVS results are also showing an increase in both our Employee Engagement Index score (+1) and Global Satisfaction Index score (+3).

Our results indicate that USDA continues to measure on the high end of what makes up an engaged Federal work environment. The survey also points to areas for potential improvement in the workplace. The government-wide results are posted at: <https://www.fedview.opm.gov/2017/>. USDA results are posted at: <https://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/USDA%20FEVS%20Comparison%20Report%202017%20Level%201.pdf>.

FSIS Marks International Literacy Day

By Dr. Adanetch Gebreselassie (Lilly), Food Safety and Inspection Service

Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) employees at Amick Farms in Hurlock, MD, marked International Literacy Day on September 8, 2017. FSIS workers took part in the celebration by donating school supplies such as backpacks, pencils, notebooks, glue, crayons, and rulers to students in need at several local schools.



September 8 was proclaimed International Literacy Day by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) on November 17, 1965. Its aim is to highlight the importance of literacy to individuals, communities and societies.

On International Literacy Day each year, UNESCO reminds the international community of the status of literacy and adult learning globally.

For children everywhere, education is the best hope for breaking free from poverty. Yet even school supplies are hard to come by for the millions of U.S. children whose families struggle just to pay rent and buy food.

The goal is to help ensure these children have the tools they need to learn as part of the international community.

Photo by Laura Smith, Food Safety and Inspection Service

U.S. Forest Service Employees Win 2017 Excellence in BioPreferred Procurement Awards

By Vernell Thompson, Office of Procurement and Property Management

Two U.S. Forest Service employees received the Fiscal Year 2017 USDA Excellence in BioPreferred Procurement Award. Erin Hollenshead, Contracting Officer, and Cele Aguirre-Bravo, Agency Small Business Coordinator, received this year's Award based on their leadership in driving USDA's commitment to purchase and use biobased products throughout its operations.

According to George Sears, Director of Acquisition Management for the Forest Service, "Both Erin Hollenshead and Cele Aguirre-Bravo employ a strategy anchored in continuous training, monitoring and assessing results, and providing feedback throughout the acquisition cycle. They understand the complexities involved in these processes and generate win-win solutions to make biobased product purchasing operationally feasible within the agency's acquisition planning and decisional contexts."

In 2016, Hollenshead and Aguirre-Bravo's combined leadership helped USDA achieve over \$160 million dollars in contract obligations toward the purchase of biobased products.

Created by the 2002 Farm Bill and reauthorized and expanded as part of the 2014 Farm Bill, the USDA BioPreferred program spurs economic development, creates new jobs, and provides new markets for farm commodities.



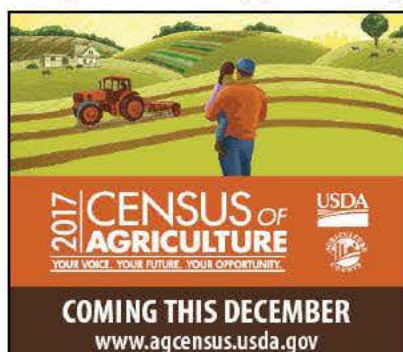
Vernell Thompson (center, BioPreferred Program) presents awards to USDA's Erin Hollenshead (left), and Dan McCusker (right, accepting on behalf of Cele Aguirre-Bravo, Forest Service).

2017 Census of Agriculture to Begin

By Teresa White, National Agricultural Statistics Service

In December, farmers and ranchers across the nation will start receiving the 2017 Census of Agriculture. Producers can mail in their completed census form, or respond online via the improved web questionnaire. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) has extensively revised the online questionnaire to make it more convenient for producers.

"The updated online questionnaire is very user-friendly – it can now be accessed on mobile phones and tablets, as well as desk- and laptops, and can be saved and revisited as the producer's schedule allows," said NASS Census and Survey Division Director Barbara Rater. "Responding online saves time and protects data quality. That's our mission at NASS – to provide timely, accurate, and useful statistics in service to U.S. agriculture. Better data means informed decisions, and that's why it is so important that every producer respond and be represented."



Help NASS spread the word about the upcoming census of agriculture by using the 2017 Partner Tools on www.agcensus.usda.gov/Partners.

The census website will continue to be updated with new information through the census response deadline of February 5, 2018. One recently added feature is a new video from Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue reminding all producers to respond when they receive their 2017 Census of Agriculture in the mail later this year.

Revisions and additions to the 2017 Census of Agriculture aim to capture a more detailed account of the industry. Producers will see a new question about military veteran status, expanded questions about food marketing practices, and questions about on-farm decision-making to better capture the roles and contributions of beginning farmers, women farmers, and others involved in running the business.

Conducted once every five years, the census of agriculture is a complete count of all U.S. farms, ranches, and those who operate them; it is the only source of uniform, comprehensive, and impartial agriculture data for every state and county in the country. For more information about the 2017 Census of Agriculture, visit <http://www.agcensus.usda.gov> or call (800) 727-9540.

FNS Employees Assist Victims of Hurricane Harvey

By Susan M. Siemietkowski, Food and Nutrition Service

As they do several times each year, staff from the Southwest Regional Office (SWRO) of USDA's Food & Nutrition Service, based in Dallas, volunteered at the North Texas Food Bank (NTFB) recently sorting, boxing and bagging food.

SWRO employees boxed 558 boxes totaling 13,453 pounds of food which equals 11,210 meals! In addition to providing its traditional support to the North Texas community, the NTFB is in the process of distributing food to households impacted by Hurricane Harvey.



Mentoring Panel Honors Women's Equality Day

By Carrie Moore, Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination

USDA marked Women's Equality Day with a Mentoring Panel event on Thursday, August 24, 2017, in the Jefferson Auditorium in the South Building. The event, coordinated by Carrie Moore with the Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Coordination, was also broadcast over Adobe Connect for field employees to participate. Over 225 registered to attend in-person and 200 registered for Adobe Connect with 647 on a waitlist. A big thank you to Dawn Scaff from the Office of Human Resources Management for running Adobe Connect for the event. It is important to us that we offer an online option for the field to participate in events whenever possible.

We had a fantastic group of women join us for this event (pictured right.) Dr. Ann Bartuska, Acting Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics, served as the Keynote Speaker. Dr. Johanna "Jeleen" Briscoe, Acting Chief of Staff for the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Administration, served as the Panel Moderator.

The following ladies served as mentors: Dr. Vivian Chen, Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Public Health Science, Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS); Janell Kause, Scientific Advisor for Risk Assessment, Office of Public Health Science, FSIS; Jerri Marr, Assistant Director for Recreation, Business, Heritage, and Volunteer Resources, U. S. Forest Service, and Erin Morris, Associate Administrator, Agricultural Marketing Service.

The panel addressed several topic areas including Taking Charge of Your Career, Building a Reputation, Seeing Success in Yourself, Healthy Women Lead, and Generational Differences.



Mentoring Panelists included Ms Erin Morris, Agricultural Marketing Service; Dr. Vivian Chen, FSIS; Ms. Janell Kause (FSIS); Dr. Ann Bartuska, Research, Education, and Economics; Ms. Jerri Marr, Forest Service; and Dr. Jeleen Briscoe, Departmental Management/Office of the Assistant Secretary of Administration.

The event was recorded and will be posted on the OHSEC Women in Leadership website at <https://www.dm.usda.gov/ohsec/wldp.htm> as soon as it becomes available. If you have any questions, please contact Carrie Moore at carrie.moore@dm.usda.gov

Learn About OPEDA!

The Organization of Professional Employees of the USDA (OPEDA) has a great group of members consisting of USDA employees and retirees dedicated to such initiatives as the annual Unsung Hero Awards, the John W. Peterson Scholarship, the Steven "Tom" Stefani Scholarship, and employee growth programs.

OPEDA's mission is strengthened by the continued support of the USDA's offices, agencies, and employees. We would be honored to have you as a member and look forward to meeting with you at your earliest convenience.

For more information on OPEDA, USDA events, and initiatives, we welcome you to visit the customer center, room 1212 (second wing of the first floor in the South Building, next to the cafeteria) or www.opeda.org.

AMS Employees Support FFF

By Asel Mustafa, Agricultural Marketing Service

On Aug. 9, 2017, 15 individuals from the Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) Office of the Administrator (OA); Livestock, Poultry, and Seed Program (LPS); Management and Analysis Program (MAP); Information and Technology Service (ITS); Dairy Program (DY); and Specialty Crops Program (SCP) volunteered on First Fruits Farms in Freeland, MD, to glean on behalf of AMS.

The event hosted by the AMS New and Emerging Professionals (NEP) group aimed to bring NEP members and AMS employees together in support of the Fed Feeds Families campaign. The group ventured to Freedland, Maryland for two and a half hours of field gleaning. Although for many of the participants the gleaning signified their first on farm visit, the group gathered a total of 7,250 lbs. of bell peppers and banana peppers!



The First Fruits Farm produces a large variety of crops each year. In 2016, they donated a total of 1,674,483 lbs. of apples, zucchini, tomatoes, cabbage, corn, beans, potatoes and other produce to the local community. NEP would like to say a huge thank you to all those who joined for the fun on the farm. Be sure to join NEP on their upcoming events.

From left to right:

Harvey Lee (MAP), Shalon Santana (MAP), Alex Wright (SCP), Calwyn Morton (Intern), Alex Smith (LPS), Jameelah Taylor (OA), Meredith Frisius (DY), John Koller (SCP), Tran Ngoc-Tien (MAP), Tiffany Rizer (MAP), Adjoa Ataah (MAP), Tanya Gouch (MAP), Oanh Vu (MAP), Roy Mitchell (ITS), and a Farmer from First Fruits Farm.

Wisconsin APHIS Employees Collect Food for the Hungry

By Bryan P. Rose, Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service



You don't have to work in a large office for you and your co-workers to make a difference!

The Madison, Wisconsin Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service office in Madison, WI, has fewer than ten employees, but this year they collected a total of 358 pounds of dry goods to donate to the Second Harvest Food Bank of Southern Wisconsin.

The hunger-relief charity supplies meals to the people who need them most.

Second Harvest distributes millions of pounds of food each year through a network of local partners and agencies like APHIS.

The non-profit organization raises hunger awareness to assist thousands of people in Wisconsin who don't always know where their next meal is coming from.

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

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

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