



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

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

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 3, Issue 4

April 2013

A Message from the Assistant Secretary for Administration

MyUSDA is a newsletter devoted to updating you on USDA's Cultural Transformation Progress. Starting with this issue, you will notice some changes. The newsletter is shorter, and the articles inside speak directly to the Departmental-wide transformational advances in the areas of leadership, recruitment and retention, talent management, employee development, and customer focus/community outreach. The Secretary's emphasis on inclusion, diversity, and an improved work environment remain our top priorities. As always, your feedback and input are encouraged. If you have questions or suggestions for MyUSDA, please contact the editor at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov. Thank you for your commitment and dedication to USDA's mission. Because of you, we continue to provide effective and timely customer service to All Americans.



Dr. Gregory Parham

Telework Pledge Week: The Numbers Are In!

National Telework Week 2013 has ended and the results are in! We might not have reached "Super Star" status, but overall USDA pledge numbers increased by more than 2,200 over Telework Week 2012. Below is a list of our "Top Performers":

Supervisors should continue to encourage Teleworking where possible and give employees the opportunity to participate and give Telework a chance! "Step out" of the traditional office space for a "Win-Win-Win" situation by saving the agency commute dollars, the environment gas emissions, and you time with your family!. For a copy of the report tracker, visit Work/Life and Wellness Connect page at [Work/Life and Wellness](#).

Agency/Mission Area	Total Pledges Received
Natural Resources and Environment:	2651 pledges
Rural Development:	1460 pledges
Marketing and Regulatory Programs:	1457 pledges
Departmental Management:	1227 pledges

UPCOMING USDA SPECIAL OBSERVANCE

- **LGBT Pride Event, Thursday, June 6, 2013**

Observance begins at 10:00 (EST), Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC

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

USDA Participates in “Great Spirit Moon” Traditional Pow Wow

By Julie MacSwain and Debra Walchuk

Several USDA agencies, including the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Minnesota, participated in the recent “Taking Care of the Land and Community” Traditional Pow Wow in Carlton, MN. Nikki Crowe, coordinator of the 13 Moons Program for the Fond du Lac Tribal Extension Program, invited USDA to participate. . The pow wow was sponsored in part by USDA-NIFA funding.

The purpose for inviting tribal, state and Federal agencies to exhibit at the Gichi Manidoo Giizis (Great Spirit Moon) traditional pow wow was to provide tribal community members an opportunity to learn about programs that can help tribal communities take care of the land and community. The invitation also provided USDA/NRCS and others the opportunity to spend time at a traditional event attended by Native American communities.

More than a thousand people attended, including Native American community members from all four directions, in addition to members of the Fond du Lac community. Traditional activities at the pow wow included dancing, drum contests and moccasin games.

The USDA/NRCS exhibit showcased literature on NRCS’ mission and vision, who NRCS is and what we do. Debra Walchuk, State Tribal Liaison; Dave Wise, FDLTCC Tribal Liaison; and Gail Bong, Soil Conservation Technician, staffed the booth at the pow wow.

Crowe said that feedback reported from community members indicated they found the exhibitors and vendors to be the most helpful part of the pow wow. Interested in more information and comments about the powwow? Check the website at www.fdlrez.com

For additional information regarding Minnesota NRCS’ involvement in the “Gichi Manidoo Giizis traditional pow wow,” contact Debra Walchuk at 218-681-6600.



The “Taking Care of the Land and Community” Traditional Pow Wow included a number of dancers in regalia accompanied by drum groups.

Family members of all ages participated in the ceremony, which also included hoop dances.

Photos by Anna Marineau Merritt, Gordon, WI.



USDA Extending Summer Employment Opportunities to DC Youth

By Michelle Jordan-Hedgeman

Departmental Management is coordinating another centralized USDA-wide effort to provide District youth with career exploration opportunities at **Metro DC area agency offices**. The Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) is a local initiative funded by DC government that provides District youth ages 14-21 with enriching and constructive summer work experiences up to 25 hours a week through subsidized placements in the government and private sectors for a period of six weeks. The SYEP is a great opportunity to expose young adults to various career fields and introduce them to the dynamics of working in a professional and positive work environment.

In 2011 and 2012, USDA worked only with SYEP students ages 18-21. This year, we have elected to start working with students starting at age 16. However, host supervisors that select an SYEP Candidate under the age of 18 must complete a Metropolitan DC Police Department background investigation. All host supervisors, program administrators, and designated payroll coordinators must attend the Departmental Management orientation briefing on the guidelines and regulations set forth by the DC Department of Employer Services in June 2013 (date and time – TBD).

The SYEP begins on Monday, July 1, 2013 and ends on Friday, August 9, 2013. The period for applying this year has closed, but if you would like to volunteer as a host employer in the future, please contact wenndy.carrasco@dm.usda.gov or michelle.jordan-hedgeman@dm.usda.gov for more information

Update Your Designation of Beneficiaries Forms

It has become an annual tradition for USDA GLOBE, the Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender Employees organization, to conduct a campaign to remind to help members make sure to properly provide for their spouses/partners/significant others. USDA GLOBE President Blake Velde says it's important to remind all employees, regardless of sexual orientation, to ensure their loved ones are taken care of. "Since many of us haven't looked at our designation of beneficiary forms since that first day of Federal service when we signed a million forms, it's a good idea to update them and make sure they reflect your current living situation. LGBT employees very often reflect on the benefits they can't include their spouses on – health insurance and retirement survivor annuity – but there are many we can – Life insurance (FEGLI), TSP savings, last paycheck/annual leave, and death benefit for CSRS or FERS current/former/retired employees. Velde encourages employees to keep a copy of their signed and filed forms with their will and other important documents along with a copy of the form your survivors will need to claim the benefits.



USDA GLOBE
President
Blake Velde

Important Links:

Federal Employee Life Insurance (FEGLI)

SF 2823, Designation of Beneficiary: http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf2823.pdf

To claim insurance proceeds: http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/fe6.pdf

Thrift Savings Plan (TSP)

TSP-3 Designation of Beneficiary: <https://www.tsp.gov/PDF/formspubs/tsp-3.pdf>

To receive proceeds: <https://www.tsp.gov/PDF/formspubs/tsp-17.pdf>

Unpaid Compensation (annual leave and last paycheck)

SF 1152 Designation of Beneficiary: http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/SF1152.pdf

To claim unpaid compensation: SF1153 http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf1153.pdf

Employee Death Benefit (Current/former/retired employees but different than retirement survivor annuity)

CSRS Designation of Beneficiary: SF2808, http://www.opm.gov/Forms/pdf_fill/SF2808.pdf

To claim benefit after the death of a CSRS covered employee:

SF2800 http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf-2800.pdf

FERS Designation of Beneficiary:

SF3102 http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf3102.pdf

To claim benefit after the death of a FERS covered employee:

SF3104 http://www.opm.gov/forms/pdf_fill/sf3104.pdf

Contact your agency HR rep if you have any questions!

And the FEDVIEW USDA Survey Says...

According to results from the 2012 Federal View Point Survey (FEVS), USDA Teleworkers are 73% satisfied with the telework program, up from a rating of 68% reported in the previous year .

It is also important to note that the same results showed a 91% overall satisfaction rating with Work/Life programs at USDA. We are excited that we are making progress in meeting your needs to better balance the demands outside of the workplace while still effectively carrying out your jobs and the mission of USDA, but we still have work to do. Throughout Fiscal Year 2012, 30% of our eligible workforce participated in the USDA Telework Program. Our goal this year is to reach a total of 55% (which includes both Core and Ad/Hoc Teleworkers.)

Mika J. Cross, USDA
Work/Life and
Wellness
Program Manager
worklife@dm.usda.gov



We look forward to increasing not only USDA’s Telework participation goals, but also your satisfaction with the program and other Work/Life support initiatives throughout the year.

If you have suggestions on how we can improve or would like to share your success stories with our team, send an email to worklife@dm.usda.gov or visit our [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community webpage on USDA Connect!

Grassroots Call for State Agency Wellness Ambassadors

By Debra Arnold USDA has established an employee Wellness Work Group geared to develop and implement a comprehensive USDA-wide Wellness Program, update Health and Wellness Departmental Regulation, and establish nationwide, state and agency Wellness Ambassadors.

Many agencies and states did “Step Up” for Wellness, and over 130 employees have now volunteered to assist with our efforts representing over 35 states.

However, there is still much work to be done, and we continue to call for nominations of employees to serve as Wellness Ambassadors for your state and agency.

Ambassadors will be responsible for promoting Health and Wellness policy initiatives and marketing campaigns at the

2013-2014 USDA Wellness Ambassadors or Nominees	
Arizona	NRCS, Dawn Messinger, Ambassador
California	FSIS, Vincent Marquez, Nominee
District of Columbia	FSA, Karen Malken, Nominee
	FSIS, Kellie Upshaw, Nominee
Florida	FSA, Bonnie Kisko, Ambassador
	NRCS, Uretha Bostic, Ambassador
Hawaii	NRCS, Douglas Maguire, Nominee
Illinois	NRCS, Sandi Lewis, Nominee
Kansas	NRCS, Xiomara Tryban, Nominee
Maryland	ARS, Rachel Anderson, Ambassador
	FSIS, Salina Najera, Ambassador
Missouri	NRCS, Elizabeth Moy, Nominee
Montana	FSA, Jennifer Simon, Ambassador
Nebraska	NRCS, Cindy Steufer-Powell, Ambassador
New Hampshire	NRCS, BethAnn Finlay, Ambassador
North Carolina	RMA, Sandra Strayhorn, Ambassador
Texas	RMA, Helen Ward, Ambassador
Utah	FSA, Sandy Sanders, Nominee

grassroots level, and will provide an additional venue for all employees to stay informed and engaged!

Wellness Ambassadors will play a vital role in the success of USDA’s Wellness Program with the goal of having a representative from every state becoming a valuable member of the Department’s Wellness Work Group.

To the left is a current roster of Wellness Ambassadors and nominees for the USDA Wellness Program and Initiatives.

USDA Marks Women's History Month



U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) celebrated 2013 Women's History Month Observance in the Jefferson Auditorium with an event themed "Women Inspiring Innovation Through Imagination: Celebrating Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics" on Thursday, March 21, 2013.

Linda Hallman, Director / CEO of American Association of University Women Executive was the keynote speaker. USDA Deputy Secretary Dr. Kathleen Merrigan was the opening remarks' speaker; Rural Development Acting Deputy Under Secretary Judith Canales; USDA Secretary Vilsack's Chief-of-Staff Krysta Harden; Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration Deputy Assistant Secretary Robin Heard; and Agriculture Research Service Associate Administrator for National Programs Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young, were among the leadership who took part of this celebration.

Renee Allen, Pamela Carter, Rita Meade and Reedema Rock, performed the song: "I'm every Woman" to close-out the event.

USDA Photo by Lance Cheung

USDA Employees Honor Dr. Martin Luther King By Volunteering

By Susan Siemietkowski

Twelve employees from the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (MARO) of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service staff honored the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. by volunteering at the Mercer Street Friends Food Bank in Trenton, NJ. MARO staff sorted canned goods and prepared bags of food that will be picked up by families who are food insecure.

Not only was this a chance to serve those who are less fortunate, but the outing promoted fellowship and team-building among participants as well. "It's a joy to help others," said Sara Vazquez of MARO. "We love opportunities like this one to reach out and lend a hand to those in need," she added.



LEFT: MARO Deputy Regional Administrator Diana Limbacher joins colleagues Carlos Worthy and Steve Bergonzoni at Mercer Street Friends Food Bank in Trenton, New Jersey.



RIGHT: MARO staffers Nina Catena, Amy Holton, and Christine Berberich repackage 50-pound bags of donated pasta into smaller, family-size portions which will be used to supplement food packages for hungry neighbors in New Jersey.

USDA Holds Special Emphasis Program Managers All-Hands Meeting

USDA photos by Bob Nichols.

The Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) recently hosted an All-Hands Special Emphasis Program Managers (SEPM) Meeting at the Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, D.C. In all, 212 people participated, with half attending in person and the

other half linked through teleconference. Speakers included Geraldine Herring and Donna Carter from the Office of Civil Rights; Veronica E. Villalobos and Bruce Stewart from the U.S. Office of Personnel Management; Dexter Brooks from the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission; and William P. Milton, Jr. and Roberta Jeanquart from OHRM.



In opening remarks, Chief Human Capital Officer William P. Milton, Jr. said, "Each of you has a part to play, and each of you can bring your expertise and passion to this effort. Together, we can do even more to positively change the culture of USDA's workforce, and ensure our Department is reflective of the diverse landscape of the American Public whom we serve."



OHRM's Director of Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/Life Division, Monshi Ramdass, facilitated the meeting and provided an overview of diversity and inclusion.



U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) Office of Federal Operations Federal Sector Programs Director Dexter Brooks encouraged participants to reach out and be a liaison to other organizations. "It's not just getting to know one another's culture," he said. "It's about advancing an equal playing field."



U.S. Office of Personnel Management, Training, Compliance and Strategy Office of Diversity Inclusion Deputy Director Bruce Stewart said, "You're doing something that matters. I applaud USDA for working with OPM to put this event together."



SEPMs. "OPM received 57 strategic diversity plans. We were looking for examples, and we have turned to certain initiatives in USDA's plan and shared them with other agencies."

"USDA is an example for the other agencies," U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) Office of Diversity and Inclusion Director Veronica Villalobos told the

OHRM Deputy Director Roberta Jeanquart gave closing remarks, saying "You are making change. You're the heart and soul of the cultural transformation process that's happening at USDA. Our work demographics are changing, and your work here is a model for all government."



If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov 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 deadline for May submissions is **Wednesday, May 15, 2013.**

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue with an accompanying photo. Send photos as separate attachments and make sure they are high quality. **The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it. Maximum length of articles is 250 words.**

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