



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

**USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items**

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

**Inside this issue:**

- Final FEVS Results Released** 2
- FSIS Raising Disability Awareness** 2
- Secretary Wins National "Outie" Award** 3
- USDA Shares Diversity Lessons** 4
- Get a Mentor, Be a Mentor!** 5
- USFS Partners With the Navajo Nation** 6

# MyUSDA

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

Volume 7, Issue 1

October 2016

### USDA Leads All Government Agencies in 2016 Feds Feed Families Campaign

**By Linda Cronin, Feds Feed Families National Program Manager**

In 2016, over 40 Federal agencies participated in the Feds Feed Families (FFF) campaign across the Federal Government. The campaign lasted from the beginning of June through the end of August. In that time, government employees collected an average of 136,816 pounds per day, resulting in nearly 125,000 meals per day over a three month period.

FFF is a national food drive, led by the U.S. Department of Agriculture in partnership with the Chief Human Capital Officers Council and other Federal agencies, to raise food for Americans struggling with hunger across the country. Since 2009, the Feds Feed Families Campaign has collected nearly 69.8 million pounds of food for the hungry and food insecure. This year alone, Federal employees donated over 12.5 million pounds of food.

USDA hosted the national FFF closing ceremony on October 4, 2016, and invited participating agencies and partners to mark this year's accomplishments. Under the leadership of USDA Chair Sabrina Ferguson-Ward, the Department collected over 4.9 million pounds of food, making USDA the winner in two categories: Most Collected for a Large Size Agency and Most Collected by a Single Agency.

Duane Williams, in USDA's Office of Operations (OO), also received an award for his efforts leading the campaign's annual golf tournament. Carol Rowe from the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Jennifer McDowell from the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) both received the coveted Shining Star awards for their efforts in expanding gleaning opportunities across the Federal government.



They, along with Janet Freeman (USFS); Marian Romero, Levi Johnson and Wilbert Wilson (OO); and Michael Booth and Scott Whittington from the Farm Service Agency managed the FFF activities, including reporting, food collection, and gleaning.

*Photo by Bob Nichols*

USDA employees gather to volunteer for a gleaning event on August 30, 2016.

## Final FEVS Results Released

**By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, USDA Virtual University**

The Office of Personnel Management has posted the finalized government-wide report of the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) at this site: <https://www.fedview.opm.gov/>.

In the management report that highlights the results, USDA was recognized several times. USDA is noted as having the top response rate among very large agencies (greater than 75,000 employees). Our response rate was 61.3%.

USDA is also recognized for increasing more than 1% above last year's government-wide average for the New IQ Index that is focused on diversity and inclusion. USDA's result for this index was 60% as compared to the government-wide average of 58%. USDA is highlighted for increasing in all sub-factors of the Employee Engagement Index (Leaders Lead, Work Environment, Supervisor Support).

The 360 degree assessments, provided by USDA's Virtual University, are noted as a best practice in promoting employee engagement. For more information, go to the item by item results for USDA and all of our sub-component organizations posted on our website at: <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/2016%20FEVS%20Report.pdf>.

Thank you for helping us continue our positive progress.

## FSIS Raises Awareness of Employee Disability Issues

**By Sarah Milchman, Food Safety and Inspection Service**

The Equal Employment Opportunity Advisory Committee (EEOAC) group from the Office of Policy and Program Development (OPPD) in the Food Safety Inspection Service (FSIS) organized an insightful and successful conference in September to bring awareness and provide information about individuals with disabilities. The full-day conference was broken into seven sessions relating to disability.

Mark Benedict, the FSIS Disability Emphasis Program Manager, arranged an insightful panel discussion on the experiences of people with disabilities. Alison Levy, the USDA Disability Employee Manager, gave a presentation on hiring, accommodation, and communication with the disability community. Todd Bettiker from Departmental Management and Tom Valluzzi from FSIS provided information about the target center and the reasonable accommodation process. Tanja Thompson from the Civil Rights staff gave a session on working with a disability and conflict management. Sharon Randle from the Office of Human Resources led a session on courtesy and disability.



Overall, the conference was an eye-opening experience and everyone in attendance learned something new.

Thanks to Rosemary Earley and Bryan Maculloch of FSIS for leading this effort and thanks to the OPPD EEOAC group for helping make the event possible! In addition, special thanks go to Dan Engeljohn and Rachel Edelstein, the OPPD Administrators, for their continued support of the OPPD-EEOAC this year!

## Secretary Wins National “Outie” Award

By Perry Stevens, Office of Human Resources Management

The world’s premier nonprofit organization dedicated to achieving Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) equality in the workplace has given its highest award to Secretary Thomas Vilsack. The Secretary was honored with the 2016 Out & Equal Workplace Advocates’ Champion Award (also known as an “Outie”) at the Out & Equal Workplace Summit in Orlando on October 5, 2016. The award recognizes outstanding leadership in promoting LGBT workplace equality.

Secretary Vilsack was named the Out & Equal Champion due to his forward thinking and positive actions on behalf of USDA’s LGBT employees and customers.

Secretary Vilsack has fostered a safer, more inclusive workplace for employees by creating the LGBT Special Emphasis Program and including gender identity/gender expression in the Department’s non-discrimination policy. Through the LGBT Rural Summits, he has ensured USDA hears from all its customers, including LGBT farmers, ranchers, and landowners.



USDA employees representing agencies from across the Department participated in the 2016 Out & Equal Workplace Summit in Orlando in October.

USDA employees from across the Department participated in the Workplace Summit where they received training, gathered resources, and shared lessons learned with their counterparts from both the public and private sector. Other federal agencies represented at the conference included NASA, the Veterans Administration, and the Central Intelligence Agency.

## NIFA Names Winner of the A.J. Dye Award for Diversity



Brent Elrod, National Program Leader for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s (NIFA) Community and Rural Development, has been honored with NIFA’s 2016 A.J. Dye Award for Diversity. Brent was presented with the award on October 6, 2016.

Brent serves as NIFA’s Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) and the agency’s Veterans SEPM.

He was recognized for these efforts and for demonstrating outstanding leadership in successfully launching two national initiatives that achieve positive organizational outcomes supporting diversity, pluralism, and innovative program design and implementation.

Brent Elrod is presented with the National Institute of Food and Agriculture’s 2016 A.J. Dye Award for Diversity from Dr. Robert Holland (left) and Dr. Muquarrab Qureshi (right).

## USDA Talks Diversity to Federal Managers With Evaluation Responsibilities Across the Government

By Janine Gillis, Office of Human Resources Management

Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost of USDA's Virtual University, was the keynote speaker for the first Federal Employee Development Evaluation Conference, hosted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management and held at the U.S. General Services Administration Training Center on September 26, 2016.



Joellen M. Jarrett, left, Chief Learning Officer of U.S. Small Business Administration and Dr. Karlease Kelly, the Provost of USDA Virtual University.

This conference was designed to help Federal training practitioners with evaluation responsibilities: increase knowledge of the diversity in evaluation terms and practices; gain knowledge about evaluation principles, to include reliability and validity of data; increase awareness of evaluation professionals within the collective federal evaluation community; increase capability in making effective decisions when hiring contractors to conduct evaluation training and perform evaluation work; and, collect accurate and reliable evaluation data to use in making data driven decisions and in justifying training dollars spent.

Attendees were offered sessions in three training tracks: Planning, Implementation, and Reporting. Topics included logic models; developing evaluation plans; obtaining vendor support; data collection; outcome harvesting; asking the right evaluation questions; making meaningful recommendations; and data visualization techniques.

## “Show Some Love” Through the Combined Federal Campaign

This year's Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) is underway and you have an opportunity to take advantage of the largest and most successful workplace charity drive. CFC is structured to support and to promote philanthropy through a voluntary program that is cost-efficient and effective in providing all Federal employees the opportunity to impact the CFC charitable interest of their choosing.

This year's theme is "Show Some Love". There are thousands of CFC charitable interests a Federal employee can choose to support. In fact, there are over 20,000 charities that are asking for our support and contributions. Our hope and goal is that every U.S. Department of Agriculture employee can find a CFC charitable interest that they can identify with and consider supporting. Programs and organizations concerning children, families, individuals with special needs, the elderly, the environment, inner city schools, and research institutes are just a sampling of the multitude of interests that can be supported.

Your support helps to further a charitable interest you believe in. Your pledge can be completed anonymously or with the release of your contact information to the charity you are supporting.

For more on the CFC, go to [http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=USDA\\_CFC](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=USDA_CFC).

### Do you have an article to submit to MyUSDA?

You can email [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov) with submissions. They may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity or event demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

## OPM Training Opportunity to Improve Work-Life

By Janine Gillis, Office of Human Resources Management

Have you heard about the new [Work-Life Studio](#) within the Office of Personnel Management's Human Resources University (HRU)? The HRU studio is an ongoing training opportunity for human resource practitioners and agency managers where you can find training webinars, videos, and online courses, upcoming events, Federal resources, and general guidance related to work-life in the Federal government.

Topics covered so far include Evolving Fatherhood; Research on the New Dad; and Telework & Performance Management.

You can find the Work-Life Studio under the Resource Center at [www.hru.gov](http://www.hru.gov). Click on a date in the Events calendar for more details. (Note: Many of these free work-life webinars are recorded for later playback.)

## Get a Mentor, Be a Mentor!

By Roderick Mance, Office of Human Resources Management

In FY 2016, the [USDA Mentoring Program](#) had over 900 mentoring pairs across the Department. The majority of those pairs were captured in the [USDA Mentoring Portal](#). This was a great accomplishment! Still, more than 400 prospective protégés went unmatched in FY 2016 and only 50% of executives formally made themselves available to be mentors.

The competency that unmatched protégés desired most was Continual Learning, and 77% of them did not mind if their mentor was located in another geographic region. Fortunately, technology is helping us bridge mentoring gaps. Other competencies with high interest included Strategic Thinking, Problem Solving, and Conflict Resolution.

Visit the [USDA Mentoring Portal](#) to complete your mentor and/or protégé application for FY 2017. Be advised, there is a two-step process when accessing the USDA Mentoring Portal for the first time.

First, you will need to request access. After access is granted, you will need to visit the Portal a second time to complete a mentor application, a protégé application, or both. You will receive email confirmations when each step is complete.

If you've completed an application in prior years, you only need to log in and complete an application for FY 2017. [Directions](#) on the access request and application process can be found [here](#).

Thank you for supporting USDA Mentoring!

### Upcoming Observances at USDA

**American Indian/Alaskan Native Heritage Month**  
**Thursday, November 17, 2016**

**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.***

# U.S. Forest Service and Alamo Band of Navajo Nation Expand Forest Health and Tribal Employment Partnership

By Jackie Banks, U.S. Forest Service

After several successful years of partnering together to conduct forest restoration work and provide employment opportunities to tribal members, the Kaibab National Forest in northern Arizona and the Alamo Band of the Navajo Nation have expanded their relationship by committing to tackling mutually beneficial projects through 2020.

The Forest Service signed an agreement with Alamo Navajo School Board Inc., the primary employer for the reservation.

Under the agreement, both partners will work together to reduce the risk of high-severity wildland fire and improve ecosystem health through forest restoration efforts such as removing trees from overly dense stands.

“We are very excited to see this partnership continue to grow because it is accomplishing great restoration work while providing an economic benefit to the Alamo Navajo community and on-the-job training to Alamo community members,” said Heather Provencio, supervisor of the Kaibab National Forest.

Alamo has a 73 percent unemployment rate in the 18 to 34 year-old age group, and 55 percent of its members have never been in the workforce. Through the partnership, Alamo crew members will be trained and then employed to complete priority forest restoration projects that will also provide firewood to tribal communities.



Pictured Above: Alamo Navajo and Kaibab National Forest representatives sit on a pile of firewood generated from forest restoration partnership efforts.

Pictured Below: Forest restoration work is being completed as part of the partnership between the Alamo Band of Navajo Nation and the Kaibab National Forest.

*Photos by Dyan Bone. Credit Kaibab National Forest.*



## HR Quick Facts:



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

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

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

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

Source: CFR, Title 5, Part 890

For more information contact your HR Office.

OHRM 6/2016

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov) or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



Catch Up On Recent Issues of MyUSDA!

To see previous issues of MyUSDA, please visit:

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/newsroom.htm>



The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability and, where applicable, sex (including gender identity and expression), marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD.)

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)

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination against its customers. If you believe you experienced discrimination when obtaining services from USDA, participating in a USDA program, or participating in a program that receives financial assistance from USDA, you may file a complaint with USDA. Information about how to file a discrimination complaint is at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and is available from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

*USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.*

## MyUSDA Staff

**Roberta Jeanquart—Editorial Director**

**Marsha Wiggins—Deputy Editorial Director**

**Perry Stevens—Editor-in-Chief**

**Dr. Karlease Kelly, Hillary Caron, Lynne Short, Faith Rogers, Vandetta Mack—Editors**

### Key Contributors:

Linda Cronin, Janine Gillis, Sarah Milchman, Brent Elrod, Roderick Mance, Jackie Banks, Dyan Bone

**If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov)**

### Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

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

### Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the 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 the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

Email submissions or further inquiries to [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov).