



# MWACOP News Notes

## Midwest Area Council for Office Professionals

January 2022 Issue

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### Message from the Co-Chairs

Happy New Year! As we approach our 2-year mark during the COVID-19 pandemic, we want to remind all of you that your dedication to the changing times and hard work has not gone unnoticed. Your work is appreciated by all.

MWACOP would like to welcome the new Office Professionals who have onboarded to the Midwest Area since Spring. Please contact your mentors or any member of the Council if you need assistance. We are always here to help.

Our Annual Meeting was held virtually August 11, 12 & 16, 2021. This year is the 10-year anniversary for when the logo for MWACOP was created. We launched a Logo Update contest and are excited to see everyone's design ideas. The new design will be displayed on the MWACOP website and used for promotional items. The new logo winner will be announced later this month. Thank you to all who have participated.

The Refuel & Refocus sessions held have been a success. We are in the process of planning R&R sessions for 2022. If you have ideas or suggestions, please reach out to the Council at [ARS-MWA-COP@usda.gov](mailto:ARS-MWA-COP@usda.gov) or any Council member.

A new location for Departmental Directives and Departmental Forms. As of December 10, 2021, all directives and forms have been moved to a centralized location. We will be adding these links to the MWACOP SOP website as well. Directives and Forms can now be found at the following URLs:

#### Departmental Directives

Main Directives page: <https://www.usda.gov/directives>

Directives by Categories: <https://www.usda.gov/directives/directives-categories>

What's New (listing by FY and publication month): <https://www.usda.gov/directives/whats-new>

#### Departmental Forms

Main Forms page: <https://www.usda.gov/forms>

Electronic forms: <https://www.usda.gov/forms/electronic-forms>

As always, we are here as a Council to assist you, the Office Professional. If you have a question or need support, do not hesitate to contact any of us.

Happy New Year,

Amy McNamara, Senior Co-Chair  
Marci Bushman, Junior Co-Chair



From top to bottom, L to R: Amy McNamara, St. Paul, MN; Marci Bushman, Ames, IA; Brian Brusky, Madison, WI; Janeen Polen, Wooster, OH; Shelby Nepple, Ames, IA; Kerri Bentley, Columbia, MO; Traci Durre, Peoria, IL; Ann Kessler, Columbia, MO; Jessica Boyer, Peoria, IL; Brittney Jones, Peoria, IL; Kelli Adkins, Lexington, KY; Beth Burmeister, Morris, MN; Sherri Buxton, Peoria, IL



MWACOP Website: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/MWA/Pages/MWACOP.aspx>

MWACOP SOP Website: <https://www.ars.usda.gov/midwest-area/docs/sop-manual/>

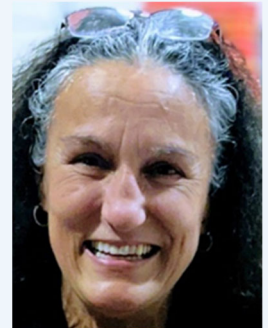
NACOP Website: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/Inside%20ARS/NACOP/Pages/NACOP.aspx>

## Welcoming New Office Professionals to MWA



**Kim Montgomery** started on May 9, 2021, as the Program Support Assistant (PSA) with the Renewable Product Technology Research Unit in Peoria, Illinois. While Kim does not have any previous federal service, she does state that she has always been an advocate for USDA and she wanted to be a part of that future that is always changing and growing. Coming to ARS Kim recognizes that the work in ARS does matter to every person each day and is always a team effort. She is proud to be a part of the team. Kim has previous experience at the University of Illinois College of Medicine (UICOMP) with the State of Illinois located at OSF. Kim was in the Office of Administrator for the Inpatient Pediatric Hospitals (Inpatient Service, Research, Quality, Protocols). Kim has been managing her own small farm since 2010. When Kim is not in the office, she enjoys small poultry farming that includes selling eggs and produce. She also spends time making goatmilk soaps and says “Back to Basics of Life” is the farm motto. Kim shared the following mottos: “If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way” – Napoleon Hill. “Quality means doing it right when no one is looking” – Henry Ford.

**Catherine Spencer**, who also goes by Cathy, joined the Food Safety and Enteric Pathogens Research Unit in Ames, Iowa, on August 15, 2021 as their PSA. She came to the USDA so that she may continue in a research support position. Cathy has brief prior federal experience: one season as a teen, Cathy worked as a federal income tax data transcriber. Additionally, Cathy has experience in research at an engineering firm subcontracting for the United States Army studying the effects of hazardous materials at the Dugway Proving Grounds in Nevada. Most recently she held the position as a Clinical Project Assistant at NewLink Genetics for cancer research. Most of her adult life she has worked in administration. Cathy’s hobbies include being a grandma to her grandchildren Zion and Aksel, spending time with family and friends either outdoors or around the dinner table (her family still has weekly Sunday dinners), reading, gardening, traveling, and playing BINGO! Her advice to everyone: If in doubt, don’t be afraid to ask for help.



**Erin Taylor** began her position in April 25, 2021, as the PSA with the Functional Foods Research Unit in Peoria, Illinois. Prior to joining the USDA Erin worked in healthcare and other staffing industries. During free time, Erin’s hobbies include crafting and cooking.

## Thank you

MWACOP would like to thank the following Council members for their participation and commitment:

Tracy Durre has resigned from the USDA pursuing a career in the automotive industry. Brian Brusky is now the Management Analyst for Madison, Wisconsin. Brittney Jones is now a Program Analyst for the MWA (working with Chad Henry).

Good luck to each you in your new endeavors.

**Update**

## NACOP Update

*Submitted by: Beth Burmeister and Kelli Adkins*

Happy New Year! As we move into 2022, the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals (NACOP) anticipates many opportunities to represent Office Professionals and enhance the office support profession.

The first part of NACOP's mission is to serve the ARS Administrator in an advisory capacity on new initiatives, which impact employees across the Agency. One of the ways NACOP represents you, the Office Professional, is through communication with Administrative & Financial Management (AFM). In 2021 AFM arranged for each of the six AFM Directors or their representative to attend a NACOP meeting. The objectives are to become more familiar with each of the divisions, learn of upcoming initiatives that impact Office Professionals, identify pain points and offer suggestions for how Office Professionals can be part of the solution. The following is a list of upcoming guests and the topics they plan to discuss: Jeff Hayes, Homeland Security (January); Chevon Gibson, Advisory Groups (February); Lisa Baldus, Deputy Administrator for AFM (DAAF) General Q&A (March); Joon Park, DAAF General Q&A (April); Lorna Drennen, Information Technology (May) and Robert Magill, Financial Management & Agreements (June).

Speaking of communication, NACOP recently finalized the NACOP Internal Communications Plan. The plan is used to identify internal communication methods and tools that are used to increase information sharing from NACOP to the Local Area Councils and Office Professionals. In a nutshell, this is how it will work. NACOP receives information that needs to be distributed. Each Technical Advisor from their Area will communicate with the Local Area Council. In turn the Local Area Council will communicate with the Office Professionals in their Area. Be on the lookout for the plan to be posted on the NACOP page in Axon.

The second part of NACOP's mission is to enhance the office support professional through training. Originally, NACOP planned to host an Office Professional Training Workshop in 2022. Due to the uncertainty of the return to the office timeframe and travel limitations, NACOP decided to work toward hosting a Training Workshop in 2023.

NACOP looks forward to representing Office Professionals and enhancing the office support profession in 2022.

**Kelli Adkins**

NACOP Jr. Co-Chair

**Beth Burmeister**

NACOP Ex-Officio

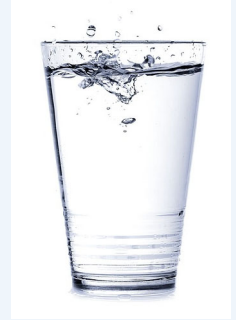


## Keeping a Full Cup with Energy & Optimism

By 3x5 Leadership

***"You can't pour from an empty cup."***

This simple phrase is an idea that heavily influences both my personal leadership style and my family's perspective. As a leader and as a family, we are passionate about pouring into others - in our family, our work teams, and our community. It's also a quote and perspective that I've found myself repeating countless times in coaching and mentorship conversations over the last few months.



To effectively and sustainably do this, we must maintain full cups ourselves.

This is something that is easy to talk about, of course, but challenging to live out day in and day out. As we continue to manage the complexities of COVID, work-life balance, many teams still working remotely or still with high restrictions, struggles of working from home, and more - many of us likely feel depleted by the end of each week. I'm sure many of us still feel like we are doing all that we can to merely get by each week, and the ideals of pouring into others, leader energy, and bringing optimism to the team feel like a fictional Neverland.

But, bringing inspiration, energy, and optimism to our teams is an inherent leader responsibility. Leaders pour into others.

So, we must be deliberate in finding ways to maintain our own full cup. And while there is no simple "10-step guide" to accomplishing this, we hope that we can provide a few resources to help shape your thinking and attitude around this important area of leadership.

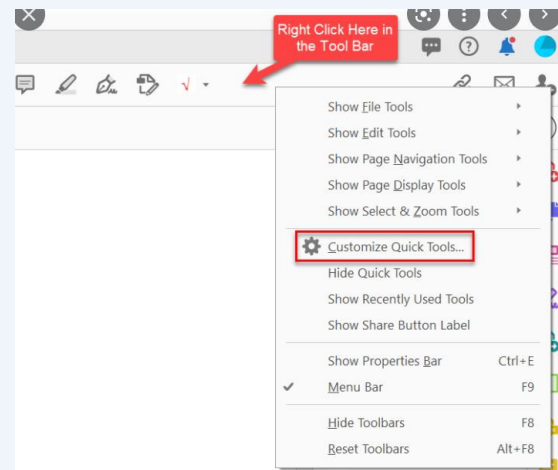
Lead well this week, friends! As always, thanks for your continued support.



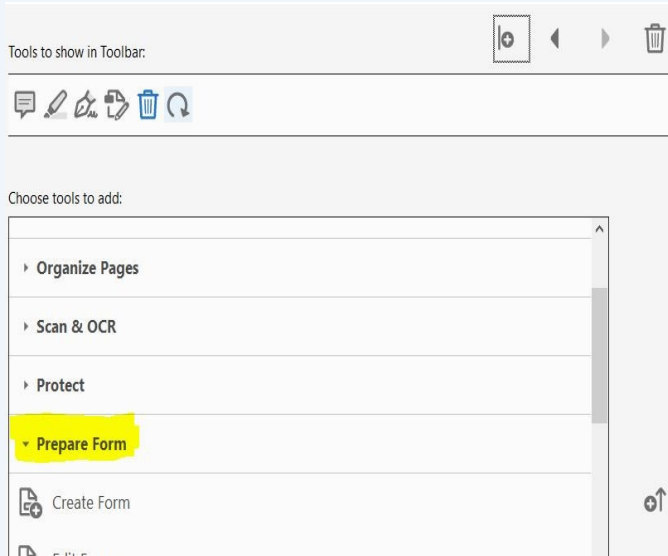
# Adobe Quick Tip: Adding Digital Signature to Toolbar

MWACOP would like to share a quick tip on how to add the Digital Signature Tool to your Adobe toolbar display that appears at the top of an Adobe document. Please follow the steps below:

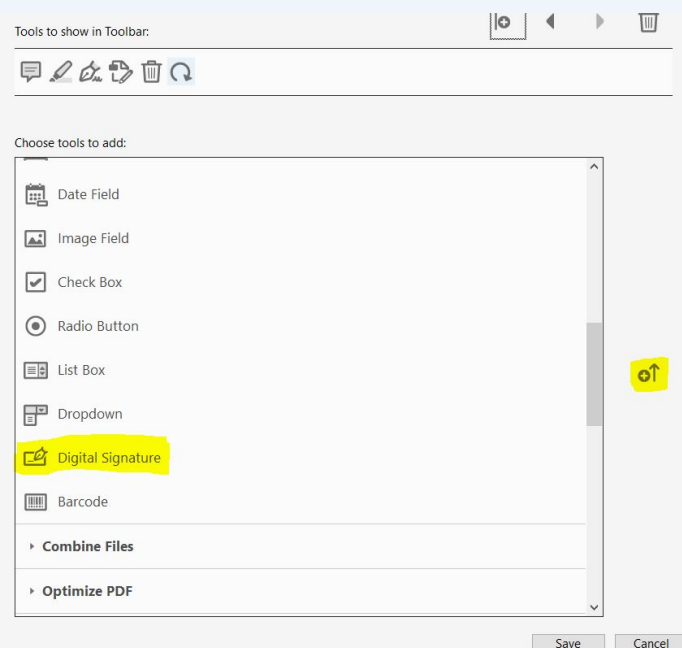
1. Begin at the top of the adobe document and move your cursor over your toolbar display. Right click your mouse to bring up a table. From the table select: Customize Quick Tools.



2. A new window will appear. Scroll down in the Choose tools to add section and select Prepare Form.

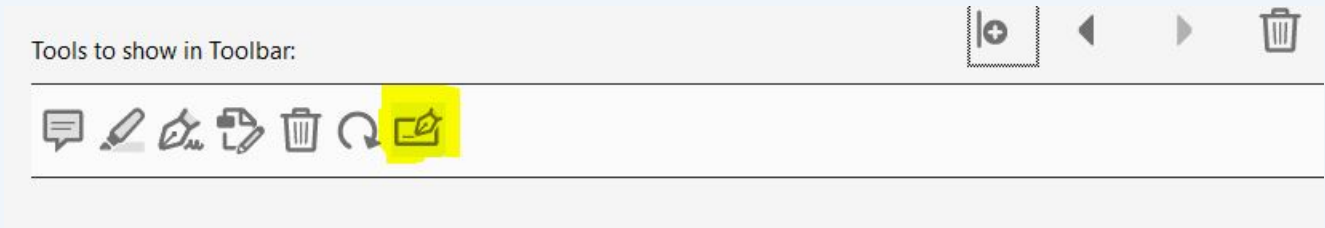


3. Once you have selected prepare form; scroll down to find and select Digital Signature. Upon selecting Digital Signature, click on the + image off to the right of the window.



# Adobe Quick Tip: continued

4. The Digital Signature tool should now be added to your Tools to show in Toolbar section at the top of the window.



5. Save changes at the bottom of the window.

6. Confirm at the top of your Adobe document that the Digital Signature tool has been added to your toolbar display.



7. Now you can simply click on the Digital Signature tool to easily add a Digital Signature box to your adobe document.





**January – February** (or during slower times)

- Time to catch up on all paperwork and filing.
- Go through files. Dispose of materials that need to be discarded. Do a general housecleaning of computer files and paper files.

- Check expiration dates of passports. If need renewal begin the process (at least 75 days before the expiration).
- Rethink how you work and establish goals for efficient management of tasks.

**March**

- ARMPS: Do what you can do to get ready.
- Start an ARMPS folder.
- Refresh yourself with what you did last year.
- Ask your travelers what meetings they plan to attend in FY-23 (Domestic & Foreign).
- Complete 2nd Quarter Performance Reviews by March 31st.

**April**

- Complete No FEAR Act Training by April 4th.

**Weekly or Regular Basis**

- Back up computer on a regular basis.
- Keep Outlook Calendar current.
- Reconcile credit card transactions within Access Online [AXOL] and CATS.

**Bi-weekly**

- Review T&A's (maintain communication of changing deadlines).
- Update REE Directory or send information to person responsible for updates.

**Monthly**

- Monitor required AgLearn Training.
- Reconcile Status of Funds as needed or required.
- Check ARIS to monitor progress of manuscripts, check for any 416/417's, Agreements which will be terminating and need to be extended or will require reports.
- Request necessary reports from SY's.
- Review citations - follow agency guidelines for format. Check the volume/page numbers along with the DOI.

**EAP Contact Information**

**Overwhelmed?**

The EAP is here to help at no cost to you, 24/7.  
 For more information call **1-800-222-0364**  
 (1-800-262-7848 TTY), or visit our website  
 at **www.FOH4You.com**.

**EAP**  
 We care, just call.