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## Unity: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in PWA

### ARS-PULLMAN, WA SPOTLIGHT

#### ARS Homegrown-Shantel's Journey

Dr. Shantel Martinez just received her Ph.D. from Washington State University (WSU) in Molecular Plant Sciences. This is Shantel's greatest achievement, but she shares the credit for this accomplishment with a whole community of people who supported her interest in science. Her interest in plants may have its roots in the fact that both her father and uncle have worked with plants in a greenhouse setting.

Shantel grew up on the Colville Indian Reservation in the north-central part of Washington state, where college attendance was more of the exception than the rule among high school graduates. Her biggest dream was to attend college. During her high school graduation ceremony, the principal announced that 20% of the graduating seniors were going to college, a technical school, or had a job. The remaining 80% did not yet have plans. She partly credits the director of the high school Upward Bound program, Gail Casper, with her success in obtaining admission to WSU in the Bioengineering program. Gail guided her through the testing and application process needed to apply to college.

In 2005, Dr. Dave Weller, Research Leader and Kathleen Parker, Program Support Assistant, created a **"Pumping-Up the Math and Science Pipeline: Grade School to College"** Program where the program provided core **Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)** education, extension and research projects, many of which were focused on the underserved community of the Colville Reservation, including: summer research internships for high school students in ARS labs at Pullman;

"Connections through Science and Adventure" to break down cultural barriers; mentoring and connecting students to employment opportunities in STEM professions and other outreach efforts. Pipeline projects are carried out by volunteers, including research scientists and engineers, faculty, educators, staff, administrators and students from multiple institutions: USDA-ARS Pullman Loca-

tion, USDA-NRCS, Bellevue College, Wenatchee Valley Community College-Omak, South Puget Sound Community College, The Confederated Tribes of the



#### AREA DIRECTOR'S CORNER:

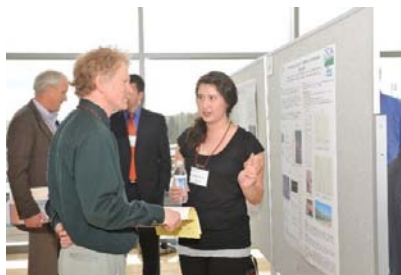
I hope you enjoy reading this latest issue of Unity, which highlights professional workforce diversification and outreach across PWA, along with an article that reminds us of the importance of self-awareness in how we communicate with other.

I also would like to take this opportunity to convey some new initiatives that we are implementing to support our diversity and inclusion efforts.

New training modules will be developed on targets for diversity recruitment (Management Directive -715) and for use of Special Hiring Authorities to reach target populations. A "diversity in action" project will be launched, which will call for competitive proposals for diversity outreach activities. PWA Science in Action, a new summer internship program, is being piloted at 4 locations, where proposals were solicited from Minority-Serving institutions nation-wide.

Finally, kudos to the PWA Workforce Diversity Committee for developing the **PWA Employee and Mentorship Guidelines Handbook**, which provides new and experienced employees with information on mentoring options and organizational information and tips for smooth onboarding and job success. The current version of this handbook can be viewed under the Quick Links tab on the PWA axon site: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/PWA/Pages/Home.aspx>.

We will keep you posted as these initiatives progress. Feel free to contact Jan Lewis if you have any questions ([jan.lewis@ars.usda.gov](mailto:jan.lewis@ars.usda.gov); or 510-559-6003). We appreciate everything you do everyday to support the efforts of diversity and inclusion for the Pacific West Area.



## SHANTEL'S JOURNEY CONTINUED

Colville Reservation, Omak High School, to name a few. ARS coordinates outreach efforts with WSU and connects STEM outreach resources throughout the state. Since the Pipeline Program began in 2005 over 2000 students have received novel scientific research educational opportunities; and, more than 200 professionals and undergraduate and graduate students, as well as local medical professionals, have volunteered time and expertise.

David said that he knew that if he could put a pipetman in the hands of young students, he could attract new talent to research science. Shantel was one of the first three student research interns in the high school intern program in Pullman WA. She worked with ARS Research Geneticist Dr. Kim Garland Campbell on a wheat genetics research program. This started Shantel on the road to becoming a wheat researcher.

During Shantel's undergraduate studies, she sampled many kinds of research projects through internships funded by the Louis Stokes Alliance for Minority Participation (LSAMP) and the National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates (NSF-REU) programs. She did research on malaria transmission in mosquitos, improving human hip implants, and plant molecular biology. It was the plant molecular biology that caught her imagination. She decided to do a Masters degree at WSU with ARS Research Molecular Geneticist, Dr. Camille Steber in collaboration with, Dr. Garland Campbell, her scientific mentors. Her mentors have described Shantel as having, "... a strong interest in molecular biology and a wonderful enthusiasm for research in applied molecular plant science." In fact, she became so enthusiastic about her research on wheat preharvest sprouting, that she chose to carry on with the research project for her Ph.D. work. "I just wasn't about to drop any of my projects. So instead, I moved on to a dual MS/Ph.D. program," said Shantel.

While completing her studies, Shantel found ways to also give back to her community by mentoring others, as she herself had been mentored. She has made many great contributions to other students as well as to WSU during her graduate work. She trained another high school intern from the ARS research pipeline program and two undergraduate interns. She has trained other graduate students in gene expression work and in data analysis. Shantel also served as the elected Director of Professional Development in the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) at WSU. During her time with GPSA, she helped plant the seeds for a new professional development initiative that blossomed into a program providing 30 workshops that serve over 1800 students at WSU. "But the most important trait Shantel has shared with us all has been her enthusiasm for the science. It has brightened the entire lab." said, Dr. Steber.

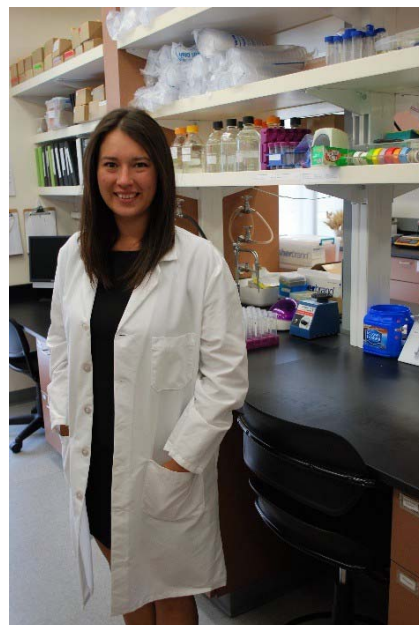
When Shantel reflects on her journey thus far, an important lesson she believes she's learned is in a simple word: community. She considers that many people along the way, her family, teachers, faculty, mentors, have supported, encouraged, listened, and cared for her. She counts working hard and completing internship opportunities as part of her success story. Shantel, believes helping others by being a mentor to them is also important, as well as improving one's soft skills, such as: communication, leadership, organization and writing.

Dr. Weller, summed up the embodiment of the meaning of **community** by saying: "It takes a village to build a scientist to pass on the skills, with enthusiasm to build the next generation of scientists."

So, what's next for Dr. Shantel Martinez? She is moving on to the next great adventure. Dr. Martinez will be performing her postdoctoral research training with Dr. Mark Sorrells, a world expert in wheat preharvest sprouting who recently received an award as one of the most influential scientists.

Last question: "Dr. Martinez, if you could have one super-human power, what would it be?"

Dr. Martinez: "I would clone myself, then I can be in multiple places at once enjoying all the great things in life"





## FARMER'S MARKET-PENDLETON, OR

Caroline Melle and Ann Klein of the USDA-ARS unit in Pendleton, Oregon hosted a booth at the Pendleton Farmer's Market. Kids and parents learned about crops grown in the dryland Pacific Northwest region with a game matching jars of seeds to the respective crops. Licorice prizes were enjoyed. Pictured is Ann Klein and Carina Melle.



*"We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same."  
-Anne Frank*

### DIVERSITY NOTES: Did You Know??...

The PWA Workforce Diversity Committee (PWA-WFDC), with support from the Area Office, announces a competitive grant **PWA Diversity-In-Action (PWA-DIA) Outreach Pilot Program**. This Pilot Program will award **three (3) \$1000 grants** to the winners. All nomination proposals **must have strong diversity components** that will:

- Expand the Area's efforts to apply new and viable approaches to reach K-12 schools, universities/colleges, minority serving institutions, and underserved communities;
- Aid underserved groups in accessing natural resource programs, activities, and services; or to reach a new population that has not yet been previously served;
- Recognize PWA location(s) that develop **innovative** and **creative** diversity outreach programs/events/activities targeting low participating students in schools (K-12 schools, universities/colleges, and minority serving institutions), and underserved communities; and the
- Impact must increase the awareness of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and promote the significant role of ARS to these students and underserved communities.

All locations are strongly encouraged to participate; *only one nomination per location* will be accepted for consideration. More information to follow soon.

## USDA-ARS-U.S. Arid Land Agricultural Research Center (ALARC) – Maricopa, AZ

On July 18, 2017, high schools student from Project Puento completed their 8-week summer internships with USDA-ARS-U.S. Arid Land Agricultural Research Center (ALARC) scientists and techs. During the internship the students completed their own research project and then produced a scientific poster, which they shared with everyone during a lunchtime poster session. The students created amazing and informative posters showcasing their research. There were 110 in attendance for the event. During the poster session, students, ALARC employees, and MAC employees enjoyed pizza and discussions with the students.

Project Puento is a USDA-NIFA funded project by the Hispanic Serving Institutions Grant Program to Central Arizona College. The goal of the project is to provides at least 60 internships in agricultural sciences for high school and college students with research, extension and industry partners over the three years of the program. The ALARC hosted 15 students for 8-week internships during the summer 2017. The students worked with a mentor scientist in one of our three research units, Pest Management & BioControl, Plant Physiology & Genetics, and Water Management & Conservation. In addition, ALARC scientists have also been involved in Science Nights at local high schools and participate as mentors and judges at local science fairs. The over-arching goal of the program is to attract students to college degrees and eventual employment in agriculture science related fields, with focus on local and regional opportunities.

On August 1, 2017, employees at ALARC remembered Gail Dahlquist, a New Crops Research Technician who touched everyone's hearts with her amazing personality. She was diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease, which took her away too early. During her last months after being confined to a wheelchair, she would wear very colorful socks to keep her spirits up. The tradition lives on as we "celebrate our individuality" and "zest for life" with Crazy Sock Day on Gail's birthday on August 1<sup>st</sup>. She will always be remembered!





## HILO, HAWAII SPOTLIGHT

On July 06, 2017, employees listened to Briana McCarthy, from Los Medanos College. The title of her seminar was "Training the Next Generation of Scientists". Briana has worked as a community college instructor for 10 years, a K-12 science coach and teacher educator for 2 years, and has focused her graduate studies and professional development pursuits on both ecology and biology education research. In her talk, she discussed her experiences and research from the front lines of science education and suggested we consider to work together to lower barriers that all students face in pursuing degrees and careers in STEM fields.



During our National Hispanic Heritage Month, Dr. Jon Suzuki, PWA, Asian American/Pacific Islander (AA/PI) Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) showed a 1 hour Diversity Training video titled, "Shaping the Bright Future of America". We watched this during our lunch and received credit for it in Aglearn.



We had Mar Ortaleza from Full Life Hawaii. Mar is the Employment Services and Outreach Coordinator for 'Full Life' <https://fullifehawaii.org/>. Full Life is a nonprofit which services the community. It is based on the self-determination model mandated by the federal government for services to persons with developmental disabilities. It is an island wide provider with two offices, an Adult Day Health Learning Center with over 100 employees.

## WAPATO, WA SPOTLIGHT

The Employment Security Department, in partnership with Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Commerce, Washington State Military Transition Council, and local chambers of commerce across the state, have partnered to create a statewide campaign to hire veterans, supporting House Bill 2040. This Bill, introduced by Representative Gina McCabe, recognizes employers who show their commitment to veteran employment by hiring veterans into their workforce. The Wapato location was recognized for the **YesVets** Award decal for 2016 and 2017.



The employees pictured are (from the left): Steven Hildreth (plaid shirt); Jerald Gefre (standing, ARMY cap); James Harris (orange shirt); Bobbi Hendershott (pink shirt); and Celia Longoria (holding the YesVets sign).