



VOICES

Advancing diversity and its unique contributions in the NPA

NPA Employee Survey Results Show High Job Satisfaction

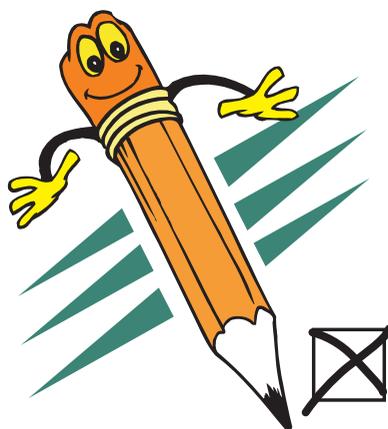
By Barbara King

Slightly more than half of all NPA permanent employees took advantage of the opportunity to provide their input on a wide range of questions dealing with diversity in the survey developed by the NPA Diversity Task Force. The on-line survey, conducted during the summer of 2007, had 435 responses, or about 54% of all permanent employees. Limited demographic information was requested in order to assure confidentiality. All locations participated, and about 10% of the respondents chose not to identify their location or indicate if they were from an under-represented group. Three general areas were included in the survey: 1) recruitment and retention; 2) work environment/balancing work and personal life; and 3) diversity and EEO. The following discussion highlights the main findings of the survey.

Recruitment and Retention

In the NPA, personal contacts are a common and powerful method for disseminating and learning about vacancies. About half of employees indicated they learned about their current position through some sort of personal contact (other employees, professional contacts, job postings at the Location). The next most common method was media sources, cited by

30% of the respondents, and included web sites, newspapers, and professional journals. There were no significant differences between men and women, although non-minorities were significantly more likely than minorities to have heard about their job through personal contacts.



Respondents were also asked to note their agreement with the statement "Permanent positions at my location are filled through a fair and open competitive process." Overall, the majority of respondents (61%) agreed with that statement. However, only 55% of women, compared to 71% of minorities and 63% of non-minorities, agreed that positions are filled through a fair and open process.

A third aspect of recruitment questions focused on involvement with

recruitment activities and the importance of being involved in recruitment activities for permanent positions. Most employees (84%) indicated they have had some involvement with recruiting, and three-quarters agreed that it was important to them to be involved with recruitment activities. Attending a candidate's presentation was the most common method of involvement, cited by 79% of respondents; about half encouraged someone to apply; 44% provided spoken comments; 43% served on an interview panel; 41% dined with a candidate; and 39% provided written comments.

There appears to be some correlation among rates of involvement, importance of being involved, and beliefs about the fairness of searches. For example, two locations had high responses in all three areas, while responses from two other locations with low agreement about fairness of searches also indicated that while it was important to be involved, participation was low. Two other locations had low agreement about searches being fair and open and low participation rates, and also expressed that it was important to be involved in recruitment activities.

Retention is not especially problematic in the NPA. However, given the

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Survey Results

Continued from page 1

relatively lengthy recruitment process and costs associated with hiring and training, retention is nonetheless important and begins as soon as someone applies for a job and ends only when an employee departs. The manner in which new employees are welcomed is the second major opportunity for retention. In the NPA, the most common method used to welcome new employees is introducing the new person at a staff meeting or sending an introductory email message, followed by holding a reception or other social event.

Mentoring is another opportunity for retention. About 12% of the employees indicated they had a formal mentor, and about 38% said they had an informal mentor. Nearly all of those who had either a formal or informal mentor said the mentoring was beneficial. Three-quarters of the employees who did not have any kind of mentor felt they would have benefitted from having had a mentor, and women were more likely than men to say they would have benefitted from having had a mentor.

Work Environment / Balancing Work and Personal Life

Overall, NPA employees reported a high level of satisfaction with their job and their work environment. Three-quarters agreed that their workplace has a sense of community, 84% said they enjoy being around their co-workers, and 79% said they would take their job again. Questions dealing with supervision and compensation rated somewhat lower: 68% of respondents said their supervisor modeled a positive work environment, and 64% felt they were fairly compensated. Seventy-eight percent of the respondents said they were satisfied with their ability to balance work and personal concerns. Certainly the opportunity for flexible work schedules, reported by 83% of respondents, is one proven way management can assist employees.

Men have higher rates of agreement/satisfaction than do women on questions dealing with work environment. Slightly more men than women feel their workplace has a sense of community; 71% of men and 64% of women agree that their supervisor models a positive work environment; 70% of men are satisfied with their compensation compared to 56% of women; and 80% of men and 74% of women would take their job again.

While levels of satisfaction do not vary greatly among the four generations, Millennials (aged 16-26) ranked highest in three dimensions: agreement that their workplace has a sense of community; that their supervisor models a positive work environment; and are satisfied with their work:life balance. Compensation was the one area where Millennials ranked lowest, while Baby Boomers (aged 42-60) are significantly more likely than other generations to be satisfied with their compensation. The generation most likely to say they would take their job again is Traditionalists (aged 61 and older). Generation X (aged 27-41) did not rank highest or lowest in any of the dimensions, and was closely aligned with Baby Boomers on most dimensions.

Diversity and EEO

A substantial majority (81%) of NPA employees believe that people at their locations demonstrate support of diversity. Agreement tended to be high across all groups, although women were slightly less likely to believe employees at their location demonstrate support for diversity than were men.

Most locations appear to have diversity-related events, and several locations appear to be especially active. When asked about recent experiences employees have had in increasing their awareness of diversity, talking is preferred over reading. Specifically, interactions outside of work and interactions with a co-worker were most

often cited, followed by participating in a diversity-related workshop or event, reading "Voices" or reading other materials. A higher percentage of women than men reported having read "Voices" and women were slightly more likely than men to have participated in a diversity-related event. Diversity-related events appear to be most appealing to older employees, in that a slight majority of Traditionalists (52%) indicated they had recently participated in such an event. Participation among the three other generations was significantly lower, with 41% of Baby Boomers, 40% of Gen Xers and only 21% of Millennials indicating they had recently participated in a diversity-related event.

Final Comments

Ninety-one employees took the opportunity to post comments at the end of the survey. Many of the comments applauded the efforts of the Task Force and welcomed the opportunity to provide feedback. While a major theme did not emerge from the comments, diversity was mentioned quite a few times, ranging from support of diversity to questioning the value of diversity. Two other areas were mentioned several times as well – recruitment and opportunities for promotion.

Conclusion

The results tend to confirm that people are very satisfied with their jobs. Generally, most employees are involved and want to be involved with recruitment activities, are satisfied with their jobs and work environment, enjoy their co-workers, and would take their job again.

During the coming year, the Task Force will study the results in more depth, paying close attention to recruitment/retention, work environment, and diversity. Follow the Task Force's progress in the coming issues of "Voices." ■

Northern Plains Notes

By NPA Area Director Will Blackburn

This issue of "Voices" includes the report on the results of the employee survey conducted by the NPA Diversity Task Force [*our front page story*]. Without going into detail here, the results indicate that Area employees are highly satisfied with their work environment and with their jobs. The Task Force will continue to study the results, focusing their efforts on digging a little deeper into recruitment, retention, and educational needs and interests surrounding diversity.

The President's Budget Recommendations

President Bush released his proposed budget for 2009 on February 4. The recommendations would cut the ARS budget by 7.5%, and significantly impact the NPA. As Dr. Knipling noted in his memo of February 6, this budget will create challenges for ARS and for each Area. In the NPA, the proposed budget calls for location closures, project redirections, and project terminations potentially affecting about 8 percent of our permanent workforce. Clay Center would receive up to \$1.5M in additional funding from redirected programs in other Areas.

Under the budget proposal employees and programs at the two locations slated for closure, Grand Forks and Laramie, would be redirected to other locations outside of NPA. Permanent employees at Grand Forks would be relocated to either Beltsville, MD or Davis, CA, and all research programs would be redirected to obesity. All research programs and permanent employees at Laramie would be relocated to Ames, IA. One research project at Lincoln (Stable Flies) would be redirected to Kerrville, TX to work on cattle ticks, and permanent employees would be relocated to Kerrville. Additional research projects at 4 locations within the NPA have also been targeted for termination.

Employees who may be impacted by these proposals have been informally notified by the Agency. As Area

Director, I am sensitive to the issues surrounding this type of uncertainty, and want to reiterate that our employees are truly our most important resource. ARS is committed to identifying all options to accommodate employees who may be impacted by these recommendations. I will keep you informed of the outcome of the budget process as we move through the next several months. It is important to remember that we are in tough budget times and that we in the Executive Branch work for the President, and as such, support his budget.

NPA Summer Internships and Apprenticeships

The recent "Call for Proposals" for summer internships and apprenticeships generated 22 proposals. Of these, six internships and three apprenticeships were selected to receive co-funding from the Area Office. Congratulations to the following selected mentors: (Internships) Ken Dashiell-Brookings, Tom Gulya-Fargo, Tim Green-Fort Collins, Deanna Funnell-Lincoln, Eric Scholljegerdes-Mandan, and Robert Srygley-Sidney, and (Apprenticeships) Walter Bausch-Fort Collins, Tom Geary-Miles City, and Andy Lensen-Sidney. All positions have been posted to the NPA web site [[click here for a link to the listings](#)].

ARS Annual Awards Program

The Northern Plains Area was well-represented at the ARS Annual Recognition Program on February 12, 2008 in Beltsville. Congratulations to the following award recipients from the Northern Plains Area:

NPA Senior Research Scientist:

Richard W. Beeman (Manhattan): For pioneering research in insect genomics leading to the discovery of maternal-effect selfish "Mede" genes and to the first complete genome sequence of an agricultural pest.

NPA Early Career Research Scientist:

Mark Liebig (Mandan): For improved

understanding of management influences on the soil resource and for efforts to communicate research and promote science to a broad range of clientele.



Technology

Transfer Award, Outstanding Effort:

Post-Harvest Food Safety Group, Terry Arthur, Joseph Bosilevac, Mohammad Koohmaraie, Steven Shackelford, Tommy Wheeler (Clay Center): For the development and implementation of technology that reduces pathogen contamination on cattle hides and improves the safety of the red meat supply.

Excellence in Information Award:

Beth Redlin (Sidney): For exemplary service and creativity in information technologies that communicate ARS findings to customers and promote NPARG, ARS, and USDA accomplishments regionally, nationally, and internationally. ■

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Life in the NPA

• Special Feature •

One of the questions in the employee survey asked about workplace community. This special feature takes a look at community life at the Fargo location and employee efforts to reach out to their coworkers and the community at large through various events and activities and through a very successful CFC campaign!

Share Your Ideas!

We would like to hear what other locations do to help shape a community at their workplace. For example, what activities, or events – planned or unplanned – do you or your co-workers do to lighten the air or help form camaraderie among employees? What do you or your co-workers do together, during work or after work, that is fun and helps you feel a part of a community of workers?

Send your descriptions to:

NPA-DTF@ars.usda.gov

and we'll share your ideas with the rest of the Area.

Reaching Out in the Red River Valley: Building a Community in Fargo

By Larry Charlet, DAOC Chair

The Diversity Awareness and Outreach Committee's mission is to promote an awareness of the value of a diverse workforce, foster community outreach programs, and enhance the quality of work life for the employees of the Red River Agricultural Research Center (RRVARC: approximately 135 Federal & 65 non-Federal employees) by sponsoring a variety of activities throughout the year.

During the past year the DAOC has organized, sponsored, and delivered monthly seminars or functions timed to coincide with USDA sponsored observances including the Black History Program, National Women's History

Program, Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Program, Take our Daughters and Sons to Work Program, National Hispanic Heritage Program, National Disability Employment Awareness Program, and the Native American Heritage Program. When we have speakers, the presentations are videotaped and copies burned to DVD for the DAOC events' archive. The DAOC continues to develop a library of Center DAOC activities on DVD.

Getting to Know Each Other

Quality of work life is enhanced by activities that enable employees to get to know each other better (we are in two

Continued next page



Take Your Child to Work Day!

Youngsters enjoy special activities designed just for them at the ARS Fargo location.

Fargo...

Continued from page 4

separate laboratory buildings, plus a third on the university campus) such as a holiday potluck in December and a BBQ picnic of grilled hamburgers and brats, beans, chips, cookies, and pop held each year in the courtyard at the Northern Crop Science Laboratory building.

Community outreach programs that employees participate in during the year include United Way's Annual Day of Caring each October, Season of Hope (FirstLink Holiday Clearing Bureau and Salvation Army Christmas basket program) in December, and Minnesota FoodShare and Fargo-Moorhead Emergency Food Pantry in March.

Mapping Diversity

Over the years, the makeup of the employees at the Center has changed. The DAOC decided that it was important for everyone to be aware of our diversity. We therefore prepared a poster to visually show that ARS employees working at the Red River Valley Agricultural Research Center have roots throughout the United States and all over the world. The poster shows a series of maps of the region, the United States and the world, with colored pins denoting the birthplace of each employee of the Center.

The color of the pin corresponds to the unit of the employee (there are six at the Center) and a list of the birthplace cities is also included on the poster. Each laboratory has a poster prominently displayed near the entry of the building. The poster was titled, "We are from Everywhere." The diversity is continually shifting with a mix of visiting scientists from the U.S. and other countries. The current total is at least 6 countries and 21 states. ■



Fargo's Summer BBQ Picnic

This annual event brings together ARS employees from three different buildings to enjoy a hearty meal together and get to know one another better.



United Way Annual Day of Caring

Fargo ARS employees participate in this special event each year as a community outreach.

Fargo Location Raises Big Money in CFC Campaign!

Editor's Note: The following item is another example of the "community life" nurtured at the Fargo location. It is an e-mail from Lloyd Billey to his fellow Fargo ARS employees describing the Fargo-Moorhead area's very successful Combined Federal Campaign effort in 2007, and its latest plan to join forces with Grand Forks in 2008 to further boost both communities' charity fund-raising efforts next year. It's community outreach of the very best kind!

Good afternoon

I just returned from our monthly CFC meeting downtown and thought I would share a little news with you. The final number for the Fargo-Moorhead community was \$138,580. To put that number in context last year our campaign raised \$132,000 and our goal for this year's campaign was \$137,500. The interesting pattern here is that our final total is larger than both those numbers. I am not a rocket scientist but

I think this means that we had a very successful campaign. In fact we have concluded a very successful campaign!!! Our increase over last year was about 4.91% bigger than last year. When the national increase has been 3% folks in Washington get tickled pink. So congratulations and Thanks.

As I mentioned at the last All-Employee meeting we have officially merged the Fargo-Moorhead CFC with the Grand Forks CFC. We are now the CFC of the Red River Valley. We had our first meeting today with the folks in GF via conference call and everyone is very excited to work together. Both campaigns bring strengths to table in different areas and together we are a much better and financially more efficient infrastructure. Combining campaign results from both Fargo/Moorhead and Grand Forks we raised \$256,870 this year. Yes that's over a 1/4 of a million dollars. It still boggles my undeveloped mind. As you can see

the goal for next year's campaign will be radically different than this year's.

If any or all of you would like to be involved in the LFCC (organizing committee) I would love to get you involved. We meet monthly, and now we will have 1 or 2 meetings a year face to face with the folks in GF. This is really a great group of people (12-14) that has been great to get to know and work with. They have put up with me all these years. Our next meeting is scheduled for the 28th of February, if you would like to just come and meet the gang and try it on for size please let me know.

Please know that you had an important hand in our success above and many people will benefit from it. Thanks!!!!

Lloyd Billey
 Research Technician
 USDA-ARS-RRVARC
 Animal Metabolism & Chemicals Unit ■



Where in the NPA?

How well do you know your Area? Can you identify which location these "coned" characters come from?

(Answer on page 11.)

Show your own location pride! Share your pictures of scenic landmarks, fun festivities or occupational oddities that make your location uniquely you!

Please e-mail your pictures (with captions) to Beth Redlin at: Beth.Redlin@ars.usda.gov or to Barbara King at: Barbara.King@ars.usda.gov

How We Treat Others Matters

By Barbara King

“People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel.”



Those simple words by Maya Angelou speak volumes about the importance of words, behaviors, and feelings. All of us, regardless of our position, have untold opportunities every day to leave a lasting impression on family, friends, co-workers, and others with whom we interact. All of us have warm memories of those who made us feel treasured or simply welcomed. Conversely, everyone at one time or another has felt the sting of unkind words or felt crushed by aggression or indifference. We might forget the words and behavior, but how we feel can have an enormous and lingering impact on our relationship with that person, and perhaps with our job. Although the survey results show that most NPA employees are comfortable with their workplace environments and community, there are some discrepancies between men and women, and there were several comments concerning interactions among employees. With that in mind, the following thoughts are offered as a reminder to all of us to pay attention to what we say and do, and especially to how our words and actions affect our relationships.

Work Relationships

Work relationships are important, and just as with personal or family relationships, the consequences can be powerful. How we treat others matters. How each of us treats co-workers and supervisors, and how supervisors treat those they supervise matters because those interactions form the core of workplace environments and workplace

community.

Workplace environment includes such things as friendliness, helpfulness, cordiality and recognition of others. Those dynamics help shape how we feel about our workplace, and may influence our job performance as well as our attitude and behavior towards co-workers, interactions with the public and customer groups, and over time positively or negatively impact the work environment for ourselves and others. How we treat others, demonstrate support for one another, listen to one another, and the extent to which we each show genuine concern for others' well-being are the bedrock of workplace community.

Have a Positive Impact

Each of us can contribute to positively impacting our work environment and helping to build and maintain community within our workplaces. A good starting point is to understand civil behavior and discourse and avoid discriminatory and/or harassing conduct, or language that can be construed as discriminatory or harassing while at work or during work-related events. A joke or saying that you and/or your circle of friends might consider humorous can strike co-workers as poor taste at best and harassment at worst. Violence or threats of retaliation are never acceptable.

Beyond that, simply being nice to one another is huge and so easy. Regardless of how long you have worked in your current job or location, it is never too late to engage your co-workers. It is easy to separate ourselves from others based on the organizational hierarchy, and use that hierarchy to choose with whom or by what means to interact. Other convenient but equally damaging behaviors are choosing to interact, or not interact, with others based on gender, age, race, religion, national origin, etc. Acknowledging, listening, and in general letting others know that they matter to you and to the organization are some simple acts each of us can adapt into our daily routines. While co-workers need not be the best of friends, being cordial goes a long way in developing and maintaining a work environment where everyone can feel welcome and know that their contribution as a member of the unit is recognized.

Remember too, that credibility and integrity matter. What we say and do, how we are perceived by others, and how others feel they are treated by us, reflects not only on us as individuals but also on NPA, and to an extent, to ARS. As you think about your workplace, and your interactions with your co-workers, keep in mind Maya Angelou's sage wisdom: "...people never forget how you made them feel." ■

A Taste of the NPA!

Editor's Note: Thursday, February 7, marked the onset of the New Year in Vietnam, the native land of NPA Research Microbiologist TheCan Caesar TonThat (Sidney). In this article TheCan shares a favorite holiday recipe from her homeland.

The Vietnamese New Year Celebration - called TET - is the start of the new Vietnamese calendar year. In 2008, Tet began on 7 February and continues for 10 days. 2008 is the year of the Rat, one out of 12 animals that symbolizes the different lunar years.

TET will never be complete without Bánh chưng, a Vietnamese cake made with glutinous rice in a square shape wrapped in dong leaves (*Phrynium placentarium*, a relative of arrowroot) and stuffed with mung beans, fatty pork, and black pepper. Bánh chưng is served with pickled scallions, vegetable pickles or "dưa món". Traditionally, every house must have at least one or a pair of bánh chưng to be placed on their ancestor's altars during TET.

Bánh chưng Recipe

Ingredients: (for 1 cake or 4 servings)

- 1 3/4 cups sticky (glutinous) rice, preferably long-grain
- 1/4 cup dried split mung beans
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons chopped shallots
- 1 1/2 tablespoons fish sauce
- 1 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 5 ounces pork shoulder or butt, cut into 1/4-inch-thick chunks
- 1 1/2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 2 (14" x 16") sheets plastic wrap plus extra 1 (14" x 16") sheet aluminum foil
- 2 (14" x 14") pieces banana leaf

Preparation:

1. Let the rice soak overnight. In a separate bowl, soak the mung beans for at least 4 hours. Drain both just before



2008 -The Year of the Brown Rat

These pictures from TheCan show scenes from the recent New Year's celebration in Vietnam. Top left, the year of the brown rat is thought to bring prosperity. Below right, a larger-than-life display showing the wrapped holiday cake of our featured recipe.

TheCan Caesar TonThat
Research Microbiologist
Sidney, Montana



using and set aside in separate bowls. Add the salt to the rice and stir to blend.

2. Combine the shallots, fish sauce, black pepper and pork pieces and let marinate for 30 minutes.

3. Heat the oil in a frying pan over moderate heat. Add the pork pieces and all the marinade and stir just until the meat is brown around the edges, about 3 to 4 minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and set aside.

4. Using a steamer basket, steam the mung beans until they are soft, about 10 minutes. Remove from the heat and set aside.

5. To make the packet, neatly lay down the wrappers in this order: 1 sheet of plastic wrap (leave the other for use later), the aluminum foil, 2 sheets banana leaves (one perpendicular to the other). Place one cup of the rice in the center of the banana leaf, spreading it to cover a 5-inch square. Place half of the mung beans on top, then add the pork pieces. Cover with the remaining mung beans and place 1 cup of rice on top. Bring the narrow sides of the wrappers together. Fold the gathered edges over twice, then flatten against the

packet. (You now have two open ends.) Fold one end over and hold the packet upright. Add half of the remaining rice, tapping it and pushing it down so the packet will be an even square. Fold the end over and repeat on the other side.

6. Place the packet with the folded sides down in the center of the remaining plastic sheet. Wrap tightly so that water will not seep into the packet during cooking.

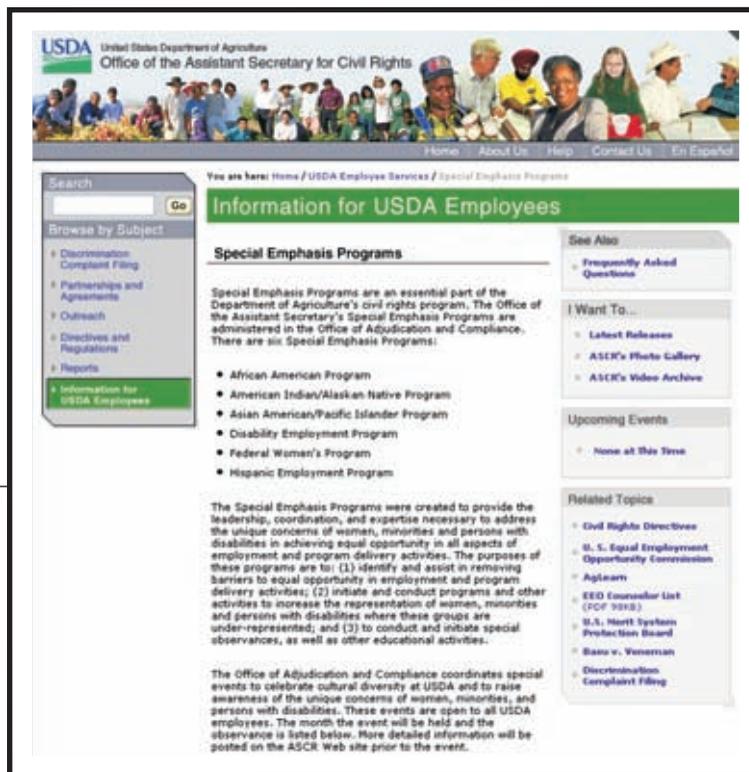
7. Tightly tie the packet with two parallel strings in both directions (as in a tic-tac-toe pattern).

8. Fill a large stockpot with water. Add the packet and bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to a simmer. Place a colander or something heavy on top of the packet to keep it submerged in the water. Cook uncovered until done, about 6 hours, adding more water if necessary. Remove from the heat and set aside to cool for 1 hour.

9. To serve, cut the packet (without unwrapping) into 1/2-inch slices. Remove the wrapping and arrange the slices on a serving plate. Serve warm or at room temperature. If wrapped in plastic and refrigerated, the cake will keep for 1 week. ■

Celebrating Diversity All Year Long!

Editor's Note: Need help coming up with ideas to recognize special emphasis program months, diversity in general, or ways to raise awareness of the unique concerns of minorities, women and persons with disabilities? A quick Internet search will yield a remarkable amount of links to organizations providing information and materials on the history and purposes of the special emphasis programs and other issues relating to raising awareness about diversity. The ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) and the USDA Office of Civil Rights web pages can also be searched for additional resources and ideas. The following is a list of what annual celebrations the USDA Office of Civil Rights coordinates by month.



Web page address for the USDA Office for Civil Rights:

http://www.ascr.usda.gov/usda_employee_special.html

- January
Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday
- February
Black History Month
- March
National Women's History Month
- April
USDA Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day
- May
Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month
Cinco De Mayo
- June
National Gay and Lesbian Pride Month
- August
Women's Equality Day
- September 15 - October 15
National Hispanic Heritage Month
- October
National Disability Awareness Month
- November
National American Indian Heritage Month

Test your knowledge!

Try your hand
 at identifying
 the famous
 African Americans
 and Women included
 in our matching game
 on the next page.

(Answer key below.)

Answer Key: (to our matching game on page 10)
1=C; 2=E; 3=B; 4=F; 5=A; 6=D; 7=G

Matching Game: Famous African Americans and Women

Editor's note: Now that you know where to find more information, try your hand at this matching game celebrating these USDA monthly observances for February and March. Answers found at bottom of page 9.

Questions:

Born the son of a French planter and a slave in New Orleans, he was educated in France. After returning to the U.S., he developed an evaporator for refining sugar, which he patented in 1846. This evaporation technique is still used in the sugar industry and in the manufacture of soap and other products.

A native of Cincinnati, Ohio, _____ received a B.S. (1891) and M.S. (1892) from the University of Cincinnati and a Ph.D. (1907) from the University of

Chicago. A noted authority on the behavior of insects, _____ was the first researcher to prove that insects can hear.

Born into slavery in Missouri, _____ earned degrees from Iowa Agricultural College. The director of agricultural research at the Tuskegee Institute from 1896-1943, _____ developed hundreds of applications for farm products important to the economy of the South, including the peanut, sweet potato, soybean, and pecan.

Who is credited with helping free more than 2,000 Chinese women and children smuggled into San Francisco to be sold as slaves?

Who drove a stagecoach across the roughest part of the West without

anyone knowing until she died that she was a woman?

As vice president of the United Farm Workers, what woman has been vital in speaking for civil and economic rights for farm workers throughout the U.S.?

Who was the first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature?

Choices:

- A. Charlie Parkhurst
- B. George Washington Carver
- C. Norbert Rillieux
- D. Dolores Huerta
- E. Charles Henry Turner
- F. Donaldina Cameron
- G. Toni Morrison

Increasing the Accessibility of "VOICES"

By Beth Redlin

Readers may have noticed a few change in this edition of VOICES as we work to make it more accessible to all NPA employees.

In an effort to aid our co-workers with limited sight to share in VOICES we've made some changes in our design to enable the Adobe Acrobat "Read Out Loud" feature to follow the text more easily. (Note: This screen reader feature has been available since Acrobat version 6, but you will need to have downloaded the full version of the free Adobe Reader to use all the available accessibility features.)

Under our new design, stories too long for a single page are no longer being jumped inside to a non-consecutive page, but instead are being continued on the succeeding page. In addition, all photos, graphics and charts will include alternative text describing what's

pictured and explaining its relationship to the story.

While the changes mean some regular features, like Dr. Blackburn's column, will no longer typically be found on page 2, all features will still be present.

For those interested in using Acrobat's "Read Out Loud" option, following are a few pointers. We'd also like to hear from those of you using this feature about any problems you may encounter, so that we can continue to fine tune our efforts to make VOICES readily accessible to all NPA employees.

To access Acrobat Reader's Read Out Loud feature, select VIEW > READ OUT LOUD then select one of the following options:

"Read This Page Only" - shortcut keys are CTRL + SHIFT + V

"Read to End of Document" - shortcut

keys are CTRL + SHIFT + B

"Pause/Resume" - shortcut keys are CTRL + SHIFT + C

"Stop" - shortcut keys are CTRL + SHIFT + E

Shortcut keys to activate and deactivate the "Read Out Loud" feature are CTRL + SHIFT + Y.

Users can also change the default Read Out Loud attributes by selecting EDIT > PREFERENCES > READING.

Among the attributes you can change are: Volume, Voice, Pitch, Speed and Read form fields.

To learn more about these and other accessibility features in Adobe Reader, check out the following helpful website from WebAIM:

<http://www.webaim.org/resources/reader/#outloud>



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Where in the NPA? - Answer Key
These colorful "coneheds" come to us from the beautiful grounds of the Northern Great Plains Research Lab in Mandan, ND. The group was helping out during the lab's annual Friendship Days field day event.
Share Your Favorite Pictures!
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ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity & Equal Opportunity (ODEO)

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