



VOICES

Advancing diversity and its unique contributions in the NPA

The Keys to the Door...Student Recruiting Tips for Diversity

By Barbara King, Fort Collins, CO

About the last thing I wanted to do on a cold, rainy evening in late October was participate in a federal career networking event sponsored by Colorado State University. Driving through pounding rain in heavy traffic, finding a parking spot, and jogging through puddles was not on my list of fun things to do. Given the rain, and predictions for the rain to turn to snow later, I was sure the turnout by students would be low. Was I wrong! Despite the weather, some 300 students turned out for the chance to learn about student and permanent federal employment.

The format called for a short panel discussion with four agencies followed by an hour or so of informal networking with representatives from twelve federal agencies. About two dozen students visited with me during the networking, and all were keenly interested in internships, the kinds of student jobs available during the school year, and what types of permanent work ARS offered. Most of the students that talked with me – and all but three were women – were majoring in science-related fields, from bachelor to doctoral degrees, and one PhD student had held an Area co-funded internship while an undergraduate at North Dakota State University. The men, at least anecdotally, seemed to be clustered around the Federal Bureau of

Investigation, Immigration and Custom Enforcement, and the Forest Service.

Students at the networking event, and at other career fairs, knew about ARS and were interested in working in ARS. The most common question that evening and at other career fairs, as well as from

email inquiries, is "How do I find out about student jobs?" Students sense that knowing someone or having current or previous federal experience is a definite plus when it comes to getting a student or permanent job.

Continued next page



Lincoln ARS Participates in Student Career Fair

Left to right, Lincoln, Nebraska ARS employees, Dr. Gautam Sarath, Dr. Deanna Funnell-Harris, and Amy Wheatley at the Oct. 8, 2009 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Career Fair.

Recruiting...

Continued from page 1

Even when students know about the Agricultural Research Service and the Northern Plains Area, the process for finding out about openings and applying is anything but transparent. For starters, student employment varies from location to location, and having a personal connection to a location does seem to help. My standing advice to students at the networking event and other students seeking jobs with NPA boils down to two steps:

1. Learn about the location by reviewing that location's web site to become familiar with the research units and scientists, and;
2. Click on the "Careers" link on each location's home page for information about student employment at that location. Contact the research leader or research scientist by email or telephone about science-related jobs (lab, field, GPS, engineering, etc.) and/or opportunities for volunteering or working an unpaid internship. Contact the administrative officer for non-science type jobs.

Knowing that acronyms and web pages can be bewildering, I always take along copies of the NPA home page and give some tips on navigating the NPA and ARS web pages.

Tips for reaching a wide variety of applicants

As I was walking back to my car after the networking event, now through a thick curtain of falling snow, my earlier misgivings were replaced with the energy that comes with interacting with smart, engaged, and interesting people. Many student employees eventually become permanent employees, and our student recruitment process must be transparent and open, and reach a wide variety of applicants. Here are some recommendations:

1. From the Careers link on your location's home page, give clear

directions on whom to contact about student jobs. Look at that as sort of a "door" to student opportunities. Contact information should include a name, street/office address, telephone, and email addresses. At a minimum, list research leaders as contacts for science-based jobs and the administrative officer for other types of jobs. The site should also include links to any required federal forms (such as the OF 612), and any deadlines for applying. Note that an OF 306 should not be collected until a job offer has been made.

2. While the web site is the door, perhaps the key to the door is widening the circle of personal contacts who have traditionally been the source of student referrals to include folks who are involved with under-represented groups. Students know about ARS and want to pursue jobs with us, yet they don't know how or who to contact. Personal connections between location personnel and university personnel can be that key between students and ARS. Don't rely on a tight circle of people you know, especially if that circle either isn't diverse or hasn't in the past referred students from diverse backgrounds.
3. Locations in communities that have two or four year schools should post all student jobs on each college or university's career office web site. Job announcements should also be emailed to student services offices that work with minority students and to departments that may have students with the desired skill sets you're seeking.
4. Also consider better utilizing SCEP (Student Career Exploration Program), which can be a terrific tool for recruiting students, especially from under-represented groups. While NPA locations have had 27 SCEP conversions since 2000, none have been from an under-represented racial/ethnic group, and

our overall retention rate of conversions is just under 50%. We can do better. At a minimum the SCEP minority/majority ratio should be similar to the ratio for permanent employees, which is still only about 7% minority.

Following these recommendations should go a long way in demystifying the process for applying for student jobs at NPA locations, along with the added benefit of having a deeper and more varied applicant pool from which to choose. Both of which are good things! ■

Upcoming USDA National Observances

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

Northern Plains Notes

By Northern Plains Area Director Will Blackburn

This past year has been fraught with federal, state, and local budget deficits. ARS did very well with the budget this year, as the agency budget is 3.4% above our FY 09 Appropriations level. Additionally, the Appropriations Act provides \$70,873,000 toward the design, construction, and modernization of ARS facilities.



You might recall that last spring Grand Forks and Laramie were put on the closure list and one of the research projects at Lincoln was to be redirected. With the signing of the Agriculture Appropriations Bill last month by President Obama, much of the uncertainty that has shrouded three of our locations has been lifted. It is now official that Grand Forks will not be closed, the Lincoln research project will not be redirected, and the Laramie research unit will be moved to Manhattan, KS.

Laramie Relocation

All of the 19 permanent employees at Laramie will receive a relocation offer to Manhattan, which includes a permanent position, movement of household goods, temporary housing, and if applicable assistance with buying and selling a primary residence. If those offered a relocation decline, they will be able to keep their position up until their reporting date to Manhattan or until they tender a letter of resignation. The transfer to Manhattan is proceeding quickly and it is anticipated that some employees will report to Manhattan by the end of January with everyone reporting to Manhattan by the end of August.

The Manhattan location, the city, university, and Congressional delegation have all warmly welcomed the Laramie folks and the location is making a wonderful effort at rearranging office and lab space to accommodate the Laramie unit. Earlier this month, Mickey McGuire,

Mike Wiggett and I, along with all Laramie scientists spent two days in Manhattan where we were treated with utmost courtesy and enthusiasm. My sincere "thanks!" to everyone involved in this huge task and to the patience and understanding exhibited especially by the Laramie employees.

Top NPA Scientists

This past summer, Dr. Jack Morgan was selected as the NPA Senior Research and Dr. Dana Blumenthal was selected as the NPA Early Career Scientist. Congratulations are also extended to the following scientists who secured ARS Post-Doc awards: James Bono (Clay Center), John Fellers (Manhattan), Janice Huwe (Fargo), Matthew Picklo (Grand Forks), Bryan Stegelmeier (Logan) and Jeff Vallet (Clay Center).

REE Reorganization

On a larger scale, there have been significant changes occurring at the department and agency levels. Transformation is the new buzz word around the halls of the Whitten and South Buildings, and filtering across all ARS Areas. The reorganization of USDA REE Mission Area is starting to take shape. On October 8, 2009, Secretary Vilsack launched the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA). NIFA is designed to integrate the planning of science across USDA and partner with other federal agencies. Accordingly, Under Secretary and Chief Scientist Dr. Rajiv Shah identified five strategic research priorities: 1) Global Food Security; 2) Climate Change; 3) Sustainable Energy; 4) Childhood Obesity; and 5) Food Safety. Although President Obama recently nominated Dr. Shah for the position of Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the five research priorities will remain.

This transformation will occur over time, and will require adjustments and changes in how we do some things. While any change can be challenging, I believe that this represents almost unlimited opportunities for ARS and NPA to initiate fundamental changes. For instance, while we have been prevented from seeking extramural funding in the past, Under

Secretary Shah was committed to removing barriers to ARS scientists and I anticipate that whoever is named to replace Dr. Shah (assuming his nomination is approved) will share that commitment. At the same time, I believe that our base funding will remain stable, although how and if that funding will be raised is not clear at this time. Webcasts discussing these changes and excerpts from Sec. Vilsack's remarks are available at:

www.visualwebcaster.com/nifa-rollout
www.csrees.usda.gov/newsroom/news/2009news/10081_nifa_launch.html

I encourage you to watch this webcast (which will be available until sometime in March). I am confident that whatever changes are made, ARS will continue to be recognized as a leading scientific organization and that ARS will be an even larger player in agriculturally related scientific research.

Happy Holidays!

As the calendar year winds down and thoughts turn to family, friends, community, and holiday celebrations, I extend my wishes to every employee for a safe and enjoyable holiday season. ■

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Celebrating National American Indian Heritage Month

November marks the USDA observance of National American Indian Heritage Month and this issue of VOICES includes several articles related to this special celebration. First is our profile of this year's participants in NPA's unique Native American Student Intern Program on pages 4 and 5. Other articles in our November Special Feature section include:

Cultural Simulation Exercise

Page 6

Cultural Misperceptions

Page 7

Reading/Viewing Recommendations

Pages 8-9

Traditional Foods

Page 9

Our 2009 NPA Summer Interns

Grand Forks, ND

Submitted by Brenda Ling
 and Sue Sorum

This year four students participated in the 2009 Native American Summer Internship at the Grand Forks (N.D.) Human Nutrition Research Center. Brittany Gene (Navajo) is student at the University of Arizona majoring in nutritional sciences. She worked with Lin Yan, Ph.D., a nutrition researcher, on an animal feeding study that examined dietary weight and cancer prevention in mice. Olivia Trujillo (Navajo) is a student at the University of Arizona who plans to continue to medical school. She worked with Huawei Zeng, Ph.D., a molecular biologist, to study the molecular basis of anticancer nutrients. Anya Ashley, (Navajo) is a student at the University of Arizona and plans to study abroad before graduating with her bachelor's degree. She worked with Bonnie Hoverson, R.D., head dietitian, on a project to determine how Navajo Indians could eat traditional foods but in a healthier way. Allison Albers (Hunkpapa



Clockwise, from top left: Grand Forks 2009 interns Brittany Gene, Anya Ashley, Allison Albers and Olivia Trujillo

Lakota Sioux) is a student at the University of North Dakota. She has associate degrees in community health and early childhood education from the United Tribes Tribal College. She worked with Lisa Jahns, Ph.D., research nutritionist, on a collaboration project with the Grand Forks Park District, which examined activity levels of school-age children and their knowledge of healthy eating habits. Each summer intern presented their project and findings during a morning seminar the last week of the internship. ■

Mandan, ND

Submitted by Holly Johnson
 and Scott Kronberg

Ryan Moran, the lone participant this year in the 2009 Native American Summer Internship at the Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory in Mandan, helped research scientists Scott Kronberg and John Hendrickson determine whether cattle can be used to help establish new plants on



Ryan Moran with marked dung patties from a study to determine whether feeding cattle seeds will help establish new plants on rangelands.

Continued next page →

Mandan, ND...

Continued from page 4

rangeland by feeding seeds to the cattle. The seeds were then dispersed on the range using the dung as a “natural” carrier where some of the seeds eventually germinated. The yellow flags behind Ryan are all the dung patties produced during the trials and any reddish colored flags visible are the dung patties that had alfalfa seedlings growing from seeds fed to the cows. Ryan was very involved and, although it is hoped that he might continue next summer, his plans also include the possibility of a move to the University of Idaho to start a program related to wildfire management and ecology, the field of study that he’s most interested in.

*The following was submitted by
 Ken Dashiell, Brookings, SD*

Ryan is also a second year intern, having worked last summer at Brookings, SD where he assisted with research projects that were investigating ecologically friendly ways to control two very important insect pests the soybean aphid and the corn rootworm. Ryan said “It was a very good experience to work at the research lab in Brookings. I now appreciate the research that has been conducted so that our farmers can grow highly productive crops like corn and soybean.” ■



Ryan Moran (right), a student at United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck ND, and Dave Schneider, a Research Technician at the USDA, ARS lab in Brookings SD, look at a corn root and determine how much damage has been caused by corn rootworms, an insect pest that eats corn roots.

Fargo, ND

Submitted by David Smith

Santana Nez (Navajo) and Rayeann Solano (Choctaw) of the University of Arizona conducted summer internships at the Animal Metabolism-Agricultural Chemicals Research Unit in Fargo, ND from June to August 2009. During the internship, each student was involved in a project designed to understand the fate of a potential feed additive in food animals. For this study, mature sheep were the food animal of interest. The students were involved in study preparation, including animal care and training, as well as organizing sample collection and storage; study execution, including sam-



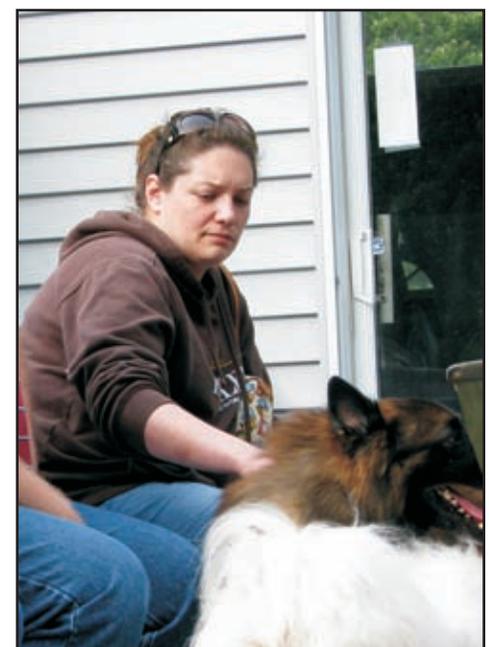
University of Arizona students Santana Nez (left) and Rayeann Solano interned at the Animal Metabolism-Agricultural Chemicals Research Unit.

ple collection, record keeping, and sample analysis; and data analysis including data summarization and presentation. While each student was responsible for their portion of the study, they worked with each other and with the technical staff to achieve the study goals. ■

Fargo, ND

Submitted by Richard Roehrdanz

Alexa Azure conducted a summer internship with the Insect Genetics and Biochemistry Research Unit in Fargo, ND in June and July 2009. Alexa is a 2007 graduate of United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, ND. She is continuing her education at the University of North Dakota in chemical engineering. During her internship Alexa participated in a project designed to measure the genetic diversity in natural populations of the western tarnished plant bug. This insect feeds on a large number of different plants. She was involved in the preparation of DNA samples from the insects and carrying out PCR reactions to obtain specific segments of DNA. The DNA samples were sequenced and she was also introduced to the software used to collate and analyze the DNA sequences. This was Alex's second tour as an intern in



Fargo, ND Intern Alexa Azure is a 2007 graduate of United Tribes Technical College, Bismarck, ND.

insect genetics. She comes from the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe. ■

BaFa' BaFa' – A Powerful Cultural Simulation Exercise

By Sue Sorum, Grand Forks, ND

Last year 30 employees at the Grand Forks Human Nutrition Research Center participated in an experiential learning exercise called “BaFA' BaFa'.” This two-hour program was facilitated by staff from the American Indian Student Services at the University of North Dakota. The program was created to understand the powerful effect that culture can play in every person's life. It deals with cultural differences, assumptions, and misunderstandings. The intent was to help participants improve their ability to work with and relate to members from

cultures different from their own.

The facilitators divided us into two groups; the Alpha culture that was relationship oriented and the Beta culture that was a highly competitive trading culture. Once each group had some understanding of their “culture” and were given some general rules, we were asked join the other group either as an observer or a visitor. Almost immediately we were dealing with stereotyping, misperceptions and misunderstandings; it made a number of folks feel alienated and confused because they were different. Once this

exercise was completed, the facilitators brought us together to deconstruct the experience. The exercise revealed stereotypes that most of us have about those we perceive as “different.”

This experience demonstrated to me that the ways in which people interact with each other tend to be culturally bound, and therefore our intentions may not translate well or even cause conflict. Understanding our differences facilitates better relationships. Information about BaFa' BaFa' simulation training can be obtained at:

www.stsintl.com/business/bafa.html . ■



Where in the NPA?

.....
...can you find this happy hen? It's part of a larger work, a unique "seed picture," that originally hung as the backdrop to a community ag booth at this location's county fair. The distinctive image took 200 hours to create and uses nearly 70 varieties of plants, seeds and other natural products, which must be grown in the area and not colored or otherwise materially altered. Prizes are awarded for the best backdrop and the competition is fierce. At which NPA location is this distinctive folk art practiced?

(Answer on page 12.)

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*

Misperceptions Impede Indian, non-Indian Relations

By Barbara King, Fort Collins, CO

November has been designated National American Indian Heritage Month since 1990, when President George H. W. Bush signed a proclamation noting the immense contributions made by American Indians. While this designation serves as a way of annually recognizing the contributions American Indians have made to the country, misperceptions about their culture and history, along with generalizations, stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination, continue to challenge productive and meaningful interactions between Indians and non-Indians.

In an attempt to study attitudes and misperceptions of American Indians and non-Indians about each other, the Public Agenda held 12 focus groups across the United States in 2006-07.* The study focuses on the Past, the Present, and the Future. To Indians, the past represents injustices akin to the Holocaust. While non-Indians feel sympathetic toward Indians, they generally had little real understanding of Indian history or the meaning of treaties and Indian sovereignty, let alone how the

past is intimately connected to the present for Indians. Additionally, to non-Indians not living near dense Indian populations, Indians are almost invisible, while non-Indians living close to Reservations tended to characterize Indians negatively. Regardless of proximity to Indians, non-Indians tended to view Indians largely through incomplete historical and Hollywood depictions, and believe that Indians in general benefit enormously from casino revenues and receive generous federal benefits if not outright handouts. Looking to the future, Indians and non-Indians are hopeful that the gap between Indians and non-Indians can be bridged through education and appreciation of historical and contemporary Indian culture as well as creating opportunities for more interactions between Indians and non-Indians.

This study sheds light on the misperceptions non-Indians have of Indian history, culture, and contemporary life and suggests how those misperceptions can be addressed so as to improve Indian and non-Indian relations. This is a compelling, thoughtful

study that will be of interest to anyone seeking to better understand how Indian history and culture impact contemporary Indian life and how relations between Indians and non-Indians can be improved. The results especially point to what each of us as individuals can do, which is to start by educating ourselves about Indian culture, history and contemporary life and to examine our own perceptions and how those affect our attitudes and approaches toward Indians. Check out this issue's "On the Shelf and on the Screen" for specific recommendations for books and videos on American Indians.

* The full report (27 pages) is found at: <http://www.publicagenda.org/reports/walking-mile-first-step-toward-mutual-understanding>.

The Public Agenda is a non-partisan research organization that examines public attitudes in order to inform the nation's leaders about what the public really thinks as well as a vehicle for educating citizens in order for them to make informed decisions.

All of My Best Ideas....

All of my best ideas come from someone else.

The following is blatantly copied from an editorial by Daniel J. Schneck in the August 2009 edition of American Laboratory and used with Dr. Schneck's permission. The original article can be found here: www.isc-newsletter.com/newsletter/2009/sep/lin-1009/art6.pdf

Dr. Schneck is a very smart man so I pay attention to what he has to say. In his editorial, he outlines twelve simple principles for dealing with people, which is something that each one of us has to do every day. His twelve principles are stated below. Notice that each principle

has the same number of words as the number of the principle. There are three principles for number 3. Take your pick or use all three. Here goes. Pay attention!

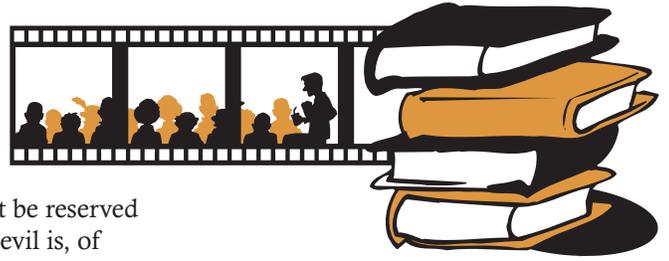
12. *I will make every effort to take care of this matter immediately.*
11. *You're human...don't fret about your mistake...we can fix it.*
10. *Ask not of others what you would not do yourself.*
9. *Say what you mean, and mean what you say.*
8. *Appreciate the important differences between ruling and leading.*

By Leonard Cook, Fargo, ND

7. *A positive attitude makes most things possible.*
6. *You did a really great job!*
5. *Admit when you are wrong.*
4. *What do you think?*
3. *Would you please? or Practice makes perfect. or I need you.*
2. *Thank you!*
1. *We (us).*

Some of these are things we may say to each other and some are attitudes that we may employ in our everyday actions. I challenge you to see how many of these you can use each day. ■

On the Shelf and on the Screen: Book, Video Reviews on Diversity



Editor's note: "On the Shelf and On the Screen" provides reviews of books and videos that deal with diversity as another means of learning about diversity. We invite you to contribute your recommendations for inclusion in future editions of "Voices" – simply email your recommendations with a short description to: NPA-DTF@ars.usda.gov

Books

Talent is Overrated by Geoff Colvin

Review by Bill Kemp, Fargo, ND

Over the years, and like many of you, I've come to wonder just what really separates world-class performers from the rest of us. This comes, in part, from occasional experiences in my life where I've witnessed remarkably gifted – at least they appear so to me - individuals struggle or fail in activities, or careers, for which they seem well-suited. Of the modest reading that I have attempted in this area, probably the closest any author has come to satisfying is Geoff Colvin, Senior Editor at Large – FORTUNE Magazine, in his recent book "Talent is Overrated" – which, by the way, I'm thinking about using as my epitaph. Although, and perhaps because of the author's day job at FORTUNE, you might think of this book as a motivational "How to..." for the business world. However, what Colvin has produced is a fascinating cross-discipline and cross-cultural study of truly great achievers – from Mozart and Ben Franklin to modern day Tiger Woods and Itzhak Perlman. Colvin distills a remarkable amount of cutting-edge research in the behavioral sciences, tosses in clever synthesis and practical advice, and delivers a most enjoyable debunking of the myth of innate talent. That said, and although

great performances may not be reserved for a preordained few, the devil is, of course, in the details. At the core of his thesis is the concept of "deliberate practice", the subject of scholarly inquiry, which will give you a new take on the old adage "practice makes perfect." Deliberate practice is specifically designed to improve performance – often with the help of a teacher or mentor; it can be repeated a lot; feedback on results is continuously available; it is highly demanding – mentally or physically, sometimes both; and isn't much fun. Deliberate practice is not a recreational pursuit, which, of course, explains my golf game. Great performances, though not reserved for a preordained few, do not come cheaply and among the many appealing aspects of this read is Colvin's practical advice on applying the principles of deliberate practice to our lives and organizations. In the concluding chapter, Colvin provides a thoughtful analysis of "understanding the deepest question about great performance", but I'll leave it to you to discover the secret.... ■

Special Recommendations

The following recommendations for authors, books, and films are suggested in recognition of National American Indian Heritage Month.

We Shall Remain A PBS Mini-Series

Review by Bill Kemp, Fargo, ND

Even if you are not a regular Public Broadcasting Service devotee, you will not want to miss what has been hailed as perhaps the most ambitious primetime television series and media project on Native American history ever produced. "We Shall Remain," from the award-winning PBS series

"American Experience," presents a multifaceted story - spanning more than three hundred years - of Native ingenuity and perseverance. Although we are all familiar with at least the general outlines of European settlement throughout North America, never before have we had the opportunity to listen to the perspective of the North America's original inhabitants. The heart of this effort is a five-part television series that shares how Native peoples adapted and fought back - from the Wampanoags of New England in the 1600s who negotiated an English alliance that weakened rival tribes, to the emerging Native leaders of the 1970s who forged a Pan-Indian identity linked to the momentum of the Civil Rights Movement. Interesting also is the fact that each historical episode of "We Shall Remain" is paired with a short, contemporary narrative showing how the past resonates in Native American lives today. Remarkable in many ways, "We Shall Remain" draws heavily from Native advisors and scholars at all levels of the effort, and represents an unprecedented collaboration between Native and non-Native filmmakers. You can view full episodes online or purchase the three DVD set at: http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/amex/weshallremain/the_films/about. ■

More Books and Films

The following is just a tiny sampling of books and films by and about American Indians:

Sherman Alexie: The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian (2007) – won the 2007 National Book Award for

Continued next page →

On the Shelf... *Continued from page 8*

Young People's Literature (but the story is timeless and resonates with readers of any age) and was reviewed in the November 2008 issue of "Voices"

N. Scott Momaday: *House Made of Dawn* (1968) – won the 1969 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Relates Reservation life through the eyes of a young Native American man.

Louise Erdrich: *Love Medicine* (1984) – Won the 1984 National Book Critics Circle Award. This was Erdrich's debut novel that tells a multigenerational stories about life and inter-generational connections.

Michael Dorris: *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* (1987) – traces the lives of three American Indian women across three

generations.

Chris Eyre – produced "Smoke Signals" (1998) based on Sherman Alexie's *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*. Tells the story of a road trip of sorts by Victor and Thomas who travel from a Reservation in Idaho to the outskirts of Phoenix to retrieve the possessions of Victor's father. ■

A Taste of the NPA!

By Brenda Ling, Grand Forks, ND



Intern Anya Ashley asks a child about his knowledge of the Food Pyramid.

Anya Ashley, a student at the University of Arizona, worked on a research project with head dietitian Bonnie Hoverson to determine how Navajo Indians could eat traditional foods but in a healthier way. Ashley learned that modifications in key ingredients could include healthier choices. For example, in her fried bread experiment, Ashley used different types of fats and flour. In the corn meal mush recipe, she found little needed to be changed as the recipe already was made up of whole grains.

Ashley wanted to add more fruits and vegetables to the recipes she studied as she found those two groups were lacking in Navajo diets. She also worked to include more calcium into the diets because a good portion of the Navajo population were lactose intolerant. ■

Traditional Navajo Foods

Mutton Stew

- 4 cups (1.5 lb) diced mutton*
- 6-8 cups water*
- 1 cup onion*
- 1 cup diced potatoes*
- 1 cup carrots*
- 1 cup celery*

Place meat and water in a soup pot and slow boil for 1-2 hours. Add vegetables and cook till done. Serves 6.

Fry Bread

- 2 cups Bluebird flour*
- 1 teaspoon baking powder*
- ¼ teaspoon salt*
- 1 cup warm water*

Mix the flour, baking powder and salt in a bowl. Mix in warm water by hand to form dough. Cover with a cloth and let stand 20 minutes. Shape dough into balls about 2 inches across, and then flatten by patting and stretching the dough. Heat the canola oil (1 inch deep) in a cast iron pan till hot. Fry one side until golden brown, then turn and fry the other side.

Note: This recipe is used for Navajo tacos, served with stews or drizzled with honey or powdered sugar for dessert. The dough can also be added to the mutton stew like a dumpling.

Blue Corn Mush

- 1 cup boiling water*
- 1 1/3 cups blue cornmeal*

Add blue cornmeal to boiling water and stir. Boil for 15 minutes stirring constantly. Take off heat and stir. Juniper ash (1/3 cup prepared with 1/3 cup water) can be added. You may add a small amount of sugar to lightly sweeten.

Impressions of the NPA Leadership Conference...

By Mark Petersen, Miles City, MT

from a new employee

First impressions on the first day in the first hour were framed by the friendly interactions of the participants. There was a positive air of collegiality, familiarity and the comfort of a well-worn hat. The feelings I experienced were reminiscent to those at my first Thanksgiving with my fiancé's large family. Everybody there was friendly and I felt comfortable even though I hardly knew anybody.

“

I feel very fortunate to have experienced the Leadership Conference within the first two months on the job.

I suspect it saved me at least six months in trial and error learning.

”

Just prior to the conference, I had the opportunity to complete my orientation in the Fort Collins office, so this meeting was a chance to renew those acquaintances and the new professional contacts I had made. Complementary to seeing the area staff again was the luncheon organization where we were assigned to tables with different location personnel. This was a nice mechanism for a “newbie” to meet other members of the organization in an informal setting. I can recall some of the conversations as I write. It was also strategic to listen to luncheon speakers who discussed the impact of research programs.

The first session of the Conference was enlightening since it was my first



glimpse of our leader Dr. Knippling. I enjoyed hearing his comments and perspective. Then we heard Steve Shafer speak to budget matters and program directions, providing some insight into our financial direction and priorities.

Along with speaker perspectives concerning the direction of ARS we heard a couple of motivational talks. These presentations were both entertaining and instructive. I liked them since there were ideas I picked up that I could use to enhance my ability to work effectively with others. It was particularly indicative of the organizational camaraderie in ARS, as evidenced by fellow ARS Research Leader Bill Kemp's willingness to serve as a guinea pig for one of the speakers. He left us in stitches and did not mind being a joke for everyone's benefit. He was a nice example for the rest of us.

Even the breaks were effective since I not only could get a cup of coffee but had a chance to meet people and net-

work to discuss organizational or program matters.

The topics of breakout sessions were also revealing since they illustrated subjects that I assumed were important to our Area. Either we needed more information, tools to solve problems or elevate awareness. Then within those sessions, I could hear what other participants were thinking or their problems or methods etc. Again having the opportunity to listen and watch the interactions of the session leaders and the participants greatly accelerated my awareness of the perspectives and responsibilities of an effective Research Leader.

I feel very fortunate to have experienced the Leadership Conference within the first two months on the job. I suspect it saved me at least six months in trial and error learning. Overall it was very good use of my time to watch, listen and participate because it quickened my understanding of the agency and my role at Fort Keogh. ■

'Paying It Forward': Fort Collins' "School is Cool" Program

By Lana J. Wheeler, Fort Collins

Although Fort Collins appears to be a very affluent city in Colorado, few people are aware of the poverty that exists within its boundaries. In 2006, the number of people living in poverty was 25,603 including 5,159 children. Over 6,300 Poudre School District students qualified for free or reduced lunch in 2007-08. Astoundingly, single mothers are head of the household in 3,382 families! In these situations, how are families to educate their children and dream for a better life?

There is an awesome CSU outreach program named "School is Cool" which provides underprivileged children in Fort Collins with needed school supplies to begin the year with a good start. Every child deserves the right to start life on a level playing field.

Established in the summer of 1991, the program has collected donations from employees at Colorado State University. Because the National Center of Genetic Resources Preservation is located on campus, NCGRP has participated through annual giving along with representation on the executive board for 18 years. Employees at NCGRP

fully support this program, knowing the importance of academic achievement. They believe in the "Pay it Forward" notion by lending a helping hand to others that want to learn. This is the true meaning of "outreach". From the contributions and a grant from the Bohemian Foundation, the CSU Bookstore purchases supplies in bulk to fill the backpacks and supply bags. Backpacks, filled with paper, pens, notebooks, calculators, crayons, markers and more, are stuffed by loving hands of CSU employees along with many local volunteers. Some people with small children like to donate filled backpacks in the hope of teaching a lesson in empathy. All backpacks are delivered around the city to 33 elementary, 9 junior high and 8 high schools using a big CSU transportation bus. Each school's representative (a principal or counselor) determine the distribution of backpacks to individual students. Whereas, it does take a village to raise one child, approximately 18,700



ARS employees with the National Center of Genetic Resources Preservation have helped provide filled backpacks for needy school children in Fort Collins, CO for the past 18 years.

children from the Poudre School District have had their hearts touched by this rewarding project over time. We lift our children on the shoulder of giants! As the need continues to grow in Fort Collins, so does the generosity of all who participates in the "School is Cool" program. The NCGRP is one of the main contributors to this wonderful outreach program.

Guess what 2,500 backpacks look like? Here are a few pictures taken at the CSU Animal Livestock Pavilion, filled with backpacks! ■



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Share Your Favorite Pictures!
E-mail your photos and captions to Barbara King or Beth Redlin (addresses on this page).

Where in the NPA? - Answer Key
Fittingly titled "Agriculture: the Fabric of Our Community," this unique seed picture is found in the Tech Transfer Room of the ARS Northern Plains Agricultural Research Laboratory in Sidney, MT. The seed pictures have been a staple attraction at the local Richland County Fair and Rodeo's Ag Exhibit Hall for decades.

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