

VOICES

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/npa/voices>

Advancing diversity and its unique contributions in the NPA

Lessons Learned...or a 'Recipe for Relocating'

By Tom Shanower, Manhattan, KS

We use 'recipes' to get as-near-identical-as-possible results each time we do something, like baking a cake. If you watch the Food Network or the Travel Channel, then you know there's lots of television programs for cooking and baking. I watch these programs frequently but haven't seen this type of recipe: Relocating an ARS Research Unit. We did it and thought maybe someone some day would like to do it again. So here's the recipe we developed from scratch.

A little background

The FY2010 Agricultural Appropriations Bill authorized the relocation of the Arthropod-Borne Animal Diseases Research Unit (ABADRU) from Laramie, WY to Manhattan, KS. The staff involved (Laramie, Manhattan and the Area Office) were told that it needed to be completed within the fiscal year.

In FY09 ABADRU included nearly 23 FTEs and occupied all or parts of more than 5 buildings. These buildings, US government and university-owned, contained specialized and general laboratories, offices, an insectary, a cell culture facility, as well as work, shop and storage spaces. More than 5 full size moving vans of laboratory and office equipment were re-located. There was also a need for new facilities and renovation of existing facilities in Manhattan. Some of the new facilities needed regulatory certification, and biological material (insects, viruses) needed to be transported across state



Relocating a research unit is no easy task. In addition to moving people and equipment, whole new facilities may need to be constructed. Here, foundation work for a new insectary is underway in Manhattan, KS to accommodate the relocated Arthropod-Borne Animal Diseases Research Unit from Laramie, WY.

lines. Another need was to dispose of excess personal and real (buildings) property in Laramie. Most importantly, staff that elected to relocate needed to pack up, move and settle into a new community. And all of this needed to be accomplished in approximately 11 months.

MANY people stepped up and made this happen. Thinking back, it seems there were some important ingredients that might be useful for future moves. Or, to continue the baking metaphor, perhaps we can share the recipe we developed. Of course, like most recipes,

the end result can be bitter, spicy or sweet depending on the ingredients, how they are combined, and in what proportions.

Ingredients

There are several obvious and critical ingredients: **People, Funds, Leadership,** and **Communication.** Smaller but essential amounts of **Empathy** and **Will** (as in desire, not as in Blackburn though he was pretty important, too) were needed to make the 'cake' rise.

Continued next page

Recipe for Relocating... *Continued from page 1*

People were to this recipe what flour is to a cake: the *raison d'être*. People in Laramie, Ft. Collins, and Manhattan were critical ingredients. It's literally impossible to name the people and their contributions because the list would be too long. All categories of staff (permanent, temporary, student, scientific, technical, administrative, maintenance) and function contributed. This task altered many people's plans about what they would be doing in the coming year, giving them new performance goals that had been unanticipated a few months earlier. We also benefitted from excellent contractors and non-government vendors that completed key parts of the project. Other non-government contributors included the Manhattan community that extended a warm welcome to the ABADRU group.

There was a lot of anxiety and uncertainty, people doing things outside their comfort zone and, frankly, doing things they didn't particularly want to do. Nonetheless, people responded and rose to the challenge. Everything didn't go perfectly, however, like when one of the modular labs was placed 180° backwards and the crane had to come back another day to lift, turn and reposition it. But, the task was completed.

Funds allocated for this task were barely enough to move all of the materiel and people, renovate and construct facilities, decommission and return labs to the university, and establish new collaborative projects. As a supplement, the State of Kansas stepped up and contributed funds for renovation. Obligating and utilizing the funds was complicated since spending occurred among two locations and the Area Office with the funds being in three different CRIS's.

Leadership was as critical for the success of this recipe as the chef and sous chefs are critical for food recipes. Naturally it is important to have the support and backing of the formal leaders of the kitchen (or in our case the agency) but the key in this case was informal leadership. Lots of people had to make decisions with short time horizons and a partial understanding of the entire project. Fortunately, the formal leaders trusted others to make these decisions and then supported the outcomes of



BEFORE

It's not Christmas, but there is a lot of unwrapping to do in this Manhattan lab filled with Laramie boxes to be unpacked.



AFTER

Bill Wilson and Dane Jaspersen bask in a job well done, proudly standing in the same now-ready-to-work laboratory.

those decisions. Many people stepped up and took on additional responsibility.

Communication was the yeast or baking soda of this recipe. Imagine a bread recipe with inactive yeast and you get the idea of what a goopy mess it could have been if people working on this task were not communicating. There were lots of regular group communications (conference calls, mass e-mails, monthly spotlight reports, etc.) and lots of individual communication. Individual communication can sometimes result in people being 'outside the loop.' So, an important aspect of this ingredient was to ensure that everyone had all the facts they needed.

Empathy and Will: These last two ingredients balance the sweet and spicy

flavors in this recipe. Empathy was the concern everyone shared for the ABADRU staff and what they were going through. It was also the basis for the respect given to the many individuals that contributed in Laramie, Ft. Collins and Manhattan. Spicing things up a bit was Will, the drive and determination to complete the task. Without it, we would have missed the deadline; added in too large a quantity, our 'spicy' communication may have gotten out of hand.

So, compliments to the many chefs involved in this project...it was a tasty treat that was worth the effort, but one that we'll, hopefully, never have to repeat!! ■

Northern Plains Notes

By Northern Plains Area Director Will Blackburn

The lingering autumn will all too soon give way to shorter days and much cooler temperatures, but in the meantime, I am sure that everyone enjoyed the unseasonably warm and dry days of October. Besides the waning warm temperatures, the federal budget has also lingered, or maybe languished is a better description. At this writing, the federal budget is once again on a continuing resolution. Whether a budget is approved before Congress recesses is anyone's guess, although I am confident that ARS research contributions will continue to be recognized and well funded.

Cultural Transformation and "Y2C"

Besides the budget, the department and ARS have been rolling-out a new departmental initiative called Cultural Transformation. This management approach generally focuses on making our workplaces more positive and more inviting environments through five key areas: leadership; talent management; employee development; recruitment and retention; and customer focus and community outreach. Click here to listen to a two-minute message from Secretary Vilsack on cultural transformation: [mms://ocbmtcwmp.usda.gov/content/agency/task_force1CAP.wmv](https://ocbmtcwmp.usda.gov/content/agency/task_force1CAP.wmv). Mr. Pearlie Reed, Assistant Secretary for Administration, believes that USDA needs to be modernized, especially in regards to diversity (age, gender, race, ethnicity, etc.). In addition, agencies are expected to take steps to improve the morale and quality of work life for all employees. Attention is increasingly aimed at diversity within management across all agencies, and ARS has recently begun investigating ways to implement a "grow our own" strategy as well as actively seek people from outside the agency for management positions.

Internally to NPA, employees continue to be encouraged to work closely with their supervisors in identifying training needs through the collaborative IDP process, to include not only classes but experiential learning opportunities such as

details and job shadowing. The Area Office has a long-standing tradition of working with employees who seek details, and in the past year instituted a

“Attention is increasingly aimed at diversity within management across all agencies and ARS has recently begun investigating ways to implement a “grow our own” strategy as well as actively seek people from outside the agency for management positions.”

scholarship fund for scientists interested in pursuing leadership training opportunities (contact Dr. McGuire for further information). Details and related opportunities are not limited to SYs – programs such as the Aspiring Leader Program (GS5-7), New Leader Program (GS 7-11); and Executive Leadership (GS 11-13) are targeted to employees in non-SY occupations.

A second initiative, and really a part of cultural transformation, is “Your Two Cents” or “Y2C.” Dr. McGuire is a member of a committee looking into various issues raised by technicians – his article can be found on page 7 in this issue of VOICES.

Telecommuting

Along with cultural transformation, the US Congress recently enacted legislation concerning telecommuting for federal employees. I have been appointed as co-chair of a committee tasked with developing guidelines for telecommuting. While telecommuting may not be universally feasible or even especially appealing, certainly maxi-flex warrants serious consideration by supervisors as an option that addresses desires for flexibility while maintaining community within a worksite. As we all know, the work-

place of today is far different from that of 20, 30 or 40 years ago. Increasingly, men and women, those with and without children, seek greater flexibility in having work schedules that help them better balance their work and personal lives.



Work-life Balance

Work-life balance has been, and will continue to be, important to employees. A recent survey of 1,300 female and male scientists conducted by the American Association for Advancement of Science (AAAS) revealed that several issues affect women as they pursue scientific careers. At the top of the list is the near-constant struggle to balance career and personal lives along with having/raising children, and 61% of female scientists noted that they personally struggled with balancing career and work demands.

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Notes from the NPA...

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Unlike their male counterparts, female scientists in that survey were less likely to be married or in a long-term relationship (78% of women vs 91% of men) and were less likely to have children (53% of females vs. 77% of males). Another stark finding is that 98% of the women responding to the survey reported that they knew of at least one other female scientist who left the field because of barriers. While the survey results do not necessarily reflect life with NPA, we must remain mindful of the challenges faced by men and women of all races and ethnicities, and reach thoughtful and workable solutions to employee and management needs.

As the NPA looks to the future for building a dynamic, culturally competent workforce, NPA is both well-situated in some arenas and not so well-situated in

others. For instance, women now make up over half of the American workforce. While the NPA workforce remains tilted toward men, 61% of the NPA employees in the millennial generation are women—the first generation in the NPA to have more women than men, and certainly a trend that is repeated throughout the American workforce. Although women are just 17% of the NPA SY workforce, in 2009 and 2008, 55% and 45% of new SYs were women. Additionally, retention of new SYs in NPA is about equal for men and women. While these trends bode well for recruiting and retaining women, the trend for recruiting racial/ethnic minorities is downward more than upward. Most of minority employees in NPA hold an SY position and the majority of those are baby boomers. Although NPA has not

yet experienced anything approaching a retirement tsunami, retirements will nonetheless occur and without a change in our recruitment of under-represented individuals, we face having a workforce that not only does not represent the national workforce but we also risk not having a diversity of perspectives and insights that is proving increasingly critical to successful organizations.

As another calendar year comes to a close, and budgetary uncertainty remains, it is important to note that ARS and NPA continue to fill an important and ever increasing link in our nation's economic security through our research programs. Thanks to each of you for all you do to help keep NPA a strong and vital research organization. ■

Your New NPA Diversity Task Force Representatives

We're welcoming five new members to the Northern Plains Area Diversity Task Force, representing Miles City, Fort Collins, Brookings, Clay Center, and Mandan locations. Our thanks to them for agreeing to serve! If you have diversity questions, comments or concerns to share with them, their contact information can be found on the last page of this issue.



Mark Petersen – Miles City, MT

Mark joined the ARS in 2009 as a Research Leader for Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory at Miles City, Montana. His research focuses on range livestock nutrition with the purpose of developing nutritional technologies that can improve biological and economic efficiency of the range beef cow. He received a BA from the University of Hawaii-Hilo, MS from the University of Idaho and a PhD at the University of Nebraska. He started his career at the University of Wyoming and has been fortunate to serve on the faculties at Montana State University and New Mexico State University. He is married to his wife, Polly, and has two married daughters, Beth and Jeni.



Dave Dierig – Fort Collins, CO

Dave Dierig is the Research Leader at the National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation in Fort Collins, CO. He joined ARS in 1984 as a temporary biological science technician. His PhD was from the University of Arizona in Plant Genetics (1987), which was part of an ARS sponsored internship program. He was hired as a Research Geneticist at the ARS, U.S. Water Conservation Laboratory in Phoenix, AZ, developing new industrial oilseed crops. In 2006, that Laboratory moved to Maricopa, AZ and became the U.S. Arid Lands Agricultural Research Center where he stayed until coming to NCGRP in 2009. He and his partner live in Ft. Collins and enjoy any outdoor activity.

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New DTF Members...

Continued from page 4



Kurt Rosentrater – Brookings, SD

Kurt Rosentrater, a Bioprocess Engineer, is a Lead Scientist with the United States Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service, at the North Central Agricultural Research Laboratory in Brookings, SD. His research program focuses on issues associated with distillers grains, which are coproducts from fuel ethanol manufacturing. He is actively developing value-added uses for these materials, including feed, food, and industrial applications. His expertise is in value-added product development, alternative recycling and reprocessing strategies for food and organic waste streams, modeling and simulation of processing systems, plant layout, and process design. Prior to his work at the USDA, he was an assistant professor at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, IL, in the Department of Engineering and Industrial Technology, where he taught in the areas of research methods, manufacturing systems, engineering mechanics, and design. Before this, he worked for a design-build firm and was responsible for process and equipment design, as well as plant and site layout for agri-industrial manufacturing facilities. He attended Iowa State University where he received his BS, MS, and PhD in Agricultural and Biosystems Engineering. He is a member of the American Society of Agricultural and Biological Engineers, the American Association of Cereal Chemists, the Institute of Food Technologists, the American Society for Engineering Education, the American Physical Society, and Sigma Xi Honorary Research Society.



Carol Chitko-McKown – Clay Center, NB

Carol Chitko-McKown is a native of New Jersey. She received her B.S. in Animal Science from Rutgers University in 1983 and her M.S. in Animal Breeding and Genetics from Oregon State University in 1986. She obtained her Ph.D. in Immunophysiology from Kansas State University in 1991. Dr. Chitko-McKown received a Cancer Research Institute Fellowship to study interactions between HIV and macrophages at the Seattle Biomedical Research Institute from 1992 – 1993, followed by a position as post-doctoral associate at Texas A & M University. In 1996, she became an Assistant Research Scientist in the Department of Veterinary Pathobiology. She joined ARS in 1998 as a Research Microbiologist in the Animal Health Research Unit at MARC. Her research focuses on the role of the innate immune response in food animals – with particular emphasis on respiratory disease. Other efforts in her laboratory are aimed at the development of cell lines for use in food animal research. Carol is married with one teenage daughter and numerous pets, large and small. Her hobbies include horseback riding, knitting, reading and cycling.



Kristine Nichols – Mandan, ND

Kris Nichols has been a Soil Microbiologist with the USDA, Agricultural Research Service (ARS) Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory (NGPRL) in Mandan, ND for nearly seven years. She was raised on a primarily corn-soybean conventional farm in southwestern Minnesota. Kris received Bachelor of Science degrees in Plant Biology and in Genetics and Cell Biology from the University of Minnesota in 1995, a Masters degree in Environmental Microbiology from West Virginia University in 1999, and a Ph.D. in Soil Science from the University of Maryland in 2003. Since 1993, she has studied arbuscular mycorrhizal (AM) fungi – a plant-root symbiont. Her most recent work involves the investigation of glomalin – a substance produced by AM fungi. Glomalin contributes to nutrient cycling by protecting AM hyphae transporting nutrients from the soil to the plant and to soil structure and plant health by helping to form and stabilize soil aggregates. Kris has been examining the impacts of management such as crop rotation, tillage practices, organic production, cover crops, and livestock grazing on soil aggregation, water relationships, and glomalin at NGPRL. ■

Tools for Diversity

• Special Feature •

Where can I find resources to help promote diversity at my location? How do they decide who's recognized in monthly observances? I have ideas to improve ARS that I'd like to share. How can I do that? Who IS the NPA? These questions and more are answered in our special "Tools" section for sharing information and promoting diversity in the NPA.

The Tools:

*VOICES
NPA Diversity Bulletin Board
Your Two Cents*

This Page

Your Two Cents:

NPA Associate Director on a team responding to online suggestions for improving ARS.

Page 7

NPA Bulletin Board:

Find information, ideas and resources for Special Observances, as well as tips on Recruitment; and an in-depth look at NPA Demographics and more.

Pages 8-10

Collaboration Tools for Promoting Diversity in the NPA

By Beth Redlin, Sidney, MT

While there are many resources on the Internet and elsewhere examining and promoting diversity in the workplace, there are three key collaborative tools available to everyone in the NPA that specifically target issues of importance to ARS employees.

The first is "VOICES," our biannual publication put together by the NPA Diversity Task Force with submissions from employees all across the area. Consider sharing your insights and experiences with diversity by submitting an article, photo, recipe, or film or book review to "VOICES," via email: NPA-DTF@ars.usda.gov.

The second tool is a new website, the "NPA Diversity Bulletin Board," that provides diversity information, discussion threads, resources, contacts and kudos for all NPA employees. The Bulletin Board is a SharePoint site which can be a little difficult for "newbies." DTF members are developing a PowerPoint providing tips on how to make the process easier, but in the meantime consider adding/bookmarking the site to your favorites list for easy access. And remember, this site is a secure site, much like your online banking, so you will need to enter your user name and password (typically the same as your email login) to gain entry. *Note:* You also may be repeatedly asked to enter your password when moving through the site if you haven't already added the Bulletin Board to your "Trusted Sites" in your web browser. Your Location IT Specialist can help you do that. Our last tip for easier navigation is to make liberal use of the "Back" button in your browser.

And finally, NPA employees have access to another agency-wide tool, the "Your Two Cents" website. All employees are encouraged to offer tips and suggestions for improving ARS, including increasing diversity, at that site and can do so anonymously. NPA Associate Area Director Mickey McGuire is co-leader of a team handling suggestions and concerns related to technician and support scientist roles in ARS. His latest report on that ongoing effort is included in this issue of "VOICES."

Links for the collaborative tools mentioned in the above article:

- VOICES:** <http://www.ars.usda.gov/npa/voices>
- Bulletin Board:** <https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/NPA/DiversityBulletinBoard/>
- Your Two Cents:** <http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents/>



“Your Two Cents”

By Michael R. McGuire
NPA Associate Director

For those of you who are either new to the Agency or living off line, the “Your Two Cents (Y2C)” Website was established to give all ARS personnel an opportunity to make comments and helpful suggestions to improve ARS. Many of these suggestions have provided valuable insight and the comments were also useful. A number of teams were formed to address the comments.

One segment of the ARS population, the technicians and support scientists, were particularly vocal about a series of issues. In response to these comments, I was asked to co-lead a team to make recommendations to the Administrator concerning “Technician Cadre Development.” The team was comprised of technicians, support scientists, RLs, a Center Director and a program analyst from the Office of National Programs. The team later refined the charge to include support scientists. After careful review of the comments from this segment of the ARS population, a series of issues became evident. These issues were:

1. *Employee Recognition*
2. *Employee Development*
3. *Authorship by Technicians and Support Scientists*

The team prepared a list of recommendations, reported them to the Administrator’s Council, then shared them with ARS in the Your 2 Cents Webcast held in September.

1. Employee Recognition Recommendations

- Start an on-line community administered by technician/support scientist
- Collect input on suggestions for recognition from scientific support staff (on-line?)
- Encourage supervisors to ask their direct reports for feedback on

Have ideas on how to improve ARS? You can share your “two cents” at the Y2C website created to solicit your ideas, input, and innovations.



<http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents/>

2. **Employee Development Recommendations**
 - Allow/encourage employees time to access and use AgLearn; perhaps allow a certain number of hours per month for self development
 - Train new SYs on technician career development
 - Develop mentoring programs for technicians/support scientists
 - Where it fits the current assignment, have technicians train with other scientists to learn new skills
 - Improve the IDP process; education on purpose and how to fill out the form meaningfully
 - Publicize career development success stories

3. Authorship Recommendations

- Recognize individuals as authors based on their contribution, regardless of position
- Educate ARS personnel on P&P 152.2
- Provide training at New SY Orientation workshops
- Provide training for current SYs on the new P&P 152.2
- Develop an AG Learn module for all scientists and technicians on P&P 152.2
- Make this a discussion topic at Leadership conferences
- Develop a justification form for each ARS author

Follow Up

In response to recommendations made by this team and other teams, the Agency has formed a number of implementation teams to evaluate and enact change. I have been asked to lead a team called the Scientific Support Staff Development Implementation Workgroup and play a team member role on a separate authorship group. We expect to complete and present our findings to the Administrator’s Council December meeting. ■

Valuing One Another and Special Emphasis Months

By Barbara King,
NPA ODEO Program Mgr.

Occasionally I receive questions about why we have special emphasis months, and especially why other groups, namely whites of different national origins do not have specific observances. A short answer is that special emphasis observances serve as opportunities to educate employees about other cultures and celebrate the similarities and differences each of us bring to our interactions with one another at work and in our social spheres. These special emphasis observances can be especially informative at locations where employees share similar racial and ethnic heritages.

A longer answer is that while our history is composed of stories of men and women of all races, ethnicities, cultures, and religions, our historical narratives – particularly history books – have largely focused on white men and to a lesser extent on white women of European heritage. That is not to say that white men and women have not had compelling and critically important contributions. Of course they have. Yet, men and women from other races and cultures who have made important contributions have largely been omitted from our history books. Special emphasis months are one way of acknowledging contributions and stories of people historically left out of history books.

Additionally, while many workplaces reflect our nation's diversity, our personal/social spheres, such as friendships, neighborhoods, schools, and places of worship, often reflect a sort of self-segregation based on race, ethnicity, class, and religion. Moving from this self-segregation to full integration is a slow-moving process and special emphasis observances are one way of bridging racial and gender divides. People of all backgrounds can understand, even if they have not experienced first-hand, the sting of inequality if not the slap of discrimination. Special emphasis observances also serve as reminders of past discrimination and social injustices that resulted in barriers to full integration and stifled opportunities to fully participate in the fabric of American life. Special emphasis months can help in promoting this process of integration.

At right is a list of USDA recognized monthly observances. Several resources are available on the NPA Diversity Bulletin Board website for acknowledging these occasions. That site is found at:

<https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/NPA/DiversityBulletinBoard/>

However, nothing about the designated months should prevent employees from celebrating other ethnicities or cultures. ■

USDA National Observances

January

Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

February

Black History Month

March

National Women's History Month

April

Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work Day (ARS)

May

Asian American / Pacific Islander Heritage Month

June

National Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

September 15 - October 15

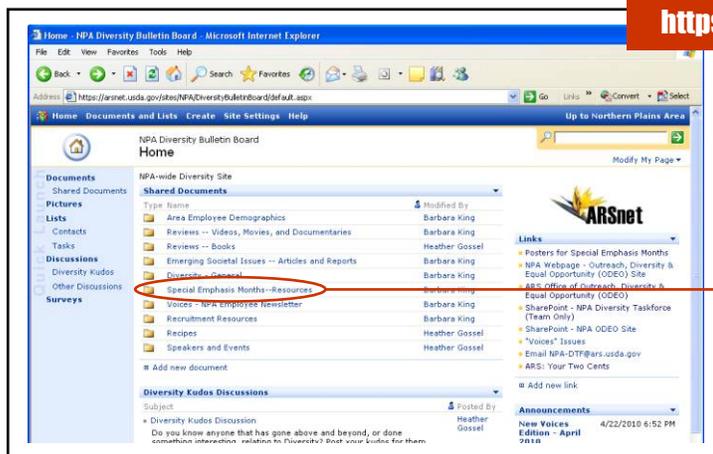
National Hispanic Heritage Month

October

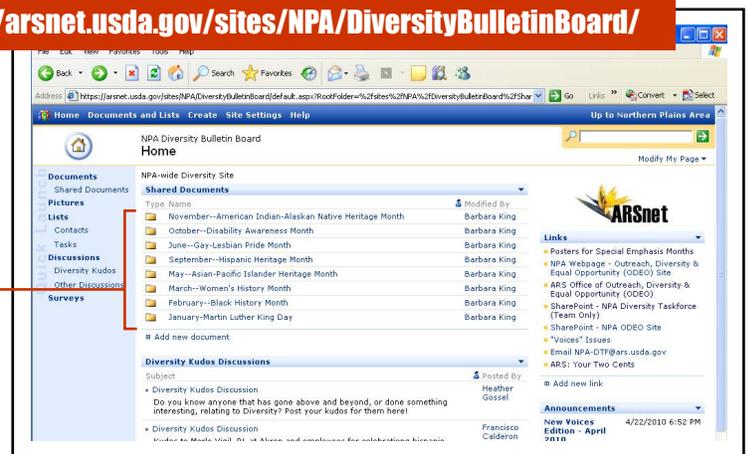
National Disability Awareness Month

November

National American Indian Heritage Month



<https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/NPA/DiversityBulletinBoard/>



To find resources to aid you in marking USDA's special observance months, go to the NPA Diversity Bulletin Board SharePoint website and select "Special Emphasis Months - Resources" under the Shared Documents section. Then select the month you are interested in. Remember, you will be asked to enter your e-mail user name - typically `arsnet\firstname.lastname` - and password when entering the site.

The NPA: Who We Are, What We Do, and When We Do It

By Barbara King, NPA ODEO Program Manager

Editor's Note: This article and all charts referenced are available through the NPA Diversity Bulletin Board in the folder "Area Employee Demographics." A link to the Diversity Bulletin Board is provided at the end of this article.

The American workforce is undergoing tremendous changes, from who is working to where and when work is being performed. One of the biggest changes and one that has received considerable media attention is that in the U.S., women now make up over half of all workers. This change in the make-up of the workforce has pressured employers to assess everything from work schedules to family-friendly policies to career patterns. At the same time, the nation's workforce is becoming more diverse and better educated.

Many businesses learned long ago that having a workforce that matches their customers makes good business sense. IBM, for example, sees diversity as a competitive advantage and states that "...workforce diversity is the bridge between the workplace and the marketplace, and as such, victory with the customer begins with winning in the workplace" (from the IBM web site). The ARS customer base is the very diverse group of American taxpayers. One aspect of "winning" for ARS means having a diverse workforce that reflects our customer base, and having a culture where the perspectives of employees of all backgrounds – race, ethnicity, national origin, gender, religion, disability, sexual orientation, class, age, etc. – are actively sought and listened to, which in turn will help maintain our relevancy to an increasingly diverse customer base.

Continuing challenges for NPA lie with recruiting and retaining a diverse workforce, and adapting to the changing labor force composition and expectations. NPA has made definite strides in some areas, and not so much in other areas. Following is a very brief overview of employee demographics for the per-

manent workforces in NPA and to a lesser extent, ARS. In looking at the workforce demographics, the following

“ One of the biggest (workforce) changes ... is that in the U.S., women now make up over half of all workers. This change in the make-up of the workforce has pressured employers to assess everything from work schedules to family-friendly policies to career patterns. At the same time, the nation's workforce is becoming more diverse and better educated. ”

characteristics stand out: number of permanent employees; employees with disabilities; race, gender, and age; and major occupations. This review of workforce demographics also raised a number of questions for some crystal ball gazing, which are discussed at the end of this article.

Number of permanent employees:

Since 2007, the numbers of permanent employees in NPA and ARS have declined each year, from about 785 to 741 in the NPA. [Charts 1 and 1a]

Employees with disabilities: About 9% of NPA employees report one or more disabilities, which is about 1% more than ARS as a whole. For both ARS and NPA, employees with targeted disabilities (i.e., severe disabilities) are almost 1%, which is relatively unchanged from previous years. [Chart 1b]

Race, gender, and age: Just as with the US labor force as a whole (73% white, 2000 Census—latest available data), whites are the dominant race in NPA and ARS, with NPA 92% white and ARS 78% white. The NPA racial/ethnic demographic has not changed much

since at least 2004. In NPA, Asians are the largest minority group, followed by Hispanics, American Indians, and African Americans. [Charts 2-2b]

The majority of employees in both NPA and ARS are male. In the NPA the only racial/ethnic group with more women than men is American Indians, while across ARS as a whole there are more women than men in three racial groups – African Americans, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islanders, and American Indians. [Chart 3]

The Baby Boomer generation is the largest generation in the NPA, followed by Generation X, then Millennials, and finally, Traditionalists. Two trends are seemingly developing in the NPA: an increase in the participation rate of women accompanied by a decrease in the participation rate of people from under-represented groups. For example, the traditionalist generation has the highest participation rate of people from under-represented groups and the lowest participation rate of women, while the millennial generation has the lowest participation rate of employees from under-represented groups but is the first generation to have more women than men.

Across ARS, the participation of minorities overall has remained fairly steady among the four generations, although the participation of African Americans in the millennial generation is nearly double that of the traditionalist generation. [Charts 4-6b]

Recent reports on the federal workforce released in recent years point towards a 'tsunami of retirements' for the next several years. In the NPA, though, employees do not necessarily retire when they first become eligible. There are 100 NPA employees who became eligible to retire between 1991 and 2009 who continue working today. Between 2010 and 2014 another 139 employees will be eligible to retire. Time will tell when baby boomers choose to retire. [Chart 7]

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NPA Demographics...

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Major Occupations: Occupations in ARS and NPA are divided into four major groups: Officials and Managers; Professionals; Technicians, and Administrative Support. In the NPA, professionals is the largest group, followed by technicians, then officials and managers, and then by administrative support. Interestingly, there are differences in the types of positions men and women hold. For instance, about three-quarters of all professionals are men, and just over half of all men in the NPA are professionals. About a quarter of all women are professionals. A little more than half of all technicians are women, and almost half of all women in the NPA are technicians. About a quarter of all men are technicians. [Charts 8-9a]

The largest sub-group of professionals is "category one" (SY) scientists, and roughly 83% are men. Over half of all minorities hold an SY position, and about 30% of all whites hold an SY position. Since 2008, 43% of all new SY recruitments have been filled by women. [Charts 10-11a]

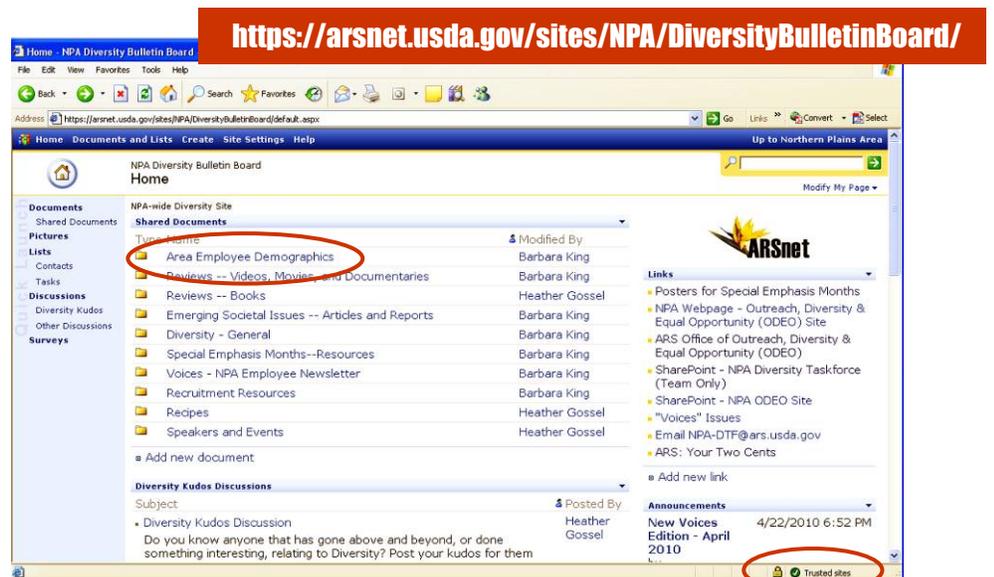
Looking to the Future: The following questions are my crystal ball gazing – no doubt readers will have some of their own:

1. If the trend (in permanent employees) continues downward, will an increasingly smaller workforce affect what we do? If it does have an impact, what might that impact be? Additionally, even though the population of the northern plains states is predominantly white, the expectation remains that our workforce should be more racially/ethnically diverse. What steps can be taken to more proactively reach out to the diversity within local communities and the greater regional communities, if not nationally?
2. President Obama has recently signed an Executive Order instructing federal agencies to hire more employees with disabilities. What can and should the NPA do to increase the representation of peo-

3. ple with disabilities?
3. With the dramatic turn-around in the representation of women in the millennial generation within NPA, will men still be interested in what NPA/ARS offers? Are ARS/NPA careers attractive to the younger generations, regardless of gender, race and ethnicity? Will new employees want to either stay in one location or even with NPA/ARS for an entire career, and if not, how will that sort of mobility and turn-over impact NPA/ARS?
4. How well do the generations mix in the workplace? Will – and do – younger managers treat all employees equally? Will – and do – younger supervisors hire older workers? How do older employees respond to younger colleagues – and especially to younger supervisors/managers?
5. While we have not yet experienced any sort of retirement tsunami, what will happen if our culture changes to one where employees retire once they are eligible? Will those vacancies be filled, and if so,

6. how will they be filled and by whom?
6. The technician category is home to almost half of all women in the NPA. As more and more women earn advanced degrees, will they choose technician careers? Will men?
7. Lastly, NPA's minority participation has gotten smaller with each succeeding generation. As traditionalists retire, NPA stands to lose much of our diversity. How can that diversity be rebuilt?

For More Information: The challenges are many, and the answers are not clear. For detailed charts on the above data, go to the NPA Diversity Bulletin Board and the file "Area Employee Demographics" (circled in the screenshot below) <https://arsnet.usda.gov/sites/NPA/DiversityBulletinBoard/Shared%20Documents/Forms/AllItems.aspx>. The bulletin board also includes a wide range of resources dealing with diversity – one of my favorite folders is "Emerging Societal Issues – Articles and Reports." ■



To view the charts from this article go to the NPA Diversity Bulletin Board and select "Area Employee Demographics" in the Shared Documents section. The Bulletin Board is a SharePoint website so you will be asked for your e-mail user name - usually `arsnet\firstname.lastname` - and password when entering the site. You may also have to repeat that process when viewing other items on the site if you have not yet added it to your Trusted Sites list in your web browser.

Celebrating Diversity and Science

By Bill Kemp, Fargo, ND

The summer of 2010 marked the sixth year of the NPA American Indian Internship Program. For those of you not familiar with the program, it evolved from the creative insights and leadership, beginning in 2004, of Jerry Combs (Center Director) and Susan Sorum (Administrative Officer) at Human Nutrition Research Center, Grand Forks, ND. The first internships arrived at Grand Forks during the summer of 2005 and the program has since expanded to include NPA programs at Sidney, MT, Brookings, SD, as well as the remaining two ND locations, Mandan and Fargo. This NPA-wide collaboration is enabled by Specific Cooperative Agreements (SCAs) between the ARS Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (ODEO, Beltsville, MD), the Northern Plains Area, and United Tribes Technical College (UTTC, Bismarck, ND) and the University of Arizona (UA, Tucson, AZ) which provide for up to 10 eight-week internships each summer (GS-3 level, plus housing and a travel stipend).

Of course, the primary intent of the NPA internships is to expose American Indian college students to USDA and

ARS research environments and career tracks, and all interns discuss their research projects at the end of the internship through either a PowerPoint or poster presentation. At the same time, however, NPA employees have frequently acknowledged their enjoyment in working directly with American Indian interns and with the opportunities for learning about the wide range of Native American cultures. In fact, annual surveys of participants (interns, mentors, technicians, administrative staff) reveal a consistently high degree of interest in working with Native American students from NPA scientists, technicians, and administrators. Likewise, interns report a high degree of satisfaction with opportunities to conduct hands-on research with ARS mentor scientists and technicians.

Another measure of the success of this fledgling program is participation levels and results thus far continue to be encouraging. Between 2005 and 2010, 43 internships, all undergraduate students, have been completed. Nine students have completed two or more consecutive internships, including one intern, Alexa Azure, who "graduated" from the program after three internships

and who worked with Scientist Rich Roehrdanz and Technician Sheila Sears at the Red River Valley Agricultural Research Center (Fargo) during 2010. Although Alexa, who graduated from the UTTC, is now a chemical engineering major at the University of ND (Grand Forks), both Rich and Sheila think that she'd be a "pretty darn good" molecular biologist as well.

There is also a growing number of referrals (aka recruitments) that come from interns who return to their home institution and share their positive experiences with peers and mentors; and their successes are not infrequently carried in other media, for example http://www.cals.arizona.edu/ans/livestockreview/Summer_10/nez.html

and also the *United Tribes News* article reprinted below, both of which provide for greater visibility not only for the students themselves, but also for USDA and ARS diversity-enhancing efforts.

In sum, the NPA Native American Internship Program continues to demonstrate the importance of investing in youth and diversity through cross cultural exchanges made possible by this unique collaboration. ■

Vocational Interest Emerges Over Summer

By Annette E. Broyles, UTTC

Editor's Note: This article is reprinted by permission from the "United Tribes News" October 2010 edition. The author is an Instructor and Chair of the Nutrition and Foodservice Department of United Tribes Technical College in Bismarck, ND.

Summer is a time when learning continues for some lucky and dedicated United Tribes students. For one student in the Nutrition and Foodservice vocation, an experience over summer crystallized his enthusiasm for research and learning about diabetes.

Jamie Cameron (Standing Rock) participated in an eight week summer intern-

ship at the Agricultural Research Service (ARS) in Grand Forks, ND. While there, his strong interest in a disease he suffers from became evident to Human Nutrition Research Center Director Dr. Gerald Combs and the center staff.

According to Combs, Jamie initially selected a basic research project for his internship. But his mentor, Dr. Leah Whigham, soon saw his passion for diabetes awareness and prevention.

The two developed a second project focusing on diabetes: what it is, the warning signs, how to prevent it, and how to get tested.

Continued next page →



Vocational Interest... *Continued from page 11*

It meant that, in addition to his original research project, Jamie spent a lot of time investigating public health information and delivery mechanisms related to diabetes, wrote Combs in praise of Jamie's work to United Tribes.

Jamie prepared a PowerPoint, which he presented to the center staff. It was a clear discussion of the signs and symptoms of diabetes and the strategies for preventing it and for mediating its consequences, wrote Combs. He also prepared a poster that he will be able to use at UTTC and Standing Rock to help inform other people about diabetes.

According to the ARS staff, there are two potential job opportunities that could figure in Jamie's future: one with NDSU Extension Service and another with the Standing Rock Community Health Representatives.

"The magical thing about teaching... is that the teacher benefits as much as the student. That was surely the case this summer," wrote Combs. "It was a plea-

sure for us to have a role in Jamie's education. We all hope very much that he will complete his program at UTTC, as he as a gift to share with others – his passion, now perhaps better informed than before, about diabetes prevention."

Jamie is scheduled to participate in October with his poster presentation at the First Americans Land-grant College Organization and Network (FALCONS) conference in Minneapolis.

Other Summer Experiences

During the first summer school session (May to July) two students completed hands on practicum hours. Nutrition and Wellness major Ron His Horse Is Thunder Jr. completed a 150 hour foodservice practicum in the deli at Cashwise Foods in Bismarck.

Kathleen Brown, Foodservice/Culinary Arts major, completed a 150 hour practicum in the foodservice kitchen of the Waterford, a Bismarck seniors living community. And in July, Annette Broyles, Nutrition and Foodservice



Jamie Cameron with Dr. Jerry Combs during Jamie's summer internship in Grand Forks. Photo courtesy Leah Whigham.

instructor and department chair, attended a week long culinary training session that focused on pastries and baking at the Johnson and Wales University in Denver.

Learning is lifelong and participating in hands-on training over the summer is invaluable to all students and instructors at United Tribes. ■

Where in the NPA?

.....
...can you find this patriotic pair? Nicknamed "George" and "Martha" these bald eagles appear to return to this location every year!

(Answer on page 15.)

.....
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



Fargo Cultivates Scientists for the Future

By Larry Charlet, Fargo, ND

As members of the Agricultural Research Service, we all recognize that we will require a force of creative and innovative scientists for the future. What better way to grow this cadre of problem solvers than from our own families! At the RRVARC this past spring we invited our Center employees to bring their children to work on April 22nd as part of the national event, "Take Your Child to Work Day."

A number of individuals from the different units volunteered to put on demonstrations or conduct tours for the ten children that participated. They had the opportunity to see live and dead insects, learned about DNA and even loaded and ran gels, visited the animals in the barn and plants in the greenhouse and those in tissue culture, were introduced to the wonders of electron microscopy, viewed a variety of lab equipment in action, saw how a banana frozen in liquid nitrogen could be used as a hammer, and even the wonders of chemistry in making "elephant toothpaste."

It was a challenge with ages from 4 to 12, but you could certainly see in their eyes and the excitement in their faces that the event made an impression on them. Perhaps we will even have a couple of budding scientists from this small group? It is certainly worth the effort to try and present the fascinating world of science to our youth to help them understand why we have chosen the field of agricultural research as a career. ■



USDA- grade A kids! Attendees line up for the customary class photo before receiving a tour of the Fargo laboratories.



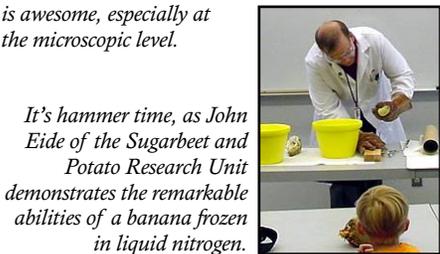
Richard Sonju of the Cereal Crops Research Unit explains work done in the research greenhouses.



Dee Ellig (kneeling) of the Animal Metabolism and Chemicals Research Unit shows off cattle to a group of suddenly timid children.



Scott Payne of the NDSU Electron Microscopy Lab demonstrates that science is awesome, especially at the microscopic level.



It's hammer time, as John Eide of the Sugarbeet and Potato Research Unit demonstrates the remarkable abilities of a banana frozen in liquid nitrogen.

A Taste of the NPA!

Submitted by Richard Sonju, Fargo, ND

Pretty Good Chai Tea

Ingredients for a 1 cup serving:

½ cup milk

½ cup of water

1 tsp sugar

1 tsp black tea

1 pod green cardamom
(opened)

Note: If your local grocer doesn't carry black tea and cardamom pods you can usually find them at an Asian food market.

This is a very simple recipe that an Indian friend taught my wife and I how to prepare. We didn't know what Chai tea was until we had hers; now we share it with friends and family regularly. Put all the ingredients into a small pan on the stovetop and bring it to a boil for about half a minute stirring as needed (be sure to open the cardamom pod and empty the seeds into the pan or the cardamom flavor won't be strong): it's ready when the sugar fully melts, or when it gets the desired color. The longer the tea is boiled the stronger the flavor, and the darker the color. Strain out the solids (tea grains and cardamom seeds) and serve.

Here's a little hint for first time Chai drinkers: Most of the time we serve it to first timers we tend to add a bit more sugar – it seems to meld the flavors better – and they usually love it. I tested it on some ARS coworkers with enthusiastic results! One coworker enjoyed the flavor so much she forgot it's a caffeinated beverage and got too much energy – so drink in moderation! Chai provides a wakeful energy and maintains a refreshing element with a bit of substance probably due to the milk. The fun with this recipe is that though this Chai stands alone just fine, ultimately it is the base of any good Chai. You may add cinnamon, vanilla or any other spice you like and have fun experimenting with other combinations. Enjoy! ■

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

The Help by Kathryn Stockett

Review by Ellen Klinger, Logan, UT

The Help is a novel set in Mississippi during the 1960s, a time and a place where people were struggling with the desire to accept cultural and racial differences. "Skeeter" is a young white woman in her twenties who returns from college, unmarried, to try and fit back into her pre-college life. Aibileen is a matronly black maid, working for a white family. Minny is a sassy black maid who is fired from her job and begins working for a woman who is considered by the local socialites to be "white trash." Skeeter helps the maids in town find a voice by which to express themselves through writing an anonymous book called "Help" that contains

true stories told by black maids. The creation of this book strengthens the black community, and eventually, the white community. There are characters and moments of intolerance that make you want to cry for the characters involved, but there are also brave moments of people standing up for what they believe, despite popular feeling, that make you want to stand up and cheer. This book is written from the viewpoints of all three women, and, although the differences between the black and white women are expected, the differences and intolerances portrayed between the women of the same race are, perhaps, what makes this book quite engaging. ■

Major Pettigrew's Last Stand by Helen Simonson

Review by Ellen Klomps, Logan, UT

In *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand*, by Helen Simonson, retired British Major Ernest Pettigrew contends with multiple expectations. As a widower of some wealth and education, he is targeted by the village to make a match suitable to his age and station. He is expected to side with the local landowner to push through a land deal. His son expects him to be delighted at the prospect of the son moving nearby to spend time

with the 'old man.' But the major unexpectedly finds himself drawn to Jasmina Ali, a Pakistani widow who keeps a shop in the village. Reaching across boundaries of class, race, and religion, Pettigrew and Ali develop a deep friendship, which leaves Jasmina contending with her own family and cultural expectations. This is a charming and gentle comedy of manners that touches on several areas of diversity: age, race, religion and class. ■

Films

A Day Without a Mexican directed by Sergio Arau

Review by Ellen Klomps, Logan, UT

In the 2004 film, *A Day Without A Mexican*, all of California awakens one morning to find a wall of fog surrounding the state and all people of Latin American descent have vanished without explanation. As the state scrambles to find field workers, teachers, journalists, musicians, and healthcare workers, everyone examines their beliefs about the contributions brought by Latinos to the culture and economy of the state. Meanwhile, one individual who was left behind explores what it is to be Mexican. ■



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Where in the NPA? - Answer Key

This handsome duo can be found hanging out at the U.S. Meat Animal Research Center in Clay Center, Nebraska.

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

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