



VOICES

Advancing diversity and its unique contributions in the NPA

Task Force Promoting Diversity in NPA

By Beth Redlin

Welcome to our first edition of “Voices,” a biannual publication designed to inform and promote diversity in the Northern Plains Area. Just as an orchestra needs many different instruments and rhythms to recreate the full musical spectrum, so, too, do we in the scientific “arts” benefit from looking at the world from many different perspectives to solve today’s increasingly complex agricultural problems.

To acknowledge the importance of a diverse workplace in the Northern Plains Area and to nurture its continued development, the NPA Diversity Task Force was established in 2005. The Task Force’s primary charge is to promote diversity within the NPA. This newsletter is just one of several projects underway as a result. The second, to come shortly, is a survey for all area employees to identify diversity-related needs and accomplishments in the NPA (see related story, page 2). Information from that survey will be used to help guide future recruiting, education and outreach activities in the Area as we work to identify new talent needed to replace the more than three quarters of the NPA workforce eligible to retire in the next 10 years.

This inaugural issue of “Voices” has “mentoring” as its theme and includes

articles on several mentoring programs available in the NPA along with tips on how to make the most of those programs. In addition, there are articles describing just what diversity “is”, i.e. all those individual dimensions (race, age, class, sex, family/work background, education, religion, disabilities and more) that we share with so many others, but which, when uniquely combined in each individual, make us all truly “one of a kind.” Another article gives a very brief overview of the dynamic changes occurring in the American workforce and workplace. And try your hand at our “four generations” quiz (page 9). It’s an eye opener!

As our name implies, “Voices” is a vehicle for everyone to be heard, so please feel free to contact anyone on the Task Force with your questions, concerns, or any information you have to share regarding diversity-related events, activities or initiatives. The contact information for all of our Diversity Task Force members is listed on page 10.

We are excited about this inaugural edition of “Voices” and we hope that the articles will jumpstart discussions throughout the Area on how diversity positively impacts our work and our interactions with one another. We will be happy to consider your story ideas and other suggestions in future issues. ■

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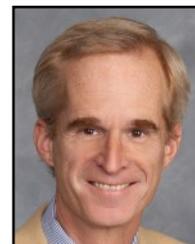
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Continued next page

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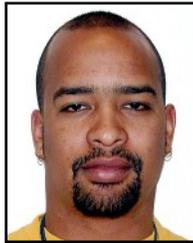
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Editor's Note:

Contact information for all NPA Task Force members is found on page 10.

A message from NPA Area Director Will Blackburn is found on page 11.

Diversity - What Is It?

By Barbara King

In the Northern Plains Area we often say "we're not diverse." Although the word "diversity" is the current buzz word, what exactly constitutes diversity? While race, gender and national origin are the primary foundations of diversity, there are many other dimensions of diversity.

For starters, diversity is not just another word for EEO, Affirmative Action, or other civil rights legislation. Those laws ensure that employees are not subjected to discrimination and harassment at work, and that everyone regardless of their race, gender, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, age, etc. is given a fair chance at hiring and promotion decisions.

Diversity builds on these laws by providing an inclusive framework on which all of us are seen as individuals who are valued for our perspectives. Individual perspectives are important because they reflect our experiences and backgrounds. Backgrounds are often considered only in terms of race, color, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, and disabilities. Yet other dimensions such as class, culture, family, occu-

pation, sexual orientation, age, and even education comprise our backgrounds.

These dimensions of our backgrounds frame our experiences with the world - how we see the world and how the world sees or treats us. For instance, men and women experience the world differently from one another, as do white people and people of color, as does a very wealthy person and a person who lives on minimum wage, just as does someone from a culture that is steeped in centuries-old traditions living in a culture that values change.

Those experiences - being "one of the guys" or being a woman in a man's world; freely browsing through stores, driving, hailing a cab, or buying or renting a home in a neighborhood of your choosing, versus enduring racial profiling by police, store personnel, cab drivers, and real estate agents; enjoying the privileges that wealth bestows versus barely getting by; retaining traditions while living in a society that values change - play a large part in shaping our perspectives.

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Let Your Voice Be Heard!

By Theresa L. Pitts-Singer

Be on the lookout in the near future! The Diversity Taskforce has created a voluntary survey concerning diversity in the workplace. The information from the survey will be used to understand the perception of diversity by Northern Plains Area personnel, to gather data on what types of recruitment processes are used, as well as help us understand how best to retain personnel of all backgrounds in the NPA.

It is important that everyone be involved in this survey as your opinions, knowledge, and suggestions are very

valuable. The survey should only take about 10 minutes of your time, and will be posted on the NPA SharePoint site. To access SharePoint, you will need your ARSNet Active Directory username and password. If you don't have your username and password yet, your location IT staff or the NPA Helpdesk can assist you.

Your location Diversity Task Force member is also available to help you with the survey. Please be on the lookout for forthcoming messages about the survey and be sure to **PARTICIPATE!** ■



Four Generations at Work: Which Are YOU?

By Barbara King

Which generation are you? A Traditionalist? A Baby Boomer? A Gen Xer? A Millennial? We hear much about these four generations and how generational differences are bewildering if not nearly unfathomable. To add to the puzzle, the workplace has undergone tremendous change in the last 10 to 15 years. Taken together, this clash of generations and rapid redefinition of the workplace has resulted in a work world quite unlike that known a mere 40 years ago.

For instance, the workplace of the Traditionalists (born 1929-1945) was largely segregated by race and gender, loyalty was prized by organizations and workers, often “dad” was the only breadwinner so work took precedence, and many employees worked for just one company before retiring with guaranteed pensions and benefits. Organizations were hierarchical, rules were clear, distinctions between blue and white collar job were clear, and job security was almost a given. About 7% of the NPA workforce falls into this generation.

The workplace of the Baby Boomers (born 1946 to 1964) became more

diverse as women and people of color entered the workforce, and two-income families became more common. As



*Challenge your
 “Generational IQ”
 with our Match Game on page 9!*

downsizing became more prevalent, the likelihood of working for just one employer was no longer the norm. Many Boomers accepted corporate demands to make geographic moves, with the consequent loss of close proximity to extended families. Also, the challenge of balancing work and personal life became more urgent, especially with both parents working out-

side the home. This generation constitutes the largest share of the workforce nationwide, and about 64% of the NPA workforce are Baby Boomers.

Generation X (born 1965 to 1979) is characterized as independent, hard-working, and very family-oriented. Unlike the two previous generations, Gen Xers will likely work for a number of different employers in a variety of careers. Dual-career marriages are common, and the desire for balancing personal time and job demands is becoming increasingly important for this generation. Additionally, job security is determined by one’s ability to learn new skills and adapt to changing demands for continuing education. This generation accounts for about 25% of the NPA workforce.

The Millennials (born after 1980), the first of whom are just now entering the workforce, are probably the first generation with a good deal of first-hand experience and comfort with computer technology, diversity, and teamwork. This generation is also very

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Diversity - What Is It?

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Our backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that we bring to the workplace, to our social interactions, and to our conversations with one another, are the heart of diversity. Organizations long ago figured out that in order to remain competitive they needed to hear a diversity of perspectives. Simply put, diversity needs to be seen and heard.

At the same time that organizations recognize the immense contributions that a diverse workforce makes to their bottom lines, the American population is becoming increasingly diverse racially and ethnically. Three trends have been emerging for some time: women and

people of color are taking on a larger and larger share of new entrants to the workforce; technology is driving many of the changes in what, where, and how, work is performed; and for the first time in the American workplace there are four generations working side by side.

Unlike the workforce of 20, 30 and 40 years ago, today’s workforce is teeming with men and women who have a wealth of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, who are looking for employers who can match their interests and meet their demands. Nearly three quarters of the NPA workforce are either Traditionalists (born between

1929 and 1945) or Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) which means that many will likely retire within the next ten years. ARS is not alone in anticipating a significant turn-over due to Baby Boomer retirements, and the competition for new employees will be keen. The challenge for ARS, and all locations within the NPA, is to ensure that we are positioned to attract and retain high-caliber employees, and that will depend not only on our ability to offer competitive pay and benefits, but more importantly, on how inclusive and welcoming we are to new - and continuing - employees. ■

Mentoring

• Special Section •

Included in this special section are articles describing mentoring programs available in the NPA, along with thoughts from students and scientists that have participated in them.

For additional information on any of these programs, please contact NPA Civil Rights Manager Barbara King (see page 10 for contact information).

Native American Students

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Research as Teaching and Learning

By Gerald Combs, Jr., Ph.D.

The term "lifelong learner" appeared in academic circles in the 1990s. Even then, it struck me as long overdue. After all, what kind of formal schooling can provide the learning sufficient for a lifetime? Our school experiences serve mostly to give us bases for learning even more beyond the class room. Nowhere is this more necessary than in the realm of science, where understanding is built and re-built as the result of ever-newer observations of natural phenomena – the "poking and prying with a purpose," as author Zora Neal Hurston referred to research.

What drives a lifelong learner? I suspect it is what Carl Sagan evidenced when he said that, "somewhere, something incredible is waiting to be known." I suspect that this is the urge that compels us towards the lifelong learning upon which our scientific "poking and prying" depends.

To undertake the best research, each of us in ARS needs to be a lifelong learner. Our abilities to contribute in meaningful ways demand nothing less. This view informs not only the implementation of our research program, but also our daily operation and our interactions with others. This summer it informed our participation in the Agency's Native American Internship Program.

Last summer, ours (Grand Forks) and three other NPA locations (Brookings, Fargo, Mandan) hosted six students from United Tribes Technical College (UTTC, Bismarck, N.D.), one from the University of North Dakota (Grand Forks, N.D.), and four from the University of Arizona (UA). Each intern pursued a mentored project addressing basic or applied aspects of biomedical and agricultural science.

(Continued next page)



Native American Internship Program Participants: *From left (top), Adrienne Begaye, Claudette Pochant, and Josh Lucio; From left (bottom), Sheena Curtis, Ismelda Lucio, and Ivy Thunderhawk.*



◀ *Student Intern
 Josh Lucio doing
 labwork.*



*Summer intern Sheena
 Curtis with her mentor,
 research chemist Tom
 Johnson, Ph.D.* ▶

(Continued from page 4)

In developing these student projects, we strove to provide structured, experiential learning as well as informed views of the nature of scientific research. Our goal was to provide “hands-on” experiences that build on each student's academic preparation and, perhaps, widen the horizons of his/her career thinking.

But, as every teacher knows, “to teach is to learn twice.” So it is that our mentoring scientists - indeed, our entire research support team - also benefited from this program as lifelong learners themselves.

That we were able to host these terrific students was due to the efforts of many people throughout this agency and at the collaborating academic institutions. I was genuinely impressed with the efforts and good spirit of the many who contributed in various ways to establish this innovative student internship program, which is now sponsoring bright Native American students at four ARS locations in the

Northern Plains Area. After only its second year, it is clear to me that this program is already yielding benefits to all contributors. I strongly suspect that the range of these benefits is wider than we may think, since a teacher can never tell where his/her influence stops.

For this reason, I see it as important that we, as scientists-teachers-lifelong learners, expect our research to yield more than facts - that we pursue it to develop understanding, and that it be relevant. “Intelligence is not information alone,” Sagan wrote, “but also judgment in the manner in which information is collected and used.” This may be the most important part of science that we can teach and, while teaching, learn again ourselves. I see this as our challenge, our responsibility, and our reward.

If you would be interested in working with this program, please contact Barbara King for more information. ■

The Student View:

“I learned a lot from this internship. I thought I would just spend my time mostly observing, but instead I spent it, like being in a scientist’s shoes, so I got a lot of hands-on experience.”

■ — ■

“The people here are great. I couldn't have met a cooler group of scientists. When I worked with my mentor he would allow me to do what I needed to do from the sidelines. If I looked confused he would explain to me as many times as needed until I understood.”

■ — ■

“This internship showed me how much more fun research can be. I found that qualitative research is just as important as the research that comes from a book, articles, or computers.”

■ — ■

“I was able to work on my own study and I received so much help and advice from my mentors. I was fortunate to have my advisor from UND be present for my presentation, and she told me that I did a great job and that a lot of her students who are ready to graduate haven't yet done the work that I have.”

■ — ■

“The most important thing I learned this summer was how to be responsible and independent when working on such an important project. I was given guidance, help, and encouragement by my mentors and they had confidence in me to conduct myself in a professional manner.”

(continued on page 11)

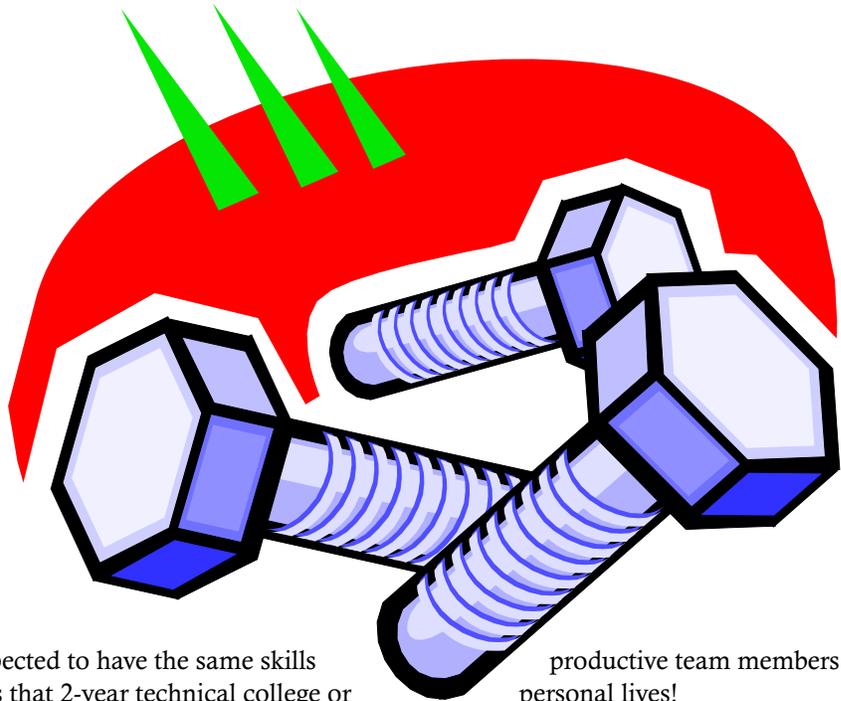
The "Nuts & Bolts" of Internship Programs

By Bill Kemp, Ph.D.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will be reading about the varied accomplishments of our NPA interns – the “what” of these important and developing programs. It is useful, however, to consider the “how” of such efforts as the number of interns and participating research teams continues to expand. The theme here is providing the intern a stimulating and worthwhile experience while managing day-to-day work flow within the supporting research team. The thoughts that follow are an incomplete list of some things that you might wish to consider.

As you well know, a common element of successful research teams is good communication. This allows them to maintain the productivity that they enjoy, and of which they are rightfully proud, and adapt to necessary changes in program work flow. In such an environment, the anticipated arrival of a summer intern, be it an NPA Native American Intern, an NPA Summer Intern/Apprentice, or a local high school student, normally triggers advance planning often months prior to the intern's arrival. Upon the announcement, usually early in the calendar year, that your research team has been “awarded” an intern, it is wise to have an initial “team visit” to sketch the outlines of the research experience that you wish to deliver. An 8-10 week interval is a short time to provide an intern with a true research experience, one that results in real engagement on the part of the intern. Additionally, it is wise to maintain focus on the arrival of an intern through short monthly reminder/planning sessions that will help your research team integrate an intern into an already busy summer research schedule.

Obviously, the complexity of an intern's experience will need to be tailored to the knowledge and abilities that the individual interns bring with them. High school interns cannot be



expected to have the same skills sets that 2-year technical college or 4-year university interns will be bringing. E-mail or phone contact with the intern early in the process, by the lead SY, will provide valuable information on the experience and interests of your prospective intern.

Members of successful research teams, like those awarded internships, are normally busy people. They rely on good communication and planning to integrate interns. As you might expect, it is important to anticipate the need for a change in the daily work flow during the 8-10 week internship. As there is only a relatively fixed number of hours in a research day, the re-scheduling of some plans is normally inevitable.

Given the rather short period of the internship, the research team also needs to allow for any required laboratory safety training (chemical or radiological safety training) that will be required at the beginning of the internship. Likewise, as supervision is critical to safety and to the overall intern/research team experience, some thought should be given to coordinating the AL schedules of team members – yes,

productive team members have personal lives!

A common theme among NPA research teams supporting internships is the expectation that the intern take ownership of a particular aspect of the research and present a short summary, frequently a PowerPoint presentation, to a small group including her/his mentors. This, of course requires that the lead SY and research team members anticipate the extra time required for this activity. Among the various ways to accomplish this would be for mentors to schedule time each week for the intern to work on her/his presentation.

Mentoring intelligent, enthusiastic youth is an important part of the larger mission of USDA and ARS, and research team members frequently mention how rewarding internship experiences can be. They also mention that mentoring interns requires a significant time commitment by participating team members. It seems though, from those that I've interacted with, that providing interns a positive, productive, and sometimes life-changing experience makes our world just a wee bit brighter. ■

New Scientists Professional Development Program

By Barbara King

Retirements of senior scientists are becoming more commonplace throughout the Agency, including the NPA, and a continuing challenge for the Area and Agency is to recruit and retain the next generation of scientists. As new scientists are hired, the primary goal is to ensure that new scientists are given the tools they need in order for them to achieve the standards of ARS-quality research.

With that in mind, the Northern Plains Area in the summer of 2005 established a program to ensure that all new scientists receive the kind of information, guidance, and support needed in order to make a nearly seamless transition to their role as ARS scientists. There are two components of this program, affectionately called "NASDP" (Newly Appointed Scientists Professional Development Program) – one component focuses on assisting new scientists in understanding what is needed to meet the ARS standards of performance; and the other component deals with mentoring.

This article discusses the mentoring component. A complete description of the NASDP (including the mentoring aspect) can be found at:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=14078>

All new scientists (or protégés) are matched with a senior scientist (mentor). The goal of the NPA Newly Appointed Scientist Mentoring Program is to foster relationships beyond that of employee-supervisor to assist all protégés in their professional development and their integration into ARS and the NPA. Scientists who have successfully established their career with ARS are in a position to draw from their professional experiences and relate those experiences to newly appointed scientists.

The primary emphasis is on assisting the protégé with career planning and in

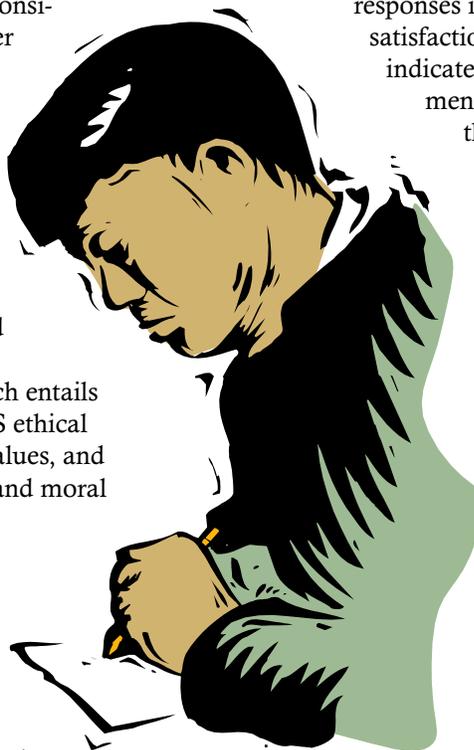
understanding responsible research. Career planning includes establishing both short and long term goals, balancing work and personal lives, and navigating Location, Area and Agency cultures. Responsible research entails understanding ARS ethical expectations and values, and scientific integrity and moral dilemmas.

The mentoring component has been designed to be fairly informal, and while new scientists are required to participate, mentors are all volunteers. There are now 23 matched pairs (mentors and protégés) in the program. This past summer the Area Office conducted a survey of all protégés, mentors, and their respective supervisors in order to determine the efficacy of the program and overall satisfaction among all parties.

The three most common reasons cited by many mentors for volunteering include:

- 1) a sense of wanting to either "pay back" for the type of assistance they received, or wanting to provide the kind of helping hand that was not offered to them;
- 2) a desire to learn new skills or technologies from their protégé; and
- 3) the possibility of establishing collaborations and networking.

In terms of satisfaction, protégé



responses indicate a high degree of satisfaction. Nearly all protégés indicated that advice from their mentor did not conflict with that of their research leader, and that their research leader was supportive of the program. Protégés also noted that their mentor's advice about career planning, the ARS structure, and research expectations were especially helpful, and that their mentor was very helpful in their transition to their current position and in promoting ARS as a long-term career. Additionally,

technical and clerical staffs were most helpful to protégés in integrating them to the worksite.

In response to a question about advice on balancing work and family, protégés indicated that they were more likely to discuss those issues with their mentor than with their research leader or other location staff. However, research leaders and other location scientists were most helpful to new scientists in developing their research plans.

Mentors were also very satisfied with the program, and especially appreciated the relative informality of the structure. A little more than half of all mentors noted that they have gained some new technical knowledge from their protégé.

The survey also shed some light on recruitment tactics and geographic mobility of scientists. About half of all respondents indicated that they currently

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NPA Summer Internship and Apprenticeship Programs

By Barbara King

Every spring, college and high school students begin their quest for that perfect summer job. To many students, securing a paid summer internship is the ideal way to earn some cash while also gaining hands-on experience related to their academic degree and career interests. That's the upside. The downside is that there generally are far more students interested in having an internship than there are available jobs.

Luckily, for some college and high school students, the Northern Plains Area has two summer internship programs – the NPA Summer Internship/Apprenticeship Program and the Native American Internship Program. This article discusses the NPA Summer Internship/Apprenticeship Program; [click here](#) to read the article by Dr. Jerry Combs about the American Indian Summer Internship Program.

The NPA intern/apprentice program provides meaningful work supplemented by competitive pay for college and high school students. Locations benefit by having highly motivated students, many of whom are interested in gaining hands-on research experience. In the past five years alone, the NPA Area Director and locations have provided 52 internships (college students) and 24 apprenticeships (high school students).

About \$15,000 each year is allocated by Dr. Blackburn for internships and apprenticeships. Locations compete for matching funding from the Area Director. Successful proposals are those that describe creative ways to recruit minority and female students as well as students with disabilities, and also include a well-defined project. Additionally, other key attributes include a strong mentoring component, and expectations that the student will present the research findings either in some type of oral presentation or a written report.



Often, students are cited in the published research.

At the completion of the summer, scientists are required to submit a brief report noting the success of the project and student and any outcomes for the unit and student. Typical kinds of outcomes include completed research, posters, and unit presentations. Students benefit from an intensive, hands-on learning experience, and many also earn college internship credits. One mutual outcome for one student and location is the promise of continued interactions. In that case, the intern plans to teach science in the same town she did her internship, and her mentor scientist is hopeful that he will be able to develop outreach activities between the lab and local schools.

While there have been several success stories, one in particular stands out. A few years ago one of the locations hired a high school student for two consecutive summers. According to her mentor scientist, this student was extremely talented, eager to gain professional work experience, and excited about entering college at a large university out of state. Unfortunately, for a variety of reasons, her first year at school was disappointing and left her questioning her desire for a college degree. However, she was rehired between her freshman and

sophomore years, and that experience gave her a fresh appreciation for agricultural research, and she is now majoring in agriculture and is once again academically engaged. Her mentoring scientist has remained in contact with her and he is convinced that her three years with ARS showed her that she should remain in college, that she has a knack for agricultural sciences, and that her career prospects looks promising.

The research projects for the summer of 2006 were: molecular population genetics of the red flour beetle (with Dr. James Campbell, Manhattan); understanding proteomic changes in sugarbeet associated with defense against Beet necrotic yellow vein virus, the causal agent of rhizomania (with Dr. Rebecca Larson, Fort Collins); characterizing the effects that pathogens have on inducing polyphenol oxidase in wild oat seeds (with Dr. James Anderson, Fargo); determining whether the *Metarhizium* fungus in development for sugarbeet root maggot control can become endophytic in sugar beets, using PCR of organism-specific primers and sequencing specific rDNA regions (with Dr. Stefan Jaronski); community-based research (survey development, in-depth interviewing with Elders) on traditional Native American foods (with Dr. Sarah Colby, Grand Forks); learning a procedure to removing the need for vernalization in the flowering pathway of sugarbeet (with Dr. Lee Panella, Fort Collins); and free air CO₂ enrichment (FACE) experiment to explicitly focus on interactions between plant invasion and global climate change (with Dr. Dana Blumenthal, Fort Collins).

The next call for proposals will be released in January of 2007. The announcement of selected proposals is made in late February. Questions about this program should be directed to Barbara King at:

Barbara.King@ars.usda.gov ■

Generations Matching Game

There are four recognized generations currently in the American workforce. Each term, phrase and/or event on the left, rightly or wrongly, is often associated with one of these four generations. Try to match the terms, phrases and/or events with the generations on the right. [Hint: Each generation has five terms/phrases/events.]



- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| a. Company Man | k. Arab Oil Embargo |
| b. Me Generation | l. Structured/scheduled "free time" |
| c. Have Helicopter Parents | m. MySpace.com |
| d. Golden Handcuffs | n. Digital Generation |
| e. Vietnam War | o. Live within your means |
| f. Latchkey kids | p. Loyal |
| g. Columbine | q. Self image deeply tied to career |
| h. Self-sufficient | r. Punk Rock |
| i. Civil rights and feminism movements | s. Disciplined |
| j. Generation that is hard to define | t. There's more to life than a job |

Millennials

Baby Boomers

Traditionalists

Generation X

(Answers on next page)

Four Generations at Work *Continued from page 3*

family-oriented, and many in this generation are extremely close to their parents. Like Generation X, Millennials will be entering a workforce dominated by Baby Boomers, at a time when employees will take ever greater responsibility for managing their own careers as well as their own retirements. About 4% of the NPA workforce are Millennials.

Given the vastly different times and circumstances that each generation

experienced while growing-up, coupled with changes in the workplace, it is no wonder that employees at all levels sometimes encounter dismay, misunderstanding, and even conflict in their interactions with one another. Yet, despite the differences, some general themes such as having meaningful work, taking pride in one's work, receiving fair treatment, and having their efforts recognized are shared across all four generations.

Overcoming challenges presented by the differing and sometimes competing interests of these four generations, coupled with the inherent diversity throughout the workforce, requires sincere efforts on the part of all employees. Good managers understand that one approach does not work with everyone. Each of us can benefit from being more engaged with all of our co-workers regardless of their position or background. ■

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Generations Matching Game - Answer Key

Boomers:	b, e, i, k, q
Traditionalists:	a, d, o, p, s
Generation X:	f, h, j, r, t
Millennials:	c, g, l, m, n

ARS Civil Rights Office Contact Information

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"Voices" New Discussion Forum for All

A Message From NPA Area Director Will Blackburn

Welcome to this first issue of *Voices*, which we hope will become a forum that all Area employees will find useful for ongoing discussions about the myriad facets of diversity. It is our hope that these articles will jump-start discussions among employees and lead to further understanding and appreciating what each of us contributes to our workforce and to our mission. As demonstrated by the articles contained in this first edition, every one of us contributes to the diversity mosaic.

Additionally, the NPA has a tradition of reaching out to individuals from a wide range of backgrounds. For instance, our two internship programs provide extraordinary opportunities for bright students to gain first-hand experience about science from some of the best scientists and support staff in the agency. At the same time, the mentoring program for new scientists is proving to be a valued resource as they begin charting their careers.

With the anticipated surge of retirements over the next ten years, both the

NPA and ARS will face a steep challenge in replacing those employees who have had a profound impact on the success of the Area and the Agency. The NPA work-force is key to our tradition of success, and the Northern Plains Area employees possess the knowledge, dedication, and commitment that is essential to continuing the tradition of excellence not only in the NPA but also in ARS. How we as an Area further develop our understanding of diversity will be critical in how we position ourselves to recruit and retain our most valuable resource – our employees.

As we move into 2007, we also want to wish everyone a Happy Holiday and all the best for the New Year! ■



New Scientists Professional Development Program

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live more than a thousand miles from their home town. Interestingly, word of mouth seems to be the dominant recruitment strategy, in that 50% of protégés indicated they heard of the job vacancy from someone at the location. Since recruiting is the best opportunity for diversifying the workforce, and with the anticipated retirements over the next 10 years, word of mouth may not be the best method for ensuring a large and diversified applicant pool unless there are sincere efforts to extend this noti-

cation to contacts well beyond close friends or acquaintances.

While the mentoring program is still in its infancy, it appears to be meeting the stated goals of assisting new scientists and in ensuring that they are given ample opportunity to make connections and access the information needed to lay the foundation for a long and successful career with ARS in general and, hopefully, with the Northern Plains Area in particular. ■

The Student View:

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"This internship has confirmed my passion to be at the lab bench doing the technical hands on work. It also allowed me to know what I will need to work hard for to get where all these scientists have gotten."

"My mentor told me about many different fields of science and research and suggested some universities that I could transfer to for my bachelor's degree. I also learned some things that I didn't like, which will help me decide which field of science to specialize in."

"My experiences with this program have affected my future choices by giving me confidence, encouragement and the knowledge about how far I can take my education and career."

"The internship has further influenced my plans to pursue a Ph.D. with the intent of entering the research world."

"I learned that science and research is a lot of hard work but it is also very interesting work."

"I am getting the real world experience which I will need when I'm done with my degree."