

PASTG NEWSLETTER

**Volume 1, Issue 1
July, August, September 1995**

The Midwest Program Administrative Support Task Group had their first formal meeting May 17-18, 1995, at the Area Office in Peoria. As with most of you, the group members had questions and concerns on the what and why's of the task group. In our day and half meeting, not only did the task group members form a friendship, we all agreed that certain items need attention. All of us are proud to devote time and energy to the group, in hopes that all administrative support personnel will benefit.

The Task Group is to serve as advisors to management. Task Group members are from a mix of grades, various offices/locations within the Midwest Area. The Midwest Area includes eight states, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Representatives from each location were chosen, and from that group seven council members were chosen to represent the locations.

From Marcia Jenkins, our National Secretary Council Member; The National Secretarial Advisory Council met May 22-25, 1995, in Ft. Collins CO. All council members were present as well as Cecelia Stortzum, Technical Advisor from HRD, Toni Walls and Eileen Wolfe, Training Specialists, HRD. Area representatives reported on the activities of the organizational councils, the training "Partnership in Excellence" subcommittees finalized plans and outlines for their programs. The PC-TRAV system was reviewed and problem areas identified. An ongoing project for the upcoming year will be the development of a Secretarial Handbook to be distributed Agency-wide. All council members were pleased at the progress that each Area has made and look forward to future interaction with the organizational groups. A highlight of the meeting was a tour of the Seed Storage Laboratory and meeting with the Northern Plains Area secretaries and Director.

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The Program Administrative Support Task Group is a branch of the National Secretarial Advisory Council. Our Task Group includes one member of the National Advisory Council as an Ex-Officio member, to serve as an adviser.

We would like to share our mission and vision, along with some of our objectives with you.

Our Mission

The mission of the MWA Program Administrative Support Task Group is to serve the Area Director and Management in an advisory capacity on new initiatives which impact employees across the Area and to enhance the program administrative support profession through training, mentoring and recognition. Our goal is to ensure that ARS has highly skilled professionals working as team members with management to meet the program/administrative goals of the Agency.

Our Vision

The MWA Program Administrative Support Task Group's vision is to form a communication network to share information and to raise the esteem and the perception of the Program Administrative Support Personnel through increased awareness and value of these positions in support of the team mission.

Objectives

- Recognition system
- Formalized mentoring training programs
- Increase communications and networking
- Reinvention proposal's
- Provide input and suggestions to implement Agency-wide initiatives

All members would like suggestions and input on what you would like to see the task group accomplish. We would like to be notified of location information, some examples are accomplishments and awards, just to name a few. We would like to show congratulations Area wide. You may inform any committee member or Karen directly.

Training & Mentoring

The training and mentoring committee would also like to have your input with information pertaining to training in your area, and any other related training. Once again any committee member can be notified or Shirley can be contacted directly.

What News Notes Is About

We have the hopes that News Notes will increase location to location and location to Area communication and that it will also enhance the working knowledge of all ARS Support Personnel.

We hope to include a brief help section, including notes, helpful hints, and suggestions to the never ending RMIS program, and general network questions, just to name a few.

We, and I reemphasize WE, want to work with all secretaries, clerical, and office automation support personnel. We have the hopes that the National Secretarial Council and our Program Administrative Support Task Group will be able to serve as an advisory board to all support personnel.

We would also like to include location happenings in the News Notes, so we can keep all ARS Program Administrative Support Personnel, abreast to the goings on, some examples, births, marriages, retirements, just to name a few. The MWA is a very large area, and we would like to try and bridge the location gap.

To Marcia Jenkins, Ex-Officio Program Administrative Support Task Group Member, she is co-chair of the National Secretarial Advisory Council and has given a great deal of input and support. If you would like to contact her directly about The National Secretarial Advisory Council, she can be reached at the Office of Director, Peoria, IL, 309/681-6601.

To all those born during June, July, August and September. We hope you all have a wonderful birthday.

The Program Administrative Support Task Group would like to once again formally thank Drs. Dunkle, Gerloff, Hewings and Johnsen, for their support and enthusiasm in the PASTG. We would also like to thank our Research Leaders for their support.

If you have any ideas, suggestions, or location news that you would like to include in News Notes, please contact Karen Sussman, email !A03RLSBCR, or 517/355-7456.

PASTG NEWSLETTER

Volume 1, Issue 2
October, November, December 1995

The Program Administrative Support Task Group would like to thank all who participated in the first of our quarterly teleconferences. We would also like to thank Dr. Dunkle for joining us during the teleconference.

Our next teleconference is tentatively set for December. If there are any items you would like to include in the agenda, please feel free to contact a task group member.

TELECONFERENCE & SURVEY RESPONSES

Questions were raised regarding working (position) titles, training & mentoring, communication and position upgrades.

Position titles The working titles that we now have are by choice and supervisor approval. We encourage those of you who wish to change your working title and have not yet done so to speak with your supervisor and/or personnel.

At this time the office automation series does not have the option of a working title. This position is newly established, and the position title is believed to properly represent the position.

Training There were quite a few questions and concerns in this area. For those who have not yet received RMIS training, Area Office Program Analyst, Pat Bothast, will be conducting RMIS training during the last week of November and the first week of December. In conjunction with the RMIS training, the participants will also receive training in the areas of T&As, ARS correspondence, E-mail, etc., by the Area staff and PASTG members. Pat Bothast will notify those who are to receive RMIS training.

Mentoring We had some questions as to who, why, and where. Mentoring is a personal decision. The mentoring program provides many benefits to ARS. Some benefits include increasing ARS program knowledge, and "tricks of the trade." Mentoring someone in a certain position, is sharing knowledge and giving guidance. Mentoring not only enhances the abilities of the mentee, but also those of the mentor.

We remember our first few months with ARS, trying to decipher what was what, and wondering how to use certain programs; mentoring could have alleviated much of the confusion. Mentoring would also have enhanced the job performance of all involved. Mentoring increases communication, which generates questions and concerns. This can

enhance work quality by receiving all the tools needed to properly complete a job. The mentoring would be done at the location of the mentee. We wish to thank those who showed interest in becoming a mentor. The mentoring/training committee will be providing more information on this topic.

Position upgrades The proper procedure for position upgrades still remains the same, however, the criteria has changed. Instead of only reviewing the position, the person in the position along with duties and personal initiative are now taken into account. Any direct questions regarding this matter may be directed to Sherri or personnel.

Communication We all have the hopes of improving the communication channels. Increased communication is a goal at all locations.

The Program Administrative Support Task Group, which consists of various series and grades, has the hope that with training, mentoring and teleconferencing, we can all work together to increase communication and broaden our work knowledge.

FROM THE MENTORING/TRAINING SUBCOMMITTEE

The Mentoring/Training Subcommittee held its first conference call on August 5th. The subcommittee members are: Shirley Runge/Chair, Jean Sparks, Sandy Groneberg, Alice McCain and Sue Ohlendorf.

The subcommittee established the following mission statement, along with the goals and objectives of the subcommittee.

Mission Statement: The mission of the Mentoring/Training subcommittee is to identify and meet the development and professional growth needs of the Program Administrative Support Staff of the Midwest Area.

Goals and Objectives: Assist new program support personnel in becoming acclimated to ARS through a strong mentoring program. Elevate effectiveness of program support personnel by:

- Recommending topics where training is needed
- Increasing awareness of training opportunities
- Encouraging personnel to utilize the Individual Development Plan and training programs available.

Mentor/Mentee Program: Anyone interested in serving as a mentor should refer to the "Stepping into the Future" (green) book. It explains in detail what mentoring involves and explains the duties of the Mentor and Mentee.

Training: The development of a training and planning guide for MWA secretarial/clerical personnel is in process.

As mentoring and training information becomes available it will be included in the PASTG News Notes, or distributed as needed. If anyone has any questions or suggestions for the committee, please feel free to contact any committee member.

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Speaking on behalf of my colleagues in the Midwest Area Office, I would like to thank all of you for the fine job and all your hard work in regard to this year's ARMPS cycle. Your efforts resulted in an exceptionally smooth ARMPS review and submittal process. Due in large part to the delay of the appointment of Dr. Floyd Horn as ARS Administrator, the Area ARMPS review with Headquarters has been pushed back about a month. I expect that the Midwest Area review will occur mid-November.

This year will present many training opportunities for many of you, due largely to the high turnover of research leaders and various support staff caused by retirements and program restructurings. For example, out of 50 research leader positions in the Midwest Area, 15 of them represent new appointments since July 1. This winter we plan to hold a training session for new research leaders. One component of this session will include a panel discussion on what service and support capabilities a secretary can offer to the RL. I have asked the PASTG to provide recommendations to me on which secretaries to consider inviting to participate in the new RL training program. Also, Pat Bothast, Area Program Analyst, along with several individuals from the Midwest Administrative Office, Area Office staff and members of the PASTG plan to present RMIS related training in late November and early December. I look forward to interacting with those of you who are planning to attend.

FY-96 will present many challenges to all of us. I'm hopeful we will avoid furloughs and will get back to the tasks at hand once the budget is finally signed into law. I understand that the ARS budget is ready for the President's signature; however, it is likely it will not be signed until other pressing issues of concern to Congress and the President are resolved first. In light of all these seemingly uncontrollable uncertainties, let's all focus in on what we can control, our jobs, our productivity, and our pride in making ARS the most successful program in the government!

R.L. Dunkle, Director, MWA

The following individuals have joined or have assumed new roles of the Midwest Area Team:

- Thomas Walton, Center Director, National Animal Disease Center, Ames, IA;
- Julie Morrow-Tesch, Research Leader, Livestock Behavior Research Unit, West Lafayette, IN;
- Mark Nearing, Acting Research Leader, National Soil Erosion Laboratory, West Lafayette, IN;

- Raymond Louie, Acting Research Leader, Corn & Soybean Research Unit, Wooster, OH;
- Don Ort, Acting Research Leader, Photosynthesis Research, Urbana, IL;
- Michael McGuire, Research Leader, Bioactive Constituents Research, Peoria, IL;
- J.L. Willett, Acting Research Leader, Plant Polymer Research, Peoria, IL;
- Thomas Abbott, Acting Research Leader, New Crops Research Unit, Peoria, IL;
- Richard Rimler, Research Leader, Avian & Swine Respiratory Diseases, Ames, IA;
- George L. Hosfield, Research Leader, Sugarbeet & Bean Research, E. Lansing, MI;
- Alan Rotz, Acting Research Lead, Fruit & Vegetable Harvesting, E. Lansing, MI;
- Carroll Vance, Acting Research Leader, Plant Science Research, St. Paul, MN
- Michael R. Burkhart, Research Leader, Agricultural Land Management, Ames, IA;
- Dan Jaynes, Research Leader, Soil & Water Quality, Ames, IA;
- John Crouse, Project Manager, National Swine Research Center, Ames, IA;
- Joni Casteel, Secretary, Photosynthesis Research Unit, Urbana, IL;
- Judy Spillman, Secretary, Plant Genetics Research Unit, Columbia, MO;
- Virginia Walker, Secretary, Plant Science Research Unit, St. Paul, MN;
- Doreen Murray, Secretary, Soil & Water Management, St. Paul, MN;
- Cynthia Zick, Secretary, Plant Disease Resistance, Madison, WI;
- Linda Theesfeld, Secretary, Center Director's Office, Peoria, IL;
- Christy Gibson, Program Analyst, NCAUR, Peoria;
- Connie Bond, Location Administrative Office, Columbia, MO;
- Garland Gray, Realty Property Specialist, Area Administrative Office, Peoria, IL;
- Michael Gould, Technology Transfer Coordinator, Peoria, IL;
- Joseph Lipovsky, Patents Office, Peoria, IL;
- Kathy Salaiz, Office Automation Assistant, Avian Disease & Oncology, E. Lansing, MI;
- Amy Pentkowski, Office Automation Clerk, Avian Disease & Oncology, E. Lansing, MI;
- Linda Wells, Office Automation Clerk, Plant Introduction Research, Ames, IA;
- Elizabeth Copley, Office Automation Clerk, NCAUR, Peoria, IL



Congratulations to Steve and Sharon Edney on the birth of their son, Sean Thomas, born on October 18. The Edney's have another son, Steve age 4. Steve Edney is the Area Administrative Officer in Peoria, IL.

Send your ideas/suggestions to Karen Sussman, at !a03rlsbcr, ksussman@pilotx.msu.edu or call 517/355-7456.