

## PASTG Newsletter - March 24, 2000

### 1999 SECRETARY OF THE YEAR:

The Area Office is pleased to announce that Ms. Georgetta Stonewall, Program Office Manager for the Microbial Properties Research Unit at NCAUR, Peoria, IL has been selected as the 1999 MWA Secretary of the Year. Georgetta is being recognized for her outstanding secretarial skills in office operations, management of scientific databases, and mentoring of colleagues.

### MIDWEST AREA LEADERSHIP MEETING

On March 6 & 7, a number of Midwest Area secretaries attended the RL/LAO meeting in Peoria, IL. Several presentations were held throughout the afternoon and morning sessions.

A presentation was given by Stephen Duke from the Office of Scientific Quality Review (OSQR) on the new ARS National Programs procedures for creating new CRIS projects and the peer panel review procedures. Marcia Moore led the Administrative break out session and discussed in more detail formats, timelines, roles and responsibilities, and chain of command. Additional information will be forthcoming to assist secretaries with this process. Pat Bothast is the Area Office contact for the CRIS replacements.

Harvey Ratzlaff and Lynell Odenbach from the Office of the Inspector General discussed how to handle vandalism and violence on the job. Handouts provided were: Assault and Threat Reporting Procedures, Bribery Reporting Procedures, and a listing of all USDA, Office of the Inspector General sites throughout the U.S. The Midwest Area Office will provide more detailed information on these issues.

Janet S. (Kim) Kaplan, Public Affairs Specialist for the Information Staff provided useful techniques on how to perform effective interviews with the news media. She also videotaped an interview with a meeting attendee and later critiqued the "dos" and "don'ts" of the interview.

The PASTG had a breakout session to share ideas and concerns of Area secretaries. Concerns of those attending were:

RMIS, ARMPS and OSQR training for all secretaries (possible video clips)

More frequent PASTG newsletters

Conference calls for Midwest Area

Another Midwest Area secretarial meeting

Links on PASTG website for training, Cooperative Resolution Program, and a list of available hotels

Names of all Midwest Area clerical personnel, email address, phone and expertise on PASTG Website

Calendar on PASTG homepage with deadlines

Inability to read actual subsistence messages with actual subsistence as an attachment

Items for SOP: alphabetized table of contents; Cooperative Resolution Program; OSQR

Classification concerns: Take RL secretaries out of 300 series; give supervisor authority

to set grade. Secretaries were encouraged to initiate individual job audits.  
Individual worksheets for tasks

#### PASTG HOMEPAGE:

The PASTG homepage is now available for your use. Our address is:

<http://www.mwa.ars.usda.gov/mwa/pastg/index1.htm>

Some of the things on the homepage which will be of use to you are: links to information you will find helpful in your everyday work; scholarship, mentor, and secretary of the year forms and application information; PASTG newsletters, Issues sheets, charter and mission statement; information on the National Secretarial Meeting in Hunt Valley, MD, and the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual.

One of the items discussed at the breakout session at the RL/LAO/Secretarial meeting in Peoria was the benefit of listing the Secretaries of the Midwest Area on the PASTG home page, including their location, email address, phone and fax number, along with areas that they had enough expertise that they would be willing to accept a phone call from another secretary and try to help them out with a question. For example, if you felt comfortable helping others with PowerPoint or graphics, you would indicate that. This page would give you a fast accurate access to phone and email for the MWA secretaries who could help you with your question. We are requesting that you email the following information to Sandy Groneberg ([groneberg@morris.ars.usda.gov](mailto:groneberg@morris.ars.usda.gov)) to include on the home page. If you prefer not to take any phone calls, you don't need to list areas of expertise, but we would still like to have the rest of the information: name, location, email address, phone and fax number, areas of expertise.

The official updated version of our SOP manual will be maintained on our PASTG website. Hard copy revisions will no longer be mailed. Secretaries will be notified by email when revisions have been made.

#### CHANGING FACES

We would like to welcome the following new employees to the Midwest Area:

Jacilyn Weese, Office Automation Assistant, has recently joined ARS as part of ARS's role in the National Swine Research and Information Center. Jaci lives in Ames, IA with her husband and two daughters. She worked for three years as the Building Secretary with the Amex Community School District and seven years as an Administrative Assistant at St. Andrews Lutheran Church. Jaci serves on the Board of Directors for the Children's Museum of Central Iowa. She enjoys reading, bicycling, camping, and spending time with her family. Jaci is looking forward to many new challenges in working for ARS.

Sue Peters has been selected for the Secretarial position with Dr. J. L. Willett, Research Leader, Plant Polymer Research Unit at NCAUR. She has worked for various local temporary service agencies and several Government agencies in the past. She and her husband enjoy boating and skiing. She began her new position March 13.

Barbara Henry has accepted a position at NADC in Ames, IA as Personnel Clerk. She was formerly an Office Automation Assistant in the Plant Introduction Unit.

Dr. Michael R. McGuire, Research Leader of the Bioactive Agents Research Unit, is serving a detail in the Midwest Area as Acting Assistant Area Director.

#### PASTG MEMBERSHIP ROTATION

Shirley Runge and Jean Sparks, two of the original PASTG members, have completed their terms on the Task Group. We would like to thank Shirley & Jean for all of their hard work and dedication to the group and members they represent.

The PASTG is pleased to welcome two new members:

Georgetta Stonewall is the Program Office Manager for the Microbial Properties Research Unit at NCAUR, Peoria, IL. In addition to developing new methods to define, characterize, and rapidly identify microorganisms, MPR is responsible for the management, maintenance, and curation of the over 80,000 strains which comprise the ARS Microbial Culture Collection. Georgetta started her Federal career at the Canton Post Office in 1985 before becoming an administrative clerk in the MWA office followed by a year and a half as the Procurement Clerk in the MWA Purchasing Office. She started her present position in 1992. Georgetta lives in the small village of Kingston Mines, IL, with her husband, Mark, and their three sons, Josh, Jason and Jamie.

Heather Pace joined ARS as Secretary for the Plant Genetics Research Unit in Columbia, MO in June, 1998. Unit scientists concentrate on research in maize, wheat and soybean genetics, and also on pests (European corn borer) associated with the development of maize. Prior employment was with the City of Columbia for 16 years. Heather is a native of Columbia, MO and enjoys playing volleyball.

#### NOTES FROM THE PASTG MEETING - ST. PAUL, MN

The PASTG met in St. Paul, MN, November 1-4. The task group finalized plans for the PASTG website, updated the SOP, and planned and designed the PASTG booth for the National Secretary Meeting in Hunt Valley, MD. Jan Overton, Location Administrative Officer, met with us and presented a program entitled "How Can We Help You Do Your Research or What Does an LAO Really Do?" We also met with the St. Paul secretaries and toured facilities on campus to become familiar with the types of research being done in St. Paul. The tours were all excellent and very interesting.

#### NATIONAL SECRETARIAL MEETING

The National Secretarial Meeting in Hunt Valley, MD "Odyssey 2000" will be held May 1-5, 2000. The Midwest Area will have 18 representatives; a total of 150 ARS support personnel staff will be attending. We will have a booth showing our PASTG accomplishments and activities since our inception.

## PASTG News Notes - August 8, 2000

### Next PASTG Meeting:

The Program Administrative Support Task Group will meet in Peoria, September 11-15, 2000. If you have any issues or concerns you would like to see addressed, please contact one of the members listed on the PASTG homepage.

### Secretarial Conference Highlights:

The "Odyssey 2000" meeting in Hunt Valley, Maryland, was an inspiring, informative and motivational experience. Participants were able to select from a number of concurrent sessions, so one could "zero in" on the areas of most interest. Hopefully we will be able to provide highlights of some of these sessions over the next newsletters. This article emphasizes the key statements of general session speakers on the first day of the conference.

Wiz Horner, Deputy Administrator, AFM, provided opening remarks designed to get us thinking about our role within the Agency. He challenged us to contribute to the Agency in new and exciting ways, and to develop our own job satisfaction by:

- committing fully to our jobs
- accepting uncertainty and ambiguity (He told us to take risks.)
- speeding up -- developing a sense of urgency and action
- taking the initiative to cut costs and improve productivity
- being accountable
- adding value-- prove our worth to the organization (make them see something important would be lost if we left)
- bringing something to the job
- managing our own morale (a positive attitude is contagious)
- getting involved in special projects
- being a "fixer" not a "finger pointer"
- welcoming problems as a way to grow

Sandy Miller Hays, Director, Information Staff, presented "Representing ARS: Meeting the Challenge." She emphasized that we are the first impression to the media, as well as tax payers. Once we have given a bad impression to the media, it is very difficult to turn that impression around to a better one. Sandy had the following tips for secretaries:

- be knowledgeable of your FULL organization
- be in tune with what is done at our location and WRITE IT DOWN. It is much easier to keep stories accurate.
- read over new articles - Do they make sense?
- use bullet statements - keep it simple
- four points: "The four best things are..."
- stick to our area of expertise ("No comment" is NOT a good idea.)
- NEVER say, "Off the record..."
- If you give out incorrect information - FIX IT NOW! Treat it like a national emergency.
- ARS is a great place to work - catch the excitement.
- Take a picture. Put it in the newspaper or on the web. Get the story out.

- If you are ever in doubt about whether information should be given out, or whether it is a major news source, contact Sandy Miller Hays at 301-504-1636 or email her at [shays@asrr.arsusda.gov](mailto:shays@asrr.arsusda.gov)
- <http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/services> is a great resource for images that can be used in ARS publications, etc.

From Lonajeon Strickland: I attended the Odyssey 2000 Meeting in Baltimore, MD the first week of May. I wish every one of you could have attended. It was an awesome meeting! The speakers were great, the facilities were wonderful, our booth and representation from the Midwest was something to brag about. The topics were very thought provoking. We were told to prepare ourselves for changing times and changes in our professional field. "To step outside our comfort zones for the betterment of ourselves". Any changes that we can make professionally can only help each one of us personally and vice versa. Whether it's education, organization skills or interpersonal relations, let each of us take this challenge to heart. I encourage each of us to challenge ourselves today to prepare for tomorrow.

Dr. Horn was very proud of our accomplishments throughout the week we were in Maryland. He was so impressed, he plans to sponsor another meeting in the next couple of years. If each of us take improvement steps now, we will be so much more successful. Just think of the dynamic changes we will have made and the impact that will be felt at our next meeting.

#### QUOTES TO LIVE BY:

How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and strong. Because someday in your life, you will have been all of these. -- George Washington Carver

#### TIMESAVING IDEAS:

- Make lists and worksheets on your computer for easy changes and make them workable for you.
- Program speed dials on your phone and keep frequently used numbers near the phone.
- Color code, including forms.
- Learn to cut and paste.
- Save frequently.
- Put things away.
- Write yourself notes and place them where you can see them easily.

The following bookmarks were written by Diane Cronk. They were printed and distributed from the MWA booth to conference participants.

*Every Office Needs One ...  
It's amazing and incredible,  
But it's as true as it can be,  
Every office needs a secretary  
Now that's clear to you and me.*

*Office Survival Kit  
Be Courteous  
Have pride in yourself  
Do a kind deed for someone  
Listen to your heart  
Have patience*

*Courageous and undaunting  
With steadfast valor we proceed  
We take on each perplexing task  
To meet each office need.*

*Perseverance and so savvy  
Lots of patience lots of grace  
Innovative and dependable  
Our smiles light up the place.*

*Challenging, yet rewarding  
Diligently working every day,  
Dedicated and reliable,  
We're proud to work for the USDA!*

*Smile  
Give thanks for each new day  
Welcome challenges  
Take time to enjoy life  
When you lose, don't lose the lesson  
Keep a sense of humor  
Respect self  
Be patient  
Smile often  
Strive always for quality  
Say something kind  
Have fun life is for real  
Bend, but don't break  
Remain calm  
Hum an old song when you feel weary  
Remember it's okay to cry  
Learn to laugh at yourself  
Don't let go of your values  
Respect others  
Have lots of patience  
Smile real often  
Feel the comfort of good times  
Believe in Yourself  
Be thankful for all you have  
Be exceptionally patient  
Smile, Smile, Smile*

Changing Faces in the MWA:

Dr. Michael (Mickey) McGuire

Dr. Mickey McGuire, Research Leader for Bioactive Agents Research (BAR) and Acting Assistant Area Director, has accepted a position in Shafter, CA as Research Leader for the Western Integrated Cropping Systems Research Unit. Dr. Pat Dowd is presently Acting Research Leader for BAR.

Kathy John

Kathy John, NCAUR Personnel Assistant, recently joined ARS in September 1999. Previously she worked eleven years for the U. S. Army Recruiting Battalion as the Chief of Advertising and Public Affairs until the office closed down in 1991 during a major reorganization. She worked a couple of years as an Account Executive for Multi-Ad Services until she was able to find another federal position. Just prior to coming to ARS, Kathy worked five years as a mail carrier for the U.S. Postal Service in Peoria. Kathy said she enjoyed working outdoors (majority of the time), but the back muscles just couldn't tolerate the weight of the mail satchel. She and her husband, Roger, both enjoy the outdoors. They do a lot of bicycling, running, canoeing, snowshoeing, hiking, camping, and gardening. They just returned from a week-long bicycle ride across the state of Wisconsin. Two years ago, they got married in Australia half-way through a nine-day bicycle ride across New South Wales. Kathy is currently training for the Chicago Marathon.

### Dr. Andrew Watkins

Dr. Andrew Watkins, Technology Transfer Manager at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR), accepted a position as Supervisory Technology Transfer Scientist at the Center for Disease Control (CD) in Atlanta, Georgia. He began his new position on May 8.

Dr. Watkins' wife, Linda, who worked in the Biomaterials Processing Research Unit, has family in the Georgia area. Everyone wishes Andrew and Linda success in their move. Dr. Craig Carriere, Research Leader for the Biomaterials Processing Research Unit (BMPR), is serving as Acting Technology Development Manager.

### Janice Olson

Janice Olson, secretary to Dr. Keith Murray at the National Animal Disease Center has announced her retirement effective August 2. Janice began her ARS career at NADC in April, 1964 in the steno pool and later became the secretary to Dr. Peter J. Matthews, Head of Animal Services. She was reassigned in 1968 to secretary for Dr. William Monlux, NADC Assistant Director. In the following years, she has served as secretary to the following NADC Directors: Dr. Chester Manthei, Dr. Phillip O'Berry, Dr. Harley Moon, Dr. Thomas Walton and presently Dr. Keith Murray.

After retirement, Janice plans to stay active with a part-time job, home duties, volunteer projects, long walks, reading, and spending time with her eight beautiful grandchildren.

Janice would like to thank all of the wonderful people of NADC, MWA, and ARS for their friendship and team work. She states that she will miss all of us!

### Teresa Sutton

Teresa Sutton joined NADC on Jan. 31, 2000 as a Program Analyst/Public Relations Officer. Prior to joining NADC, Teresa was a Trial Operations Planning and Support Manager with Pioneer Hi-Bred International, Inc. Teresa obtained an Animal Science degree from Iowa State University in December of 1987 and began her career with Pioneer March 1, 1988. While at Pioneer she held several positions in the Research, Information Management, and Supply Management Divisions of the company and pursued a Masters of Business Administration degree. Teresa lives on a farm south of Slater with her husband Chris, son Kyle and daughter Jessica. In addition to working at NADC, she enjoys family activities and riding her horse!

### BJ Dailey

Barbara (BJ) Dailey has been selected as the Area Budget & Fiscal Officer. BJ began working for ARS as a GS-4 Clerk Typist for the Lexington, KY location in 1986. When the LAO indicated she was going to retire 6 months later, she competed for the position and was selected to fill it. BJ served in the position for 7 years until they were notified that the location was going to be closed and she would be reassigned to Griffin, GA effective November 1994. In January of 1995, she was selected for the LAO position in Lincoln, Nebraska and served in that position until September 1998, when she was selected for the LAO position at Madison, WI. And to quote BJ, "Now, I am here - hopefully for the rest of my career. Kentucky is still 'home'."

Prior to coming on board with ARS, she worked for the University of KY as a Staff Assistant. She wore many other hats during the years while she was raising a family - emergency school teacher

(5 grades in a 1-room school), legal secretary, billing clerk, loan mortgage assistant, school crossing guard, and on and on. She has 3 children and 6 grandchildren.

BJ is looking forward to interacting with the staff at the area office and hopes to constructively contribute to the services provided to all of our customers.

#### Debbie Bitner

Debbie Bitner has accepted the position as the Executive Assistant to the Area Administrative Officer, MWA effective August 13, 2000. Debbie has been the Program Assistant for the Biopolymer Research Unit, National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research (NCAUR), Peoria, IL, since 1988. Debbie began her employment through a Limestone High School Co-op Program in 1976 with Heights Finance Corporation. She left that position in 1978 to work at Illinois Mutual Insurance for two years as a claims assistant. In 1980, she moved on to work in the claims department for the HHS/Social Security Administration. Debbie transferred in 1981 to the typing pool at USDA/ARS/NCAUR. In 1985, she left the workforce to take care of her son, Jason. She re-entered the workforce in 1986 as a clerk with the USDOL/Occupational Safety and Health Administration. In 1988, Debbie accepted a transfer as Secretary to the Biopolymer Research Unit. During her career with NCAUR, she has enhanced her skills by taking various college and credit courses including the USDA Graduate School New Leader Program. Debbie brings over 22 years experience to ARS with over 19 years being government service. Some of her notable accomplishments are: 1995 NCAUR Administrative Support Person of the Year, 1996 Midwest Area Secretary of the Year, promoted (from a job audit) in March 1997 to a GS-7 as a Program Assistant and in 1999 an FY-99-1 New Leader Program Graduate. Her husband, Mark works at Mitsubishi Motors Manufacturing and her son, Jason (age 16) attends Limestone Community High School. They enjoy spending their summer vacations and long weekends on their boat.

#### Linda Theesfeld

Linda Theesfeld has been selected as the MWA Real Property Specialist. Linda previously worked in the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research's (NCAUR) Office of the Center Director. She worked with the Technology Development Manager as a Technology Development Assistant.

Her culmination of 17 years of being with ARS has not been continuous. In the late 1960's, Linda began her career as a clerk-typist in the Northern Regional Laboratory's (presently NCAUR) Office of the Center Director. When ARS reorganized in 1972, Linda was selected as secretary for the North Central Regional Administrative Officer. After the birth of her daughter in 1978, Linda resigned to spend time with her newborn. In 1994, Linda returned to NCAUR.

In 1999, Linda completed the USDA Graduate School's Aspiring Leader Program. Her 30-day detail was at the ARS/USDA Administrative Office located at Washington State University in Pullman, Washington.

Linda and her husband, Don, have one child. Their daughter, Michelle, is a senior at the University of Iowa.

#### Rebecca (Becky) Clearwater

Becky Clearwater is currently busy as the Office Automation Assistant in the ARS Administrative

Office, Columbia, MO. Her major responsibilities include processing personnel actions and documents, processing and transmitting time and attendance reports, assisting with the processing and maintaining of travel, assisting with the maintenance of Location personal property, maintaining motor vehicle reports, and providing typing and administrative support.

This position begins her ninth year as a federal government employee. Prior years work experience are with the Department of Interior and Department of Agriculture (Biological Control Lab, in Columbia, MO). Her breaks in service were spent with her children, raising them through their formative years. Becky and her husband owned and operated Great Beginnings Child Development Center for ten years and recently sold it to Easter Seals of Missouri. During that time, they partnered with over 850 families caring for approximately 1200 children. It was a real learning experience for them!

Becky is currently enrolled as a Junior in college courses at Moberly Area Community College and Columbia College where she is working on a degree in Computer Information Technology. She loves every minute of this challenge and is proof that old dogs CAN learn new tricks!

[PASTG HOME PAGE It has the answers!](#)

Want to attend a training course, but your unit says they can't afford to let you go? Well, we have just the answer for you!

Fill out the application for the MWA Training Scholarship Program.

Where can I find that, you ask? It is on the PASTG home page, along with a host of other good information. Our address is: [www.mwa.ars.usda.gov/pastg](http://www.mwa.ars.usda.gov/pastg)

Maybe you have a question about policies, or a problem that needs to be solved, and you wonder why no one has ever addressed the issue. Again, your answer is on the PASTG home page! Go to the "Issues, Concerns and Questions" option, and you will find an "Issues" form to fill out and submit. The PASTG and Area Office staff take these forms very seriously and want to use them to make your job easier. Why struggle when you can ask for help?

The PASTG home page also has the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual and a direct link to the RMIS "on-line" manual. Add it to your "favorites" today!

In our last Newsletter, we told you that one of the items discussed at the breakout session at the RL/LAO/Secretarial meeting in Peoria was the benefit of listing the Secretaries of the Midwest Area on the PASTG home page, including their location, email address, phone and fax number, along with areas that they had enough expertise that they would be willing to accept a phone call from another secretary and try to help them out with a question. For example, if you felt comfortable helping others with PowerPoint or graphics, you would indicate that. This page would give you a fast accurate access to phone and email for the MWA secretaries who could help you with your question. Because I didn't receive a lot of answers back, I am once again requesting that you email the following information to Sandy Groneberg ([groneberg@morris.ars.usda.gov](mailto:groneberg@morris.ars.usda.gov)) to include on the home page. If you prefer not to take any phone calls, you don't need to list areas of expertise, but we would still like to have the rest of the information: name, location, email address, phone and fax number, areas of expertise. I am hoping to get this information on the home page soon, so I would appreciate your response.

## **PASTG News Notes - December 2000**

### Congratulations Sherri Buxton!

As most of you know, Drs. Horn and Knipling recently announced the selection of our own Sherri L. Buxton as the recipient of the ARS Secretary of the Year Award. This is an extremely prestigious award and our entire Area is proud to salute Sherri on her accomplishment.

This award annually recognizes the outstanding achievements and creative efforts of ARS secretaries at the Headquarters level, including Office of the Administrator and immediate staff, National Program Staff, Administrative and Financial Management staff, National Agricultural Library staff, and secretarial or clerical positions in the Area Directors' Offices and Area Administrative Offices or any other secretarial/clerical employees who are not eligible for consideration within their areas.

Sherri was nominated for her key role in establishing and maintaining a leadership role in the Midwest Area Program Administrative Support Task Group. She is the permanent co-chair of this group and provides a high level of expertise and leadership to the PASTG and all secretaries within and outside of this Area. Sherri regularly facilitates meetings and conference calls to ensure objectives and goals are met. Some of the more noteworthy accomplishments include the completion of the Midwest Area's Standard Operating Procedures manual (which has now been used as a standard and reference for other ARS Secretarial Task Groups), the initiation of the Midwest Area Training Scholarship program, the organization of the 1998 first Area Secretarial/Clerical Staff meeting and also the planning of the one to come in 2001, the implementation of the Mentoring program, the organization and facilitation of the selection of the Midwest Area Secretary of the Year, as well as many other accomplishments too numerous to mention here. Ms. Buxton plays a key role in increasing networking and improving communication among secretaries in the MWA.

Sherri will be recognized at the ARS Annual Recognition Program in Beltsville, Maryland on February 7, 2001. We extend our heartiest congratulations to Sherri on a job very well done!

### Meet Marilyn Paul, Program Analyst for the MWA

The Program Administrative Support Task Group met in Peoria, November 6-9, 2000 to begin planning for the Program Administrative Support Staff Meeting to be held next June. Meeting is beneficial in so many ways. We not only began planning our summer meeting, we also had a chance to get current on what's happening in the Area Office. Because you are our "customers," we pass the information to you via this newsletter.

One of our agenda items was meeting with Marilyn Paul, the Program Analyst for the Area. As most of you know, she formerly was the Executive Assistant to Terry Nelsen, the Assistant Director. However, since joining the Area Office in 1991, she has done ARS-115s and been backup to Pat Bothast. In 1995, she was given the program responsibilities of ten Management Units. Essentially, this meant that she was performing for those ten MUs the same duties Pat was performing for the others. I'm sure many, if not most, of you have talked to Marilyn one time or

another.

She's agreed to let me tell you that she's married to Mike Paul, who retired from the Property Management position in the Area in 1995, and they have one son and daughter-in-law and two grandsons, ages 16 & 17. Marilyn is very proud of her son and family who live in North Carolina, however she says they live TOO FAR AWAY.

In our meeting with Marilyn, which by-the-way was very informal, we talked about RMIS, OSQR and the interactions between us and Marilyn. Marilyn hopes she can provide excellent service to all scientists, Research Leaders, and support staff. That's her goal, and the purpose of her position.

Marilyn can provide help, support, and "how-to" on RMIS. She can also answer questions on program issues. She says she doesn't know nearly enough to answer everything, but she is willing to find answers to your questions or concerns. This includes questions on ARS-115s, ARS-425s, AD-416/417s and 550s in RMIS. Marilyn can also answer "why, when, and how to" with regard to OSQR, and the Peer Review process. Isn't that good news!

On grant proposals, Marilyn will work with Sherri and Marcia to obtain the Area Director's signature and FEDEX or FAX back to your MU. Specific Cooperative Agreement matters will be referred to Sue Shroul, although Marilyn will confer with her to get an answer for you, if necessary. We all know RMIS contains so many parts that it's hard to list them all, but consider Marilyn as a resource to use when you have a question about RMIS or program issues.

RMIS ID codes and passwords are sent to Marilyn, who works with Headquarter computer staff to get a new user started. Printing from RMIS requires a "printer setup" done by Paula Snell at 309-681-6575 or Scott Rieland at 301-504-4554. We also discussed RMIS and other types of training in our meeting. We agreed that both new user training and refresher training is a must. The plan of the PASTG is to develop mini-courses on needed subjects and offer them either on-site or in Peoria on a rotating schedule. This concept is in the developmental stage and will take some time to put in place, but count on it happening!! In the meantime, Marilyn is happy to provide one-on-one walk-throughs of any part of RMIS where you need assistance. Also remember that mentors are one of your first resources. Never hesitate to call or ask. Marilyn feels that it's her job to help in any way she can.

I guess, in a nutshell, the entire PASTG is very happy to feel the sense of cooperation that came about as a result of our meeting with Marilyn.

#### Travel Information by Sedina Lowe

Using Subsistence Code C, Conference Allowance - This became effective 2/7/2000.

It was not clear to me as how you used the Code C until I had to use it. One of the scientists returned from a conference and the hotel bill was more than per diem, but not 25% more. In this case I had to amend the Travel Authorization. On page 2, midway down the page where you use the P for Per Diem or A for Actual, you use the C and then put in the actual cost, rounded to the nearest dollar, of the hotel. The M&IE stays the same. This can now be approved by your travel

approving official at your agency and not be sent into the Area Office for approval.

So you want to design a web page! by Sandy Groneberg

I recently ran across the USDA Office of Communications Guidance for Production of a Home Page, and thought I would use it as a basis for the information in this article. If you wish to see the article in its entirety, the URL is: **<http://www.hqnet.usda.gov/intranet/docs/hpguide.htm>**

I think the best advice I have received in building web sites is "Keep the Page Layout Simple." You want your readers to obtain their information quickly. Also different browsers produce different results, so you will want to review the pages you do using several browsers. Remember that not everyone has "state-of-the-art" equipment, and trying to make your page more fancy may actually lose some readers.

One thing that has been amazing to me is the number of home pages that fail to clearly identify how their organization may be contacted. It is frustrating to have to search several pages before finally finding a phone number or mailing address for an institution. The first page of a web site should have the mailing address, email address of a contact person, phone and fax number for the facility clearly visible. It is also good to place an address tag on each document listing the contact person creating the page, the status of the document if it is incomplete, when the document was last revised and the URL.

Be consistent in all your pages with things like background, navigational menus and icons. Place them in the same location and order. Readers need to know they are still within your home page, and haven't strayed somewhere else. They also want to navigate quickly from one area to another, and this can be aided by consistency in your navigational tools.

Use larger and bolder heading typeface for headings, not as text emphasis, and use emphasis sparingly. Boldface, italic and words in all caps are hard to read and confusing, especially if they are all used in a single paragraph. Blinking items should be avoided. Keep headings, images and rule lines to a minimum so that the reader's eyes are drawn to the most important items on the page.

Text links should be single words or short phrases rather than lengthy statements. Links should be relevant to the current topic on the page, and one should avoid using "click here." Every page should be linked back to the home page or the top level of a section.

Try to write information clearly and concisely. Organize the document for quick scanning by using headings to highlight topics and lists to summarize. Lengthy paragraphs will tend to lose readers.

Use the "ALT" attribute with image tags to allow text-only browsers to see the appropriate text string in place of a graphic. Meta tags may also be used to improve search engine spider results.

If you are interested in building web pages, there are vast amounts of information available on the Internet. I wish you well in searching out information that will be helpful to you.

Timesaving Ideas by Georgetta Stonewall

Never type anything in WordPerfect twice! The second time you find yourself typing anything in a WordPerfect document (either version 6.1 or 8), you need to stop, go to a blank document, and choose from the menu "Tools" then "Macro" and then "Record". A dialog box will appear and you will need to give the macro you are creating a name. Make it short and easy to remember. Type the text into the document in which a new tool bar has appeared. After typing, you save the macro by choosing the square box icon on the far left of the tool bar. You will then be back in your original document which you can finish or exit as needed.

The next time you need the information you made into a macro, just play the macro. To play the macro, choose "Tools" then "Macro" and then "Play" (or use the hotkey which on my computer is the "Alt F10" key). The macro will appear in your document at the place where your cursor is blinking.

Example of things for which I use Macros: I do a lot of correspondence for the culture collection. I only want to type "Sincerely, 6 returns, the scientist's name, title, telephone number and fax number, once into a macro so I do not have to retype this on every letter. I use the SY's initials for the Macro name. Also because this correspondence must conform to legal requirements on sending out cultures under the Budapest Treaty, we have several standard paragraphs that must be included. Each SY has a list of these paragraphs which were named a number. When the SY writes his letter, he just lists at the bottom of the incoming letter a group of numbers and his initials. This will be turned into a full page letter by me. I have a macro named "disclaim" for the disclaimer which must be included in each manuscript.

Any questions about Macros, please feel free to call me at 309-681-6560.

#### Changing Faces in the MWA:

##### Ruth Harrison

Ruth Harrison has joined the Midwest Area Office Support Team as one of the Executive Assistants in the Area Director's Office. Ruth replaces Marilyn Paul who was selected as the Area Program Analyst. She will be providing secretarial and specialized office services to the Senior Management Team. Her primary areas of responsibility will include processing of manuscripts, germplasm releases, patents, and other varietal releases, and serving as Area control point for the ARS-115's, Request to Submit Manuscript for Publication. Ruth has been working at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research for the last 10 years and served as the Executive Assistant to the Center Director for the last six years. She can be reached by phone at 309-681-6209 and by email at rharrison@mwa.ars.usda.gov. Please welcome Ruth to the Area Office.

##### Julie Gribble

The Cereal Disease Laboratory, in St. Paul, MN, welcomes Ms. Julie Gribble. Julie is the new Program Assistant, replacing Rosalind Richards who retired in May. Julie will provide administrative support for program development, fiscal management, and research documentation, as well as managing the front office at the CDL. Julie was born a long stone's throw from Beltsville, MD. She has worked as a Federal employee for the Environmental Protection Agency since 1991, first in Washington, D.C., with a short interval in Raleigh, NC, and later in Lakewood, CO and Denver, CO. Before coming to the CDL she was a Program Assistant in the EPA, Criminal Investigations Division, National Crime Information Center in Denver. We welcome Julie and the

experience she brings to us.

#### Rebecca Holzinger

Becky Holzinger is returning to the Midwest Area Administrative Office Staff as a Contract Specialist. Becky has been working at NCAUR for the last several years as the Administrative Contracting Officer managing the A-76 contract. She will continue these responsibilities from within the Area Office Staff as well as assist with other Area contract needs as time permits. She can be reached by phone at 309-681-6616 and by email at rholzinger@mwa.ars.usda.gov.

#### Richard Houston

Richard Houston joins the MWA as an Engineer. Richard comes from the private sector where he previously worked as a project manager with Johnson Controls World Services in Rantoul, IL. Prior to that he worked as a project engineer with the Illinois Power Company. Richard will eventually get out to visit the locations and will be working with many of you in respect to your R&M and construction needs. Richard can be reached by phone at 309-681-6124 or by email at rhouston@mwa.ars.usda.gov.

#### Jerry King

Jerry King has rejoined the MWA staff as a Contracting Specialist. Many of you will recall that Jerry was previously a Purchasing Agent and Extramural Agreements Specialist at the MWA before leaving to work for Fijor Federal Services in Richland, WA. We are pleased to have Jerry back. He will be working with many of you to accomplish your R&M and construction projects as well as other contracting needs above the warrant of your Location Purchasing Staff. Jerry can be reached by phone at 309-681-6624 and by email at jlking@mwa.ars.usda.gov.

#### Dr. Donald Lay

Dr. Donald Lay has been selected for the Supervisory Research Animal Scientist position at the Livestock Behavior Research Unit in West Lafayette, IN. Dr. Lay received his BS in Animal Science from VPI, and his MS and PhD in Animal Ethology from Texas A&M. He is currently an Assistant Professor in Animal Science at Iowa State University. He received the Iowa State University College of Agriculture Early Achievement in Teaching Award for 2000. His research interests have been in 1) Maternal/offspring behavior of swine, 2) Stress physiology in swine, and 3) Production methods of raising swine. He has an extensive publication record both in refereed journals and extension publications and is a recent recipient of a NRI Grant. He is active in national and international animal science and ethology scientific groups. Dr. Lay will report to duty December 18, 2000.

#### NCAUR

NCAUR has experienced several changes since our last newsletter. The research units have been reorganized from 10 units to 8 units. Many CRIS research lead scientists, their attendant SYs and technicians were moved to different groups. Contacting scientists should not be a problem since the addresses, room numbers and telephone extensions have remained the same. Within the next few weeks we expect each research unit to receive a new name to reflect the changes brought about by the reorganization. We will let everyone know the changes once they occur.

Specific Personnel Changes:

Fermentation Biochemistry Research Unit offices have moved to Room 2058 on the second floor and Mike Cotta has been named Research Leader replacing Pat Slininger.

Mycotoxin Research Unit offices have moved to Room 1057 on the first floor.

Pat Slininger is Acting Research Leader for Bioactive Agents Research (BAR) replacing Pat Dowd who has been Acting Research Leader since Mickey McGuire accepted a position in California.

Doris Meinke, formerly Food Quality and Safety Research Unit Secretary is located in the Center Director's Office.

Perspective is everything ...

If you woke up this morning with more health than illness, you are more fortunate than the million who will not survive this week.

- If you have never experienced the danger of battle, the loneliness of imprisonment, the agony of torture, or the pangs of starvation, you are ahead of 500 million people in the world.
- If you can worship without fear of harassment, arrest, torture, or death, you are more fortunate than three billion people in the world.
- If you have food in the refrigerator, clothes on your back, a roof overhead, and a place to sleep, you are richer than 75% of this world.
- If you have money in the bank, in your wallet, and spare change in a dish someplace, you are among the top 8% of the world's wealthy.
- If your parents are still alive and still married, you are very rare, even in the United States.
- If you hold up your head with a smile on your face and are truly thankful, you are fortunate because the majority can, but most do not.
- If you can read this message, you are more fortunate than over two billion people in the world that cannot read at all.

Happy Holidays to all of you from the PASTG!

LonaJean Strickland

Sedina Lowe

Georgetta Stonewall

Heather Pace

Diane Cronk

Lori Wilson-Voss

Sandy Groneberg

Sherri Buxton