This February issue marks my 1st year anniversary as your Center Director.

During this year, quite a number of changes have taken place, some to our facility, and others to policies and procedures regarding our work requirements. The latter changes have provided clarity through guidance, and an environment of fairness through uniformity of application. Every effort to communicate and keep Center staff informed of all the various developments on a regular basis has been a priority. I thank everyone for their cooperation and faith that together we will make SRRC the best it can be.

Throughout the year, I also indicated that we will continue to review our procedures, policies and guidance to make the Center function more efficiently. So, working with the Management Team, I am currently reviewing and revising several of the Center-wide guidance to ultimately create an atmosphere that maximizes everyone’s productivity. Modifications are being made either from the input received from staff or from changes directed by our administration.

Once the modifications are approved, they will be communicated to all Center staff with the purpose of re-enforcing my initial goal: together we will accomplish great things.
Appointments of Mr. Archie Tucker as the New Director of the Southeast Area

It is with great pleasure that I announce the appointment of Mr. Archie Tucker as the new Director of the Southeast Area, effective February 4, 2018.

Mr. Tucker has served as Acting Southeast Area Director since the retirement of Dr. Deborah Brennan on December 30, 2017; before which he served as Associate Area Director since 2015. His contributions and dedication to ARS extend far beyond that listed on his resume.

Mr. Tucker has spent his entire 42-year career with ARS in Stoneville, Mississippi, where he started in 1974 as a 16-year-old student under the President’s Stay-in-School Program. He worked part-time while completing high school and during his 4 years at Mississippi Valley State University where he earned a Bachelor’s degree in Business Administration. He was a member of the Bioenvironmental Insect Control Laboratory and in 1980 accepted a permanent technician position.

During his career with ARS, Mr. Tucker has served in a wide variety of administrative and leadership positions, including as a realty specialist/area property management officer in the Mid-South Area office and the Area’s Administrative Officer and Deputy Area Director. In 2011, Mr. Tucker was appointed Assistant Area Director for the Mid-South Area and in 2015, with the consolidation of the Mid-South and South Atlantic Areas, he was selected to be the Southeast Area Associate Area Director.

Mr. Tucker has served in many details for the Agency, including as Acting Area Director for the Mid-South Area; Acting Research Leader for the Biological Control of Pests Research Unit; and Acting Deputy Area Director for the Beltsville Area. Additionally, he has completed extensive leadership and management training at the American Management Association and the USDA Graduate School in Washington, D.C.

With 30 years of Area office experience, Mr. Tucker is well respected within ARS and USDA, and with commodity groups, stakeholders, and university cooperators. He has served on numerous ARS national employee committees, including as co-chair of Cultural Transformation and as a member of the ACES Steering Committee.

Please join me in congratulating Mr. Tucker on his new leadership role in ARS.

Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young

Congratulations from the SRRC staff!
Wear Red on National Wear Red Day®

SRRC staff participated in the American Heart Association’s National Wear Red Day campaign that brings awareness to heart disease in women.

On February 2, 2018, men and women were encouraged to wear red as a symbol of their support of women’s heart health. According to the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute (N.I.H.), Coronary Heart Disease is the “#1 killer of women in the United States”. The day, which was first observed in 2002, aims to bring national attention to this fact, and to raise awareness of women’s heart health.

Heart disease and stroke cause 1 in 3 deaths among women each year, killing approximately one woman every 80 seconds. Fortunately, we can change that because 80 percent of cardiac and stroke events may be prevented with education and action. That’s why people wear red on National Wear Red Day® to bring attention to the problem and make the time to KNOW YOUR NUMBERS!

QUIZ: Find out what risk factors for heart attack and stroke you should focus on this year. When it comes to a healthy lifestyle, first you have to know your numbers:
http://spr.ly/6189DHxGv

Five numbers that all women should know to take control of their heart health are: Total Cholesterol, HDL (good) Cholesterol, Blood Pressure, Blood Sugar and Body Mass Index (BMI). Knowing these numbers can help women and their healthcare provider determine their risk for developing cardiovascular diseases.

2018 Major Festivals in New Orleans:
- Feb 2-13 Mardi Gras Parades
- April 12-15 French Quarter Festival
- April 27-29 & May 3-6 New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival
- July 5-8 ESSENCE Festival
- October 26-28 Voodoo Music + Arts Experience
- August 29-September 3 Southern Decadence
Mardi Gras is February 13th

Mardi Gras means “Fat Tuesday” in French and refers to Carnival. It's a celebration of life that precedes the fasting and simple living during the season of Lent. The season begins on Epiphany, a Christian holiday celebrated on January 6, otherwise known as Three Kings Day or the Twelfth Day of Christmas. In many countries, this period between Epiphany and Fat Tuesday is known as Carnival. Whichever name you prefer, the revelries of Mardi Gras last until midnight before Ash Wednesday which ushers in 40 days of Lent.

The first Mardi Gras parade in New Orleans was in 1837. The tradition has expanded and Mardi Gras celebrations are part of the basis of the slogan Laissez les bons temps rouler ("Let the good times roll").

Traditions of Mardi Gras

Mardi Gras Colors
Rex, the king of Carnival, proclaimed the official colors of Mardi Gras to be purple, green and gold. Symbolism of Colors: Purple represents justice, green stands for faith, and gold signifies power.

Krewes
Mardi Gras krewes are social organizations that host balls or put on parades each carnival season and often focus on charitable events throughout the year. The two best-known krewes that parade on Mardi Gras day are the Krewe of Rex and the Krewe of Zulu.

Parades, Beads and Doubloons
Customs of Mardi Gras krewes include procession with marching bands and floats, throwing beads, doubloons and other trinkets, wearing masks and decorating floats.

King Cakes
It is traditional to bake a cake in honor of the three kings - the King Cake. They are decorated with purple, green, and gold sugar icing and may be plain or filled. A plastic baby is placed inside the cake and tradition dictates that whomever gets the piece with the baby must bring the next cake or throw the next party.

Flambeaux
Before New Orleans had electric street lights, slaves or free people of color walked in front of floats carrying large torches so that revelers could see the parades that rolled at night. Today, some krewes still roll with the Flambeaux, but their purpose is to entertain, rather than light the way. Typically, the Flambeaux dance with their torches to the delight of many spectators.

Mardi Gras Indians
Tracing their roots back to a time when American Indians helped shield runaway slaves, the Mardi Gras Indians are among the most colorful and mysterious of New Orleans' cultural phenomena. Finding it difficult to participate in Mardi Gras “krewes”, early African Americans developed their own way of celebrating by organizing Mardi Gras Indian tribes as krewes. Today, Mardi Gras Indians shine at every opportunity by showcasing their spectacular hand-made costumes, music and contagious spirit.
Throughout the course of history, African-Americans endured a plethora of obstacles and thrived in great hardship. Time and time again, the strength, honor, and love of their community stormed through even their darkest plights. One of the most powerful examples of their fortitude is witnessed in the battles and victories of war. In these vicious times, whether at home or across the sea, no matter how painful the battles were, the brilliance of African-American character and culture continued to grow and shine.

The bravery that was demonstrated by African Americans was executed with merit and peculiarity during the course of World War II, despite the fact that in the “land of the free” they were simultaneously enduring their own suffrage by fighting and dying for their own civil rights. Segregation continued and African Americans were deprived of the freedom to fight in war, so they were given transportation, machine maintenance, and delivering supplies as their assigned duties. Through their excellence, they created what was known as the “Red Ball Express”, which was critical to the survival of thousands of troops through France. Along with the “Red Ball Express”, “The Famous Tuskegee Airmen” of the 332nd Fighter Group, known as the “Redtails” were victorious African Americans, while still enduring unjustifiable racism.

USDA takes great honor in celebrating those human victories that have provided America with quintessential freedoms and memories to be proud of as an American citizen.

To celebrate African American History Month, SRRC will have the following events:

**Luncheon:** February 15th at 12:30 p.m. in the Bayou Conference Room ~ Guest Speaker: The Honorable Judge Kern Reese

**Brunch:** February 28th at 11:30 a.m. in the Bayou Conference Room ~ Video Presentation: The History of African Americans Soldiers in World War 2

Combined Federal Campaign

Submitted by: Michael Santiago Cintrón

Despite all the changes, the 2017 Combined Federal Campaign was a success. Preliminary data have pledges from the Mississippi Delta/Gulf Coastal Plains CFC Zone at $1,362,481, with 1264 volunteer hours from 2479 donors. The USDA pledges from locations in the Delta/Gulf Coastal Plains zone show preliminary numbers of $66,931 in pledges and 213 volunteer hours.

A big thank you to the canvassers and the CFC Co-Chair who made this possible.

The CFC canvassers for 2017 were:
- AO/DO: Olga Carias
- CFB: Dawn Reed
- CCU: Nicolette Prevost and Crista Madison
- FFS: Greg Ford
- CSQ: E.J. Deshotel
- FPSQ: Shawndrika Reed and Jeanne Lea
- CU: Janice Boyd and Catrina Ford
- Chair: Michael Santiago Cintrón
- Co-chair: Suhad Wojkowski
With a new year, declarations for better health practices should be a priority.

**Practice Mindful Eating:** Watch what you put on your plate. About half of your plate should be filled with healthy fruits and veggies. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables is an excellent way to support good health, ensure your body functions at maximum capacity, and help prevent diseases like cancer, heart disease, obesity, and type 2 diabetes. Slow down and take time to focus on the food you eat. You’ll be attuned to your body’s signals, and it will be easier to notice when you are full.

**Move MORE:** You don’t need to spend hours at the gym each day to reap the health benefits of regular physical activity. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity each week for adults. And, guess what? Ten minutes at a time is fine! When your schedule is packed you can squeeze in physical activity by breaking it into manageable 10-minute chunks throughout your day. Following a walking schedule is a great way to stay active and ease into a regular exercise routine. And it’s cheap – all you need is a pair of comfortable shoes.

**Drink More Water:** Water makes up about 60 percent of your total body weight. It lubricates your joints, helps eliminate bodily waste, keeps your cells and tissues nourished and protected, and helps regulate your body temperature. Drinking an adequate amount of water every day is important for keeping your body and brain functioning at peak performance. The amount of water your need every day will vary based on your level of physical activity, your size, the local weather and your personal health condition. Some of your daily hydration will come from other beverages or food, but the best way to ensure you stay adequately hydrated is by making water your go-to beverage.

**Sleep MORE:** Missing out on a good night’s rest can have a detrimental effect on cardiovascular health, mood, blood pressure and appetite. According to the CDC, adults need 7-8 hours of sleep each night, but 35% percent of U.S. adults do not meet those requirements.

**Get Your Preventive Care Exams.** Preventive care exams can help you keep tabs on your overall health, catch potential health issues early and establish a relationship with your health care provider. The frequency and type of preventive screenings you require will vary based on gender, age and personal medical history. Talk with your health care provider to determine your screening needs.

*Here’s to a Healthy New Year!*
Safety Corner

The new dates for BISHOP assessment are April 2-6.

February is Biosafety and Safety Awareness Month

Since FY2015, the ARS Biosafety, Safety and Health Leadership Steering Committee has designated February as “ARS Biosafety and Safety Awareness Month”. This year’s theme, in concert with the NIH National Biosafety Month, is “Promoting Biosafety and Safety through Good Governance”. So what is governance? It is the organizational structures and processes that we have put in place to ensure we conduct safe and responsible research in accordance with regulations, policies, procedures and best practices. In other words it is codifying the ARS Safety Culture; essentially documenting our “house rules” and the processes we put in place to ensure we are living up to those rules. Examples of governance are our safety and biosafety committees; making Safety Data Sheets available; and keeping accurate chemical inventories. We are formalizing our risk assessment processes for biohazards through the use of Institutional Biosafety Committee Reviews, and developing and using a new Job Hazard Analysis Tool.

Area Offices, Business Service Centers and Locations should plan and conduct activities during the ARS Biosafety and Safety Awareness Month following this theme.

Joseph Kozlovac, Agency Biosafety Officer
Pete Jovanovich, Supervisory Safety and Occupational Health Manager

Submitted by: Shannon Beltz

In support of ARS Biosafety and Safety Awareness Month, we will have a number of activities (some mandatory, others optional) aimed at strengthening the culture of safety at the SRRC. The activities that are offered are carefully chosen such that the information is relevant, applicable, and in some cases, will go towards meeting yearly training requirements. These include Bloodborne Pathogen Training, Job Hazard Assessment Analysis, and more. Please watch your email for important events and encourage your staff to participate in these important activities.

Because the theme of this year’s Biosafety and Safety Awareness Month is “Promoting Biosafety and Safety through Good Governance”, we want you to be aware that significant effort is being made towards improving the safety culture at SRRC. These efforts include making improvements to the Work Zone Safety Inspection process, improving our methods of documenting employee training, and continued efforts at revising and updating our safety manuals. Finally, we are always interested in receiving input towards eliminating redundancies and increasing effectiveness, so please don’t hesitate to contact a safety officer with suggestions or concerns.
Safety Corner (cont.)

Shannon Beltz is the SRRC Safety Officer

Dr. Casey Grimm served as the Acting Safety Officer for SRRC, assuming that role after the unexpected departure of Bill Oalmann. During this short time, Casey has spent endless hours trying to get all the documentation and other safety related items together in preparation for the BISHOP assessment. His diligence and willingness to work tirelessly has earned the Center’s sincere gratitude. With a delay in the timing for the BISHOP assessment, he now has an opportunity to return to his primary role, and catch up on his research commitments.

To fill the void, Shannon Beltz has volunteered to do a 120 day detail as the SRRC Safety Officer and continue the efforts of Dr. Grimm, and beyond.

A researcher at heart, Shannon is committed to the mission of ARS and the success of its research projects. She believes that maintaining a strong, positive culture of safety is in line with the Agency’s mission and can help all of its employees reach their career and research goals.

We are glad that she has accepted this detail at a critical time of need for SRRC. She will continue to receive the support and guidance of Dr. Grimm and many others on the Safety Committee as she continues to organize our safety office, and gets us in total compliance with OSHA regulations.

The Agency’s new Emergency Alert Notification System, Amerilert is a safety communication system designed to assist the Agency with communicating time-sensitive information to our workforce. The system can send instant employee alerts wherever they are located. This system will be able to alert you through:

- Email
- Mobile Phone (SMS Text Message)
- Voice Call

If you desire to use the system, you are encouraged to access the system and validate your information. To access log-in instructions, go to: https://axon.ars.usda.gov/Employee%20Tools/Pages/Amerilert.aspx

Amerilert is available on Axon’s Employee Tools page, under the Emergency, Health and Safety section, as well as the Highlighted Links in the right navigation bar.
The Sugar and Cottonseed industries are mature but there is always room for improvements. Both industries could do better with a little help. The Commodity Utilization Research Unit develops technologies that enable growth and profitability in the commercial conversion of sugarcane, sweet sorghum, and energy beets. We look at making better, cheaper, and cleaner sugar for food and drinks but also focus on making dirt-cheap sugar solutions for conversion into biofuels and bioproducts, as well as finding uses for sugar processing byproducts and quick methods for screening new crop cultivars. The Unit also focuses on developing cotton varieties with unique oil composition and “green” oil processing techniques. In addition, we develop high value applications for cottonseed protein (e.g., glues) and carbohydrate fractions (e.g., as fillers for composite materials), and identify new bioactive food ingredients in seeds from new cotton varieties. In short, we develop tomorrow’s products today.

Dr. Thomas Klasson, RL
Stephanie Boone
Michael Dowd
Derisha Gaines
Isabel Lima
Alexander Nydell
Jay Shockey
Sophie Uchiniya

Janice Boyd
Kari Brisolara
Gillian Eggleston
Zhongqi He
Abrania Marrero
Scott Pelitire
Alexa Triplett
Sophie Wojkowski

Larry Boihem
Heping Cao
Catrina Ford
Elizabeth James
Catherine Mason
Kandan Sethumadhavan
Tien Vuong
Maureen Wright
New Employees

We have two new L/A Appointees who started work recently:

Charles Clayton, III, is a Physical Science Technician, in the Community Utilization Research Unit. He will be working with Dr. Eggleston. Charles attends Tulane University.

Jesus Carias, Jr., is a Biological Science Technician, in the Food Processing & Sensory Quality Research Unit, with Dr. Steve Boué.

Dr. Isabell Lima has three student volunteers working with her in the Pilot Plant: Carson Discher, Annie Tir, and Margaret Hayes. All are Tulane University students.

FEHB Representatives Service Visit

Elizabeth Conseca, our representative from Government Employees Health Association, GEHA, will make a site visit on Wednesday, February 14. She will be in Room 1021 from 2:30-3:30 p.m.

Our Blue Cross Reps will be here on Wednesday, February 21. They will be in Room 3025, from 10:00 a.m. until 11:30 a.m.

Our Representatives make regular visits to the Center to discuss any issues or answer questions.

New Telework Departmental Regulation: SRRC Policy

Submitted by: Janell Becker

This is a reminder that all telework-eligible employees must submit a new telework agreement form for approval. This includes those employees who choose to opt-out. Archie Tucker is requiring a deadline of March 29th for SEA employees.

In light of the new USDA policy on telework, SRRC T&A/Telework policy is being revised to be in compliance. Simply put, the USDA policy says that under normal circumstances, only two days of telework is permitted per pay period. However, there is an additional requirement in that the employee eligible for telework must be at work 4 days per week.

The SRRC policy will continue to allow situational telework (i.e. on a need be basis). No core/regular telework will be permitted.

Those who wish to continue to be enrolled for telework, those who wish to enroll, or those who wish to opt out may have to fill out the updated form AD-3018.
Submitted by: Trinia Bax

Twenty students and two teachers, Keith Maddox and Kathy Pennison, from Mount Carmel Academy visited and toured Southern Regional Research Center on February 1, 2018. Mount Carmel is an all girls, Catholic high school in the Center’s Lakeview neighborhood. Susan Perron of Mount Carmel stated that her students were considering advanced education in Science, Technology and Engineering (STEM) and the school wanted to expose the girls to work in those fields.

Visitors were given presentations and tours which consisted of a Center Overview by Dr. Thomas Klasson, Commodity Utilization Research Unit, a Genetic Engineering Overview by Dr. Rajah Rajasekaran of the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit. Shannon Beltz of the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit discussed “Science as a Career” and her 20 year career with SRRC. The group then toured the following labs: Vintage Lab, Textile Mill and observed Gene Gun and Chemical Separation demonstrations. Tour guides were Shannon Beltz and Geromy Moore. Christine Sickler helped with the Vintage Lab; Chris Delhom and Molly King provided a tour of the Textile Mill; Matt Lebar and Carol Carter-Wientjes gave a demonstration of chemical separation using sophisticated equipment; Greg Ford demonstrated the use of the gene gun.
On January 12th, the Community Garden Committee braved the cold rainy weather to harvest broccoli, cauliflower, kale and lettuce. Approximately 30 pounds of produce were donated to Second Harvest Food Bank that afternoon.

We are in need of more volunteers, so if you are interested in learning and working in the garden, contact Cathy Mason (241) or Christine Sickler (480). We will be meeting soon to discuss our Spring 2018 garden plans.

From left to right: Gregory Ford, Jeremy Moore, Jay Shockey, Don Buchanan (FEMA), Isabel Lima, Ping Li, Cathy Mason, and Christine Sickler
Scientific Meetings

Submitted by: Terri Von Hoven

February 5  DEADLINE EARLY REGISTRATION ACS (Mar18-22)  New Orleans, LA
February 6-7  Louisiana Division American Society of Sugar Cane Technologists  Baton Rouge, LA
February 19-22  Rice Technical Working Group Conference  Long Beach, CA
February 19-22  World Aquaculture Conference  Las Vegas, NV
February 27-28  CED Life Science Conference  Raleigh, NC
February 26-March 1  PITTCON  Orlando, FL

Recent SRRC Publications

Submitted by: Suhad Wojkowski


Click on the article’s title below to launch the pdf from Eprints.
