Dr. Deepak Bhatnagar

I hope everyone had a great holiday and my best wishes for a very happy new year.

Much progress was made last year with improvements to our facility and attention given to Center policies and procedures. At the start of this year we have been busy with safety inspections as the agency considers Lab safety a very high priority. The SEA Safety Inspection went very well, and the review comments have prepared us for the BISHOP Review. We will need everyone’s cooperation to have a very positive review by the BISHOP team, whenever that happens. With the government shutdown, the BISHOP inspection will have to be rescheduled. In the meantime, we can correct all deficiencies identified in the SEA inspection as we stay prepared for the BISHOP team.

In 2018 we will concentrate on program related items and emphasize improved productivity and streamlining research operations. We will be looking for enhancing our funding and improving our cooperation with stakeholders. We have challenges ahead, and by working together, we can continue to make improvements to our Center.
Dr. Brennan’s Retirement

After 26 years of Federal service, Dr. Deborah Brennan, Southeast Area Director, has decided to retire as of December 31, 2017.

Dr. Brennan has been Area Director of our research locations in the south and the Caribbean since 2010—first for the South Atlantic Area, and most recently with the newly consolidated Southeast Area. The 2014 consolidation of the Midsouth and South Atlantic Areas increased Dr. Brennan’s managerial portfolio from 19 research locations in 4 states and 2 islands with 1,130 employees to 32 locations in 8 states and 2 islands with 1,937 employees.

As Area Director, Dr. Brennan provided leadership and operational accountability for research programs with an annual budget of more than $225 million.

Prior to joining ARS in 2002 as Associate Area Director of the Midsouth Area, Dr. Brennan served with the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) as Area Veterinarian in Charge for the State of Mississippi, where she worked with State officials on a variety of State and Federal animal health programs in Mississippi. Under her leadership, Brucellosis was eradicated from the State.

She began her career with APHIS in 1991 as a Veterinary Medical Officer in eastern Pennsylvania, before which she owned and operated the Allentown Animal Clinic for 14 years.

Dr. Brennan has a bachelor’s degree in Biology and Chemistry from Texas A&M University and earned her Ph.D. in Veterinary Medicine from Texas A&M College of Veterinary Medicine. She also earned a Master’s degree in Public Administration from Kutztown University in Kutztown, Pennsylvania.

Deborah plans to stay active in the veterinary community after she retires with her husband Tim to their farm near Clinton, Arkansas, where she raises chickens, turkeys, and rabbits. I am very appreciative of Deborah’s years of service and dedication to ARS, USDA, and the animal kingdom. Thank you, Dr. Brennan, for being such a vibrant member of our leadership team! You will be missed. please join me in congratulating Dr. Brennan for all that she has given to USDA and ARS during her career and in wishing her health and happiness in the future.

Dr. Jacobs-Young

The SRRC staff wishes Dr. Brennan good health and happiness in her retirement.
Dr. Deborah Brennan, Area Director for the Southeast Area (SEA), retired on December 30, 2017, after 26 years of Federal service. I am very appreciative of Deborah’s years of service and dedication to ARS and USDA.

As we search for Deborah’s replacement, I am appointing Mr. Archie Tucker, SEA Associate Area Director, to serve as acting Area Director effective December 30, 2017, and until further notice.

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 working under the President’s Stay in School Program. He worked part-time while completing high school and 4 years of undergraduate studies at Mississippi Valley State University where he earned a bachelor’s degree in Business Administration. He joined the staff of the Bioenvironmental Insect Control Laboratory and in 1980 accepted a permanent technician position.

During his career with ARS, Archie has also served 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 August 2011, Archie was appointed Assistant Area Director for the Mid-South Area and in March 2015, as part of the consolidation of the Mid-South and South Atlantic areas, he was selected to serve as SEA Associate Area Director.

Archie has served in many details for the Agency, including acting Area Director for the SEA and Mid-South Area; acting Research Leader for the Biological Control of Pests Research Unit; and acting Deputy Area Director for the Beltsville Area. In addition, 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, Archie 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 welcoming Mr. Tucker to this important leadership position.

Dr. Simon Lui

Dr. Ellen Harris will continue to serve as the Associate Area Director for the Southeast Area.

Dr. Kurt Lawrence will serve as the Acting Associate Area Director for the Southeast Area.
Submitted By: Chris Florane

A collaborative effort between the Employee Advisory Council and the Employee Engagement Council was made to determine possible names for the Conference Rooms in the building. All conference rooms were selected for renaming except for the Director’s Conference Room, which will retain its name for obvious reasons. After soliciting employee input to get suggestions on naming the Conference Rooms, the EAC and EEC supplied a list of possible names to the Center Director who, in turn, decided with the management team the final list of names for the Conference Rooms. Each room that has been renamed will have a sign with the name on it as well as some sort of picture/poster with a story to go along with it which explains the history or significance of the name as it relates to the New Orleans area. In addition to the purpose of giving some information about the new names, adding posters or pictures to the rooms will help to enhance the aesthetics of the room, as opposed to the current uninviting look of the rooms.

This is final list of the names for each Conference Room as decided by the Director and Management Team:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Room Number</th>
<th>New Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Main</td>
<td>Bayou Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director’s</td>
<td>Director’s Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington</td>
<td>Magnolia Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0016</td>
<td>Azalea Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1021</td>
<td>Natchez Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3025</td>
<td>Mardi Gras Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3036</td>
<td>Jazz Conference Room</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3209</td>
<td>Saints Conference Room</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Safety Corner

Our 2018 SEA Safety Inspection has been completed. The Preliminary Findings and Quick Reference Checklist has been distributed and discussed in detail at the All Staff Meeting on January 16th. Several general items have been identified and are being addressed in preparation of the BISHOP review.

As a result of the government shutdown, the BISHOP team had to cancel their hotel and airline reservations. So, this inspection will have to be rescheduled. It may take a while to fix a date because it is difficult to coordinate travel plans for 17-18 people, especially for those with higher level responsibilities. In the meantime, we can correct all deficiencies identified in the SEA inspection as we stay prepared for the BISHOP team.

Thank you for your efforts in developing a "culture of safety" at SRRC.
Submitted by: Michael Santiago

I want to thank everyone who participated in the 2017 CFC campaign. While we are still adding up the numbers for SRRC, I know that many of you have already pledged donations to this campaign. Our collective contributions make a big difference! Federal employees and retirees in the MS Delta/Gulf Coastal Plain CFC Zone have pledged $698,382.00 and have volunteered 496 hours of community service for this year’s campaign so far.

If you have already pledged, please let your unit’s canvasser know so that we can gauge overall participation. We will be collecting paper pledges until January 12th.

If you have any questions with the new website, the charities listing or with the pledge forms please feel free to contact me, Suhad or one of the canvassers.

The CFC Canvassers for 2017 are:

AO/DO          Olga Carias
CFB             Dawn Reed
CCU             Crista Madison
                Nicolette Prevost
FFS             Gregory Ford
CSQ             E.J. Deshotel
FPSQ            Jeanne Lea
                Shawndrika Reed
CU              Janice Boyd
                Catrina Ford
Holiday Party
Submitted by: Chris Florane

The Employee Advisory Council (EAC) held the 2017 SRRC Holiday Party on December 12th. A total of 69 people attended the event. Among those in attendance were current SRRC employees as well as several retirees. With the assistance of numerous volunteers, the Main Conference Room was decorated in a festive manner and Holiday music played throughout the event. The luncheon portion of the Holiday Party included catered items such as turkeys, hams, dressings, various side dishes, finger sandwiches, muffalettas, salads, as well as fruit and vegetable trays. In addition to the catered portions, many attendees also brought their favorite side dish or dessert to supplement the selections at the luncheon. All together this made for a wonderful luncheon enjoyed by all.

The Holiday Party is an Annual tradition here at SRRC. Although the details of the Holiday Party have changed throughout the years, the nature of the Party still remains the same: providing a way for SRRC employees and retirees to come together and enjoy a day of Holiday festivities, music, delicious food and each other’s company. It’s a time for employees to catch up with others whom they don’t get to see every day, share delicious food and have a relaxed time away from the daily work.
Health Assessment for 2018
Submitted by: Jocelyn Mack

Remember you can sign in on your Health Carrier’s website and complete the Health Assessment for 2018. Completion of the yearly health risk assessment for GEHA is $75 Health Rewards on a prepaid MasterCard. You can complete other portal classes such as weight management, smoking cessation and tracking fitness activities for an additional $100. If you have Blue Cross, the amount is $50 for the Health Assessment and you may also be eligible to earn an additional $120 for completing three Health Coach goals. Assessments can be done for any person over 18 on your plan. You can use the monies on your health card towards co-pays and prescriptions.

2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey

Congratulations to SRRC for surpassing the 2017 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey response rate goal. As a result of the high percentage of responses to the survey, SRRC significantly contributed to making ARS and USDA a better government agency to work for all employees, by freely voicing their opinions so that initiatives may be implemented to ameliorate or improve the work environment.

The Southeast Area Office is granting 2 hours of administrative leave as promised for meeting or surpassing the 2017 FEVS response rate goal. All permanent employees receive the 2 hours admin leave, with supervisory approval.

Scientific Presentations

Research Chemist, Dr. Matthew Lebar of the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit will present a poster entitled "Identification and functional analysis of the aspergillic acid gene cluster in Aspergillus flavus" at the Natural Product Discovery and Development in the Genomic Era to be held in Clearwater, FL. on January 21-24, 2018. (trip cancelled)

Research Plant Pathologist, Peter Cotty of the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit has been invited to present a talk at a meeting with engineers, plant managers, and users of biocontrol technology on compositions of biocontrol technologies, design of manufacturing of biocontrol products, and on strategies to determining which biocontrol active ingredients are of most use in a given region. It is hoped that interactions among participants will result in new approaches for expanding the geographic region of which biocontrol is used in a cost effective manner. He will be presenting in Kansas City, MO. on January 16-18, 2018.

Research Chemist, John Beaulieu of the Food Processing and Sensory Quality Research Unit will be attending the Rice Technical Working Group Meeting in Long Beach, CA. on Feb 18-22, 2018. He will be presenting a research paper entitled: “Green Processing Technologies for Improving Germinated Brown Rice Milk Beverages”.
Call for Monthly Observance Volunteers
Submitted by: Karen Bett-Garber

If you have not participated with a group observance at SRRC and have an interest, please contact one of the co-chairs of the observance that you have interest in, along with an aspect of the observance of interest such as: general, decorating, serving, securing a speaker, procuring food at the restaurant, serving as a guide or greeter.

You can also volunteer to decorate the bulletin boards for Martin Luther King Day, Independence Day (July 4th), or Veterans Day. Let me or Janell Becker know if you are interested in these observances’ displays.

**Co-chairs, month and observance:**

- **February**—African-American Heritage, Dawn Reed/Mia Schexnayder
- **March**—Women’s History, Shannon Beltz/Crista Madison
- **April**—Take our sons/daughters to work, Chris Mattison/Darlene Downey
- **May**—Asian/Pacific Heritage, H.N. Cheng/Hsiaopo Cheng
- **June**—Caribbean Heritage, Michael A. Watson/Jeanne Lea
- **July**—LGBTA, Geromy Moore/Stephanie Gross
- **August**—Cultural Diversity Day, Elena Graves/Jeannine Moraitis
- **September**—Hispanic Heritage, David Ambrogio/Isabel Lima
- **October**—Disability Awareness, Vince Edwards/Shawndrika Reed
- **November**—Native American Heritage, Kelley Williams/Mary Lovisa
Recent SRRC Publications

Submitted by: Suhad Wojkowski


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