Dr. Deepak Bhatnagar

Poverty Simulation: an Eye Opener

I was recently invited to participate in a United Way hosted “poverty simulation” held at Kingsley House, a local nonprofit that provides social services to families. The exercise was designed to help participants understand the daily struggles of low-income families – and it was eye opening.

As one of the participants, I experienced four weeks – simulated in 15-minute segments – in the lives of people who lost jobs, became homeless, surviving on public assistance or facing other challenges. It taught me how quickly circumstances can change for many in our area. I was surprised to learn that over 42% of Louisiana’s population is considered ALICE, short for asset limited, income constrained and employed. The term is used to describe residents who hold jobs but still struggle to pay basic expenses.

The United Way is introducing programs to help eradicate poverty in our region. Some of these include enrichment programs for children, workforce development and prisoner re-entry programs. Well-to-do families should care about poverty eradicating efforts because those in poverty put a strain on local resources, which in turn affects other community members.

Participating in this simulation gave me a better understanding of what financial instability means, making me more empathetic towards the working poor. And if nothing else, to resist judgment. Those of us blessed with opportunities feel compelled to share our successes with others, especially the less fortunate.
Outreach Events

New Orleans Science & Engineering Fair
Submitted by: K. Thomas Klasson

The 2018 Greater New Orleans Science & Engineering Fair was held on February 26-March 1 at Tulane University.

SRRC staff, Dr. H.N. Cheng (CU), Ms. Jade Smith (CCU), Dr. Isabel Lima (CU), and Dr. Geromy Moore (FFS), participated as volunteer judges to help select ARS award recipients.

USDA-ARS sponsored two awards, one for the Junior and one for the Senior Division: "A plaque and VIP visit to our facility to the best project demonstrating improvement in utilization or safety of agricultural products in both the Junior and Senior Divisions." The project winners of the ARS award this year had the titles of "Can ‘Stimulation’ Help a Nation Feed the Population?" and “The Effect of Planting Basil with Tomatoes for Prevention of Hornworm Infestation.” The winners were from Benjamin Franklin High School and John Curtis Christian School. Several other SRRC staff routinely participate as judges for various science categories; e.g., Chemistry, Plant Sciences, etc.; or as judges for awards from national organizations which do not provide their own judges.

A short video about the fair can be found at https://www.facebook.com/michael.maples.102/videos/10210835338868471/.
Outreach Events (cont.)

Louisiana Environmental Education Symposium
Submitted by: Suhad Wojkowski

The 21st Louisiana Environmental Education Symposium held in Baton Rouge on February 23-24 was attended by Dr. Deepak Bhatnagar, Dr. Rajasekaran and Ms. Suhad Wojkowski as an outreach activity for ARS/SRRC.

The theme for the conference was “Green STEM”. The symposium focused on environmental science, technology, engineering and mathematics education, and career opportunities open to students. The Louisiana Environmental Education Commission goal is to create a comprehensive and balanced environmental education initiative that results in environmentally literate citizens who effectively and constructively solve existing environmental problems, prevent new ones, and maintain a sustainable environment for future generations.

Dr. Deepak Bhatnagar was honored for his seven years of outstanding service and devotion as Commissioner for the Louisiana Environmental Education Commission.

Community Garden
Submitted By: Cathy Mason

The Community Garden Committee met on March 6th to plan the Spring garden. A timeline for planting seeds and transplanting seedlings into the garden was discussed. Okra, squash, zucchini, eggplants, bell and banana peppers are some of the vegetables to be planted. Biocontrol plants along the perimeter of the garden to retard pests was also considered.

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).
African American History Month  
Submitted by: Mia Schexnayder & Dawn Reed

On February 15, 2018, the African American History Committee welcomed Honorable Judge Kern A. Reese of Orleans Parish Civil District Court in Division “L” to speak at the annual luncheon. Having earned the reputation as a fair and temperate jurist, both the city and law community recognizes Judge Reese for his involvement in professional organizations, mentoring, and community leadership. In his speech, Judge Reese engaged his audience in reflecting and remembering how the contributions and sacrifice of African Americans impacted World War II, alongside their community efforts and commitment created positive change in America.

In his passion for education, law, equal rights, and history, Judge Reese described in brilliant detail the hardships and triumphs of the Tuskegee Airmen and the Red Ball Express truck convoy at the luncheon. As the audience watched in full attention at his dialogue, Judge Reese captivated everyone with his knowledge and respect for historical records and events. In this, his appearance and shared wisdom enlightened the first event of this annual luncheon. Judge Reese continues to deepen his roots into the heart and foundation of justice in New Orleans. With his two sons, Justin and Jared, the kind and honorable judge continues to serve the people of the city, while educating individuals on the importance of African Americans everywhere.

SRRC welcomed the First Female Mayor Elect LaToya Cantrell, to speak for the February 28, 2018 African American History Month Brunch. She will be sworn in as Mayor in May, when she will serve as the first female mayor just in time to celebrate the city’s 300th anniversary. Our Center Director introduced the Mayor-elect and explained how significantly SRRC and its staff affect the Greater New Orleans area economically and socially.

Understanding the obstacles New Orleans faces, Cantrell spoke with deepest sincerity towards the demands and needs of her fair city. Cantrell addressed topics that hallmark the importance of recognizing the flaws within New Orleans, creating jobs, hiring qualified individuals for structure, and strengthening the city for future generations. Her knowledge of New Orleans history and gratitude for the various divisions and organizations within Orleans Parish captured her audience’s attention. Through her words and speech, Cantrell’s solid impact highlighted the profound nature of African American work ethic and perseverance. With a humble demeanor, she stood as a beacon of brilliance and wisdom.

The AAHM committee presented Mayor-elect Cantrell with a certificate of appreciation. As a gift, local artist Leah Labat created and donated a portrait for the Mayor Elect LaToya Cantrell.
Seminar Presentation
Submitted by: John Beaulieu

Mr. Michael Thelen presented an informative seminar on Monday, February 26th. Michael discussed his current operations and details about the Black Rice Project and Thai Freeze Dry Company LTD that he oversees in Thailand. He also discussed their dynamically freeze dried (via cellular fraction-line technology TM) sprouted black rice powder, amongst other things related to rice, health beneficial herbs and exotic plants and the Thai culture. SRRC staff participated in a lively discussion about his project.

Upcoming Events

Dr. Gene Lester to Visit SRRC
Submitted by: Mike Dowd

Gene Lester, National Program Leader for NP306, will visit the Center on March 22nd. During the visit, Dr. Lester will talk with several research units, including CU, FPSQ, CCU, CFB and CSQ. He will spend the day discussing progress on our current project plans. He is also interested to hear about new ideas and areas for future research.

Earth Day 2018
Submitted by: Cathy Mason

SRRC will celebrate Earth Day on Monday, April 23.

We will have our traditional Plant and Book Swap on that day, so please start preparing to bring in items to share!

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day 2018
Submitted by: Darlene Downey and Chris Mattison

Take Our Daughters/Sons to Work Day is a single day set aside nationally to allow girls and boys, ages nine to fifteen, to observe adults at their workplace. Observing what goes on in the workplace can be a stimulating and inspiring experience. SRRC provides encouragement to students who seriously consider science as a career option.

Our annual Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day will be held on Friday, April 20th.

All employees are encouraged to bring their daughter or son (niece, nephew, friend of the family) to work on Friday, April 20. Participants will be given a brief orientation and the opportunity to observe several demonstrations. There will be time to "shadow" and observe normal workday activities. Participation in simple and safe tasks routinely performed (i.e. computations, word-processing, copying, weighing, pH measurements, etc.) is encouraged.

Please refer to the email sent out on Feb. 22nd for more information; return the participation form/information sheet to Darlene Downey or Chris Mattison by Monday, March 26, 2018.
The new dates for BISHOP assessment are April 2-6. Let’s be prepared!

**Occupational Medical Surveillance Program-OMSP**  
Submitted by: Shelia Parker

The Occupational Medical Surveillance Program (OMSP) is a voluntary program provided at no cost to those who are potentially or actually exposed to chemical, physical, radiological, and/or biological hazards as part of their work.

Required occupational-related medical exams, Blood Serum Testing, Cholinesterase Determinations, Respirator Medical Clearances, Audiometric Testing, etc. are provided. Those of you who are potentially or actually exposed to harmful agents, biological hazards, and/or physical hazards are strongly encouraged to participate in the OMSP. SRRC offers the program to anyone interested annually.

The OMSP examines authorized employees to establish health-status baselines and detect work-related changes in health status. Medical records will document procedures performed, establish baselines, and work-related physiological changes (if any) throughout the employee's career. This program will also be used to plan, implement, and evaluate occupational and preventive health programs.

The limited medical procedures performed are not intended, and should not be construed, to substitute for the care provided by your personal physician. These are specifically designed to detect any abnormalities that may result from the work environment.

Participation in the OMSP is voluntary; however, whether you choose to participate or not, an ARS Form 182-A/B must be completed by all personnel who are potentially or actually are exposed to work hazards. This documentation will be maintained in the Location’s Safety Office/File.
Safety Corner (cont.)

Safety Update
Submitted by: Shannon Beltz

A big THANKS from the Safety Office as we wrap up Biosafety and Safety Awareness Month. All employees participated in various webinars and other training, and the SRRC staff must be complimented on their diligence in staying on top of our training requirements. As a reminder, proof of safety training (all different kinds) can be included in a binder in your lab (i.e. your JHA binder) for viewing during Safety Inspections. This is also handy for you when it comes time to write your annual performance narrative.

March will be a busy month for us at SRRC as we prepare for our BISHOP review in the first week of April. Please keep up your regular lab maintenance and if you see anything that you think should be checked, let the Safety Office know.

Human Resources Corner

Submitted by: Jocelyn Mack

New Employees

Justin Smith recently joined Dr. Soheila Maleki’s lab in FPSQ as a Biological Science Technician. Justin obtained a Bachelor’s of Science from the University of New Orleans in December 2017. Please welcome Justin when you meet him.

Life Events

Life events, such as marriage, divorce, death, birth of a child – provide an opportunity for you to make changes to your benefits outside of Open Season. Please see me if you would like to make any changes outside of Open Season.

Also, it is a good idea to review your Designation of Beneficiaries. You can check your eOPF for your last forms. If you would like to change beneficiaries, you will need to complete new forms and return to me. Designation of Beneficiary for the TSP should be faxed to TSP directly.
Retirement of Ms. Janice Boyd, Program Support Assistant of Commodity Utilization Research Unit

Submitted by: K. Thomas Klasson

Ms. Janice Boyd is retiring on March 31, 2018, after 30 years and 4 months of federal service. Ms. Boyd joined SRRC and ARS in April 2002 as PSA of CU under former Research Leader Dr. Armand Pepperman and has remained in the same unit ever since.

Ms. Boyd took her first federal position in November 1987 with U. S. Savings Bond (in New Orleans Main Post Office Building). Prior to that, she was Secretary to the Dean of Community Projects at Delgado Community College, which she had occupied since 1971. She stayed with U.S. Savings Bond, working as a Clerk and Secretary for 3.5 years being responsible for various administrative tasks related to the sales of U.S. Savings Bonds. In April 1991, Ms. Boyd accepted a position with USDA Agricultural Marketing Service, Fruit and Vegetable Division, located in Metairie. She worked there as a Clerk providing administrative support services for the office.

While working at SRRC, Ms. Boyd received the SRRC Outstanding Office Support Employee Award in 2008, 2010, and 2016. As Program Support Assistant of Commodity Utilization Research Unit, Janice has provided the assistance needed to keep her Unit running smoothly and all personnel work requests are handled with efficiency by the required deadlines. Despite her many administrative duties, she has been an active member of many official diversity committees at SRRC, such as Women’s History Month Committee, Earth Day Committee, African American History Month Committee, Native American Heritage Month Committee, and Cultural Diversity Day Committee. She was also a member of the Mid South Area Council of Office Professionals from 2004-2007 and served as a Recorder and Newsletter contributor. She is the current Secretary of SRRC’s Employee Benefit Club and a Member of the OTB Committee. Ms. Boyd is looking forward to retirement and spending time with her husband Alvarez, and granddaughters Ariel, Kourteney, and Haley. She also plans to travel, and most of all just relax.
Parade Throws
Submitted by: David Ambrogio

Do you have any excess Mardi Gras throws? Wondering how to get rid of all the stuff you get from parades? Donate! SRRC employees are a generous bunch! A box has been set up in the cafeteria to collect your bounty for recycling or reuse.

Do you have family, friends, and colleagues coming to visit you from other areas? You can create a gift basket for them with a touch of New Orleans using our collection of beads and trinkets, even plush animals. These tokens of SRRC are also good to give to visiting scientists and collaborators, as well as attendees of center meetings and conferences. Think of all the people who visit the center receiving such a gift for their loved ones, children, and other friends and leaving with a definite smile on their face as they remember your generosity!

Don’t throw away your catch, give it a good home here at SRRC and help recycle and reuse. It’s good for the environment, good for SRRC, and good for you. It is also good for ArcGNO, an organization that provides various services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. ArcGNO has created wage-earning jobs for individuals with intellectual disabilities by collecting, sorting, & repackaging Mardi Gras throws. Excess boxes of parade throws are donated to this group on a regular basis. Please keep them in mind when you kindly donate.

I already have several boxes full of all kinds of parade items here at SRRC, so please call me at X 401 if you would like to have any of it for your guests.
March is National Reading Awareness Month

Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis once said, “There are many little ways to enlarge your child’s world. Love of books is the best of all.”

Few things bring as much joy as reading a good book. Each of us remembers our favorite childhood book, and how reading it with our mom or dad brought us happiness, sparked our imagination, and continues to bring us good memories. Unfortunately, not every child gets to share this wonderful experience with his or her parents. In fact, more than half of our nation’s children — around 13 million — go to sleep every night without hearing a bedtime story. When you’re a parent, reading out loud every day to your kids is one of the best ways you can prepare them to learn, which is why Read Aloud started a public campaign last year for every parent and child to read aloud for 15 minutes every day. With March being National Reading Awareness Month, there’s no better time to spread this message.

March is National Nutrition Month®

National Nutrition Month® is an annual campaign run by The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. While the Academy creates and provides nutrition education and information throughout the year, the annual campaign focuses attention on the importance of making informed food choices and developing sound eating and physical activity habits.

This year, National Nutrition Month will focus on “Put Your Best Fork Forward”, in hopes to remind us all that each bite counts. The Academy states that making even just small shifts in our food choices can add up over time, to make healthier lasting changes. Be sure to visit the Academy’s National Nutrition Month® website for more information.

The USDA MyPlate is here to help you “spring” into the new season with a variety of tools and resources to help you find a healthy eating style that works for you at any age. Whether you need to find a MyPlate plan that fits your needs or just need some tips to help you on your healthy eating journey, ChooseMyPlate.gov is here to help.
ARS Research Chemist, **Vince Edwards** of the Cotton Chemistry and Utilization Research Unit will attend the American Association of Textile Chemists and Colorists (AATCC) 2018 International Conference to present a paper entitled, “Structure/Function Relations of Hemostatic Nonwoven Dressings Based on Greige Cotton”, March 6-8, 2018 in Greenville, South Carolina.

ARS Research Plant Pathologist, **Peter Cotty** of the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit will present a talk entitled "Aflatoxin management for the Caribbean region: prospects for biological control" at the ICC-International Association for Cereal Science and Technology, 4th Latin American cereals Conference to be held in Mexico City, Mexico, March 11-14, 2018.

ARS Research Molecular Biologist, **Jeffrey Cary** and ARS Research Plant Pathologist, **Rajtilak Majumdar** of the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit have been invited to present posters at the World Mycotoxin Forum-10th Conference in Amsterdam, The Netherlands on March 12-14, 2018. Dr. Cary will present a poster entitled "Control of aflatoxin contamination in maize using host-induced gene silencing of A. flavus genes," and Dr. Majumdar will present a poster entitled Aspergillus flavus polyamines: small molecules with large biological implications."

ARS Research Molecular Biologist, **Jeffrey Cary** and Research Chemist **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 255th American Chemical Society National Meeting to be held in New Orleans, LA, March 18-22, 2018.

ARS Research Mechanical Engineer, **Chris Delhom** of the Cotton Structure and Quality Research Unit will attend the “2018 34th International Cotton Conference” in BREMEN, Germany on March 21-23, 2018. He will present an update on research to implement ARS developed measurement for Lower Half Mean Length and additional fiber quality measurement work.

Scientific Meetings

Submitted by: **Terri Von Hoven**

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<td>March 18-22</td>
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Recent SRRC Publications

Submitted by: Suhad Wojkowski


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


Recent SRRC Publications (cont.)


