



NACOP Notes

November 2012

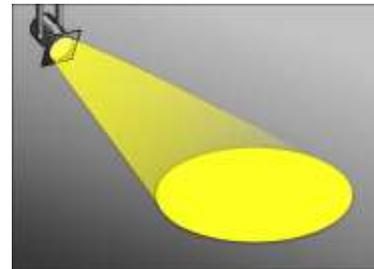
Message from the Co-Chairs

**By: Linda Fulton, Sr. Co-Chair, MSA
Linda Parnell, Jr. Co-Chair, NPA**

As an office professional, are you:
(1) complementary of the Agency mission through support of your supervisor and location employees, (2) a facilitator and leader in accomplishing tasks by utilizing unique organizational skills, (3) respected by employees, cooperators, and stakeholders for accurate information, and (4) a promoter of a pleasant attitude for the workplace? If these are among your accomplishments, congratulations!

These are expansive goals office professionals should make every effort to achieve. We know that many of you have already achieved these goals, and it is NACOP's desire to help others achieve them as well.

In order to provide support toward this end, please share with us your ideas about how your National Council can best provide support/assistance to you. Our email addresses are: Linda.Fulton@ars.usda.gov and Linda.Parnell@ars.usda.gov. We look forward to your input. Thank you.



**In The Spotlight:
Mid South Area**

**Submitted by:
Tammy Dorman,
Sr. Co-Chair**

The Mid South Area Secretarial Advisory Council was established by Dr. Thomas J. Army, Area Director, in May 1996, and was originally comprised of six office professionals from various locations in the Mid South Area (MSA).

Since it was established, the name of the Council has changed to Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals and continually adjusts the Council size and selection method to better meet the needs of the MSA Office Professionals.

The mission of the Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals (MSACOP) is to provide a resource for the Area Director's Office and all levels of management for matters relating to office professionals. The goal of the Council is to enhance office professionals through training, networking, mentoring, and recognition of office support staff. It is the desire of the Council to work with all levels of management to assure that office support staff are highly skilled and motivated professionals and to assure that the clerical and administrative needs of the Mid South Area and ARS are met.



Focus in recent years has been on providing information and training to Office Professionals (OP) throughout the MSA through assembled hard copy materials, website, webcast training, and training workshops. Some of the highlights of accomplishments in recent years for the MSACOP are:

- Council Hosted Round Table Discussion with Research Leader (RL) and Administrative Officer (AO) representatives to discuss duties/work relationships. Report presented to RLs, AOs and MSA OPs. Some of the follow-up recommendations and actions included: highlights of the Round Table Discussion being reported at the Leadership Meeting, presentation given at the new SY training by an MSACOP representative, round table discussions between RLs, AOs, and OPs at location level, and cross - training within locations or units where appropriate.
- Provide Training Workshops every two to three years for all MSA OPs. Currently in the process of finalizing the 2012 Training Workshop. Day and a half training to cover topics such as, Onboarding, Pathways, agreements, AIMS, 115's, correspondence, grammar, ARMPS, budget, WebTA and travel.
- News Notes are published semi-annually as a tool to increase communications and enhance working knowledge.
- Mentoring Program available to assist new OPs. All new OPs are assigned a mentor.
- Maintain Council website which is made available to all OPs as a quick reference to materials needed for OPs to perform daily duties.
- Highlight a different MSA OP monthly as a means to show recognition and as an avenue to get to know other OP's in the MSA.
- Developed an Office Professional Booklet and provided to all MSA OP's to use as a desktop resource.
- Provide a welcome packet to all new MSA OP hires to introduce the Council and to provide them with an initial resource.



2012 ARS Office Professional of the Year

We congratulate Amber Whittaker from the Northern Plains Area; Logan, Utah on receiving the 2012 ARS Office

Professional of the Year Award for “excellence in organizational achievement, skill advancement, cost-savings, and consistent flow of administrative operations while displaying a positive and professional attitude.”



Amber started her Federal Government career at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas in July 2001 as an active duty member of the United States Air Force where she served as an Aerospace Medical Service Craftsman (similar to a Registered Nurse). Her experience in the military included readying the first ever Aero-medical Staging Facility to treat returning war patients, Director of the Tobacco Cessation program, Family Practice Preventative Health Assessment Coordinator, Immunizations, and Operating Room and Emergency Room. She served at Scott Air Force Base, Illinois; the US Air Force Academy, CO; and Kirkuk Air Base, Iraq. Following her deployment to Kirkuk, Iraq in 2005 she was diagnosed with a Middle Eastern disease and was medically retired from the Air Force as a Staff Sergeant in January 2007. She began working for ARS as a Secretary to the Research Leader at the Pollinating Insects Research Unit in Logan, Utah, in May of the same year. A short sixteen months

later, Ms. Whittaker transferred to a part-time position as an Office Automation Clerk at the Poisonous Plant Research Laboratory (PPRL) to focus on her medical treatments and education.

Amber completed the requirements for her Bachelor's Degree from the College of Agriculture, Utah State University in December 2010 in Interdisciplinary Studies with a focus in Business Agriculture and Economics. In February 2011 she was promoted to full-time Secretary to the Research Leader at PPRL. She also began serving on the NPACOP in October 2011 as the recorder, and has since been elected as the Chairperson for the Council. Amber is currently pursuing her Master's of Business Administration through an online program at Arizona State University. She has also completed multiple additional trainings in AgLearn and courses at the Graduate School to meet her Individual Development Plan goals. Additionally, as a procurement cardholder she saved the laboratory over \$120,000 this fiscal year utilizing Intramalls, GSAXcess, and socio-economic vendors.

Ms. Whittaker's Research Leader, Dr. Kip Panter, stated that, "Amber consistently performs at an outstanding level, while displaying a customer-oriented, optimistic and professional demeanor. She has utilized her organization skills and knowledge of computer programs/office automation to relieve as much of the administrative and program support duties as possible from PPRL Scientists, freeing up time for them to focus on their primary mission, research." He went on to state, "Amber's attention to detail, dedication to the mission and devotion to skill advancement are superior to any administrative personnel I have seen in my 40 years with ARS."

Amber is a mother and wife. She met her husband, Daniel, in Kirkuk, Iraq while serving in the emergency and operating rooms there. He is an active duty soldier with the Utah Army National Guard 145th Field Artillery in Utah. They have two children, Alijah and Brayden. In her free time, she enjoys target shooting, archery, playing the piano, singing, and having campfires in the backyard. Ms. Whittaker tries to live her

life based on a quote from Harold S. Green, "Leadership is practiced not so much in words as in attitude and actions." Her vocational dream is to secure a Professional Staff Management position with USDA-ARS; however, she plans to continue serving at PPRL a few more years.

When asked how she felt about receiving the award, Amber stated, "I was very surprised, it still seems surreal. However, I wouldn't have been able to accomplish it without the amazing staff at PPRL and mentorship from various ARS employees." When asked for her advice to fellow Office Professionals, Amber said, "Never stop learning; always surround yourself with new knowledge and mentors who are willing to guide you as it relates to your current position and career progression goals, AIM HIGH!" She continued on, "Regardless of the circumstances, NEVER give up doing what you love."

Helpful Grammar Hints

The plurals for capital letters used as nouns are **not formed with apostrophes**. Example: The five RLs and two AOs met to discuss Extramural Agreements.

The possessives for capital letters used as nouns **are formed with apostrophes**. Example: The RL's manuscript was published in the journal. [one RL]

Example of plural possessive: The AOs' meeting to discuss the budget was canceled. [more than one AO]

Exception: Use apostrophes with capital letters and numbers when the meaning would be unclear otherwise. Example: Please dot your i's. [You don't mean *is*.]

More Ideas for Organizing You – Both Professionally and Personally (Adapted from “25 Office Organizing Tips” – by Janet Taylor)

Submitted by: Linda Parnell, NPA

- ✓ Color-coded files make it faster to find information.
- ✓ Avoid overloading a file drawer, thus making it difficult to retrieve information.
- ✓ Do not over stuff folders; it may be time to toss some of the information.
- ✓ Tab hanging file folders in the front.
- ✓ Return calls in batches.
- ✓ Empty workspace of everything but the project you’re working on to cut down on distractions.
- ✓ Straighten desk at the end of the day and especially at the end of the week so that you can start each morning with a clear desk.
- ✓ Create a separate drawer for personal paperwork, items, etc.
- ✓ Keep an assortment of all-occasion cards and stamps in your desk.
- ✓ Keep takeout menus from favorite restaurants so you can order ahead and pick up dinner on your way home.
- ✓ When using more than one checking account, color coded checks are an easy way to identify each account.

Source: <http://www.businessknowhow.com/manage/getorg.htm>

Tulare Ag Expo

Submitted by: Kathleen Parker, PWA

Two Pacific West Area (PWA) OSAC members from the San Joaquin Valley Agricultural Sciences Center (SVJASC), Parlier, California contributed their time and support to the Pacific West Area (PWA) information booth at the 2012

World Agriculture Expo held in Tulare, California. Anita Robles and Marlene Jensen along with others from the SJVASC and the PWA office manned the ARS booth for the three day Expo. It was a great opportunity to outreach to the local and world Ag community. The Expo, held each February, is the world’s largest annual agricultural show of its kind with more than 1,400 exhibitors displaying cutting-edge agricultural technology and equipment on 2.6 million square feet of show grounds.

Helpful Grammar Hints

Use commas to separate **items in a series**. Example: Lions, tigers, penguins, and bears are usual sights at many zoos.

Use a comma after an **introductory word group**. Example: Before we traveled to Virginia, we packed a suitcase.

Why Do We Vote in November?

Submitted by: Missy Stiefel, MWA

Have you ever wondered why we vote on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November? This particular day has been designated for holding presidential and congressional elections since 1845 and was chosen as a result of the lifestyles of Americans in the mid-19th century. Since most Americans were farmers, Congress decided that November was the most convenient time for voters to get to the polls. Planting and harvest were completed in most areas, and the weather was still relatively cooperative. Because the polling places were at the county seat, some voters had to make an overnight trip (by horse and buggy). If Election Day had been held on a Monday, people would have to leave on Sunday. But back in those days, Americans reserved Sundays for church. Congress also didn’t want Election Day to fall on November 1 because this date is All Saints’ Day (a Holy Day of Obligation) in the Roman Catholic Church. Furthermore, economics played a part in determining Election Day: the first day of the

month was the day that most businesses tallied their sales and expenses for the previous month. Congress did not want a good or bad economic month to influence a voter's decision. So, since 1845, Election Day has been held on the first Tuesday after the first Monday of November.

Source:
<http://usgovinfo.about.com/od/thepoliticalsystem/a/whenwewote.htm>

Prosser, WA Farmers' Market Report Submitted by: Kathleen Parker, PWA

Scientists from the Vegetable and Forage Crops Research Unit displayed some of the ongoing research being conducted at the Farmers' Market on September 29th, 2012. Of specific note were cooked samples of newly developed potato breeds, including Purple Pelisse and Yukon Nugget varieties.



These were prepared by a local chef and available to everyone to try and comment on. In addition, a full selection of beans from a variety of locations were on display and presented by Jennifer Trapp, courtesy of ARS Scientists Phil Miklas and Lyndon Porter. Drs. Harold Collins and Rick Boydston were present to show examples of their research on soil and irrigation management, as well as cropping systems.



Current NACOP Members

- ♦ Linda Fulton, (MSA), Sr. Co-Chair
- ♦ Linda Parnell (NPA), Jr. Co-Chair
- ♦ Darleen Nelson (SAA), Recorder
- ♦ Rose McIntosh (BA), Webmaster
- ♦ Missy Stiefel (MWA), NACOP Notes Editor
- ♦ Trudy Pinkerton (SPA), Historian
- ♦ Kathleen Parker (PWA), Outreach Coordinator
- ♦ Brenda Holmes (NAA), Member
- ♦ Tangele "Tee" Terry (HQ), Member
- ♦ Jackie Kelly (HQ), Ex-Officio
- ♦ Cathy Lonaberger (HQ), Technical Advisor
- ♦ Pat Berry (HQ), Technical Advisor

