



NACOP Notes

April 2013

Message from the Co-Chairs

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

“Report of Efficiency Rating” for Office Professionals

A 1946 form (Standard Form No. 51, U. S. Civil Service Commission) entitled “Report of Efficiency Rating” utilized at that time as a “Performance Evaluation” is the inspiration for this article. It was a simple form the supervisor completed by marking each category with a: (1) ✓ if adequate, (2) – if weak, or (3) + if outstanding. Evaluation points listed on the form which pertain to office professionals today as well as then are:

- “Skill in the application of techniques and procedures.
- Presentability of work (appropriateness of arrangement and appearance of work).
- Attention to broad phases of assignments.
- Attention to pertinent detail.
- Accuracy of final results.
- Accuracy of judgments or decisions.
- Rate of progress on or completion of assignments.
- Ability to organize work.
- Effectiveness in meeting and dealing with others.
- Cooperativeness.
- Initiative.
- Resourcefulness.
- Dependability.”

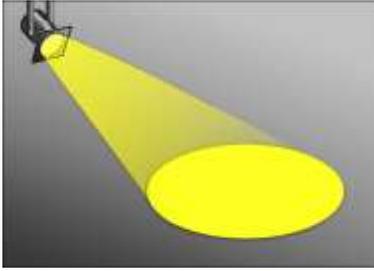
As Senior and Junior Co-Chairs of the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals (NACOP), we challenge each office professional to be, or become, the employee worthy of a “+ if outstanding” if you were to be rated in this manner today.

Please share your thoughts, ideas, best practices, etc. with us: Linda Fulton (Linda.Fulton@ars.usda.gov) or Linda Parnell (Linda.Parnell@ars.usda.gov).

USDA Logo

Submitted by: Cathy Lonaberger, HQ

Effective January 8, 2013, USDA mandated that agencies should not put their individual agency logo on documents or products. Instead, all agencies will use the USDA “rolling hills” logo. While ARS letterhead, envelopes, and business cards also must conform to the new policy, please continue to use your current stock of letterhead, envelopes, business cards, etc., until you run out, and then you can print new ones in the new format. The ARS Information Staff can provide you with a template for letterhead and Avery Label business cards that allows you to “plug in” your location’s information (unit name, street address, etc.). You can also get the new letterhead template from your Area Director’s secretary. For additional information/guidance, please feel free to contact Sandy Miller Hays, ARS Director of Information, at 301-504-1636.



**In The Spotlight:
North Atlantic
Area**

**Submitted by:
Brenda Holmes,
NAA**

The North Atlantic Area Council of Office Professionals (NAA COP) was reestablished in July 26, 2012. New Council members have been appointed and are working together to revitalize this important activity. As we move forward, it is our initial goal to develop and adopt our own distinctive Mission Statement and Charter. With those actions, we will establish a strong local Council that will not only serve but support the Office Professionals in NAA. We will also be able to provide valuable input to the National Advisory Council of Office Professionals (NACOP) as one of many local Councils.

This Council is your Council - your voice – let it be heard!

Without your support, we will be unable to provide you with the best training, mentoring and recognition. We need to hear what your concerns are, what you need to do the best job possible, and for you to be resources for all the Office Professionals in NAA. Every Office Professional is a member of the Council – not all in an official capacity – but still a contributing member. We need your support and participation.

As you well know, Office Professionals along with the other members of the Team: Research Leaders, SYs, Technicians, and other Administrative, Technical and Trade positions, contribute greatly towards our organization’s outstanding success in the research field.

We are valuable members of the Team and need to continue to excel in our jobs. Let your Council help you to help others for the betterment of all. Please feel free to contact the members of this council with feedback, suggestions or concerns that you may have.



The NAA Council of Office Professionals are: (L-R) Joanne Murphy, Brenda Holmes (NACOP Representative), Rebecca Crawford, Melody Scheffler, Diane Koch, Shu-I Tu, Tiffany Fisk.

Helpful Grammar Hints – Your and You’re

“your” means belonging to you
“you’re” is a contraction of “you are”

Correct: That is your chocolate.
Incorrect: That is you’re chocolate.

Your boss sends you an e-mail that reads, “Thank you for your hard work.” How do you respond?

Correct: You’re welcome.
Incorrect: Your welcome.

**Mid South Area Office Professionals
Workshop**

Submitted by: Linda Fulton, MSA

The Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals (MSACOP) hosted a Training Workshop for the Mid South Area (MSA) Office Professionals (OPs) November 28-29, 2012, Stoneville, Mississippi. The Council lead by Senior Chair Tammy Dorman and Junior Chair Brenda Aysenne put together an exceptional agenda that was well received by all participants. Of special note, there was almost 100 percent OP participation.

- **Local outside gratis speakers** were utilized for topics such as, “How to Work Smarter” and “Microsoft Office Computer Tips” which provided motivation and new insight.
- **Research Leaders** willingly participated making the following presentations: (1) The Indispensable Office Assistant, (2) Working Together as a Team, and (3) Life Cycle of ARIS 115’s from the RL’s Perspective.
- Two presentations were presented via **video conference by Beltsville personnel**: (1) Leave Audits and Leave Transfers/Calculating Travel Comp Time, and (2) National Agricultural Library/Ag Space Submissions.
- **Local Western Business Service Center/Area Administrative personnel** made presentations on **new** information for: (1) ARMPS and Budget, (2) Travel, and (3) Western Service Center Overview. Also, the Stoneville, MS Location Administrative Officer provided insight into the AO/OP relationship.
- **Mid South Area Program personnel** provided presentations on: (1) CRADA and Material Transfer Agreements, (2) Correspondence and Grammar, and (3) File Guide Information and Tips. Also, the MSACOP Website was promoted with a presentation by a **Council member**.

At various intervals during the workshop OPs shared tips or best practices with the group. This proved to be an avenue for all to have the opportunity of ownership and participation in the workshop. Most of all the constructive tips were well received by all OPs.

Tax Day – April 15th

Submitted by: Linda Parnell, NPA

Ever wonder why our taxes are due in mid April? Curiosity led me on a search; a short outing as I did not find much.

One source¹ indicates that the first income tax was introduced in 1861 with a 3 percent levy on

yearly income above \$800. Its purpose – help fund the American Civil War effort. This law was found to be unconstitutional and was repealed in 1872. A 2 percent rate was reintroduced in the Revenue Act of 1894, but the legality was still in question. The way was cleared with the ratification of the Sixteenth Amendment² to the Constitution and March 1st became the date of choice. Congress moved the date to March 15th in 1918. A tax overhaul in 1954 moved the date once again, forward to April 15th.

A 2002 article by Jessica Sung in *Fortune Magazine*³ offers some theories on the date changes. By delaying the date, the Government’s workload was spread out. Another theory was that the Government has more time to hold onto the tax dollars. Whatever the reason, April 15th is the date we now know.

¹ <http://www.timeanddate.com/holidays/us/tax-day>

² Passed by Congress on July 2, 1909, and ratified February 3, 1913 (http://www.loc.gov/rr/business/hottopic/irs_history.html accessed 03/25/2013).

³ http://money.cnn.com/magazines/fortune/fortune_archive/2002/04/15/321414/index.htm (accessed 03/25/2013)

Email Etiquette

Submitted by: Missy Stiefel, MWA

We’ve seen these etiquette lists a dozen times, but here are some gentle reminders to keep in mind when sending professional e-mails. Remember, your words are a reflection of you!

- **Be specific in your subject line.** Don’t just write “need help” or “form needed.” Write “Assistance Needed with RPES Case” or “SF-52 Needed for Susie Smith’s Promotion.”
- **Keep your message succinct.** Everyone’s time is valuable, so business emails should be straight to the point. Be sure to include all relevant details in your request or point of view.
- **Punctuate properly.** Driving without road signs would be disastrous. Reading without direction can be, too. Eats, Shoots & Leaves is a fantastically funny book about using proper punctuation for the message you want to convey.

- **Timely response.** In most cases, a response within 24 hours is acceptable.
- **Use spellcheck.**
- **Be careful with your tone.** E-mails are not the best form of communication. Sarcasm may not be picked up by your reader and could result in a miscommunication leading into an argument.
- **Use the cc line as FYI.** The cc line is a “for your information” courtesy, not a prompt for action.
- **Don’t use all capital letters.** It’s the written equivalent of screaming.
- **Use “Reply All” only when absolutely necessary.**
- **Question marks.** Ending a question with one question mark is sufficient. Doesn’t it seem a bit rude to use more than one????
- **Please use proper grammar.** Refer to the grammar tips in the News Notes.
- **Hesitate before sending.** Be very careful of knee-jerk responses. Compose your message with no recipient, step away for a few hours, and then go back to it. Most likely you’ll have returned in a better frame of mind.
- **E-mail is neither private nor secure.** Don’t write anything in an e-mail you wouldn’t want seen on a billboard along the freeway. And, don’t use e-mail inappropriately. Your job depends on it.



Administrative Professionals Day Special Recognition

The members of NACOP would like to take this opportunity to recognize two ARS employees who have devoted a number of their professional career years to Federal service. Congratulations to Phyllis Davis and Diane Koch for 52 and 41 years of service, respectively!

Phyllis Davis has lived her whole life in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. After graduating from Simon Gratz High School in 1950, she worked for the C&M Flooring Company for 2 years as bookkeeper/secretary, and in 1952, she became a stay-at-home mom with her daughter and son. In 1961, she resumed her career, with the Eastern Regional Research Center (ERRC) and has been in this same facility for the entire 52 years. At that time, “IT” meant the word “it” and copies were made on a manual typewriter with carbon paper - a typo cost one a great deal of time to correct. Phyllis worked in various capacities for every Center Director (CD) (starting with Dr. Percy Wells). Despite other opportunities, leaving ERRC was never an option because of the camaraderie and good friends she’s made over the years for which she’s very grateful. Phyllis also participated in the North Atlantic Area Committee of Office Professionals (NAACOP), which afforded her the opportunity to visit with ARS colleagues throughout the U.S., which included every Regional Research Center. She considers this a privilege and a great experience to collaborate with these women throughout the years. Phyllis writes, “Dr. Herb Rothbart, one of the former CDs, said to me ‘They’re going to carry you out feet first’ – if that turns out to be the case, I hope my pals make sure I’m wearing my Via Spigas (go ahead and google it). In my spare time, I love to read, cook, walk in the park and around the city, and exercise.”

Helpful Grammar Hints: It’s and Its

It’s is a contraction of “it is”

Its is a gender-neutral possessive noun

Correct: It’s [it is] a beautiful day.

Incorrect: Its a beautiful day.

Correct: The dog wagged its tail.

Incorrect: The dog wagged it’s tail.

Diane Koch has spent her entire career with ARS at the Eastern Regional Research Center (ERRC) in Wyndmoor, Pennsylvania. After graduating from high school, she began her career in 1971 as a Clerk-Stenographer in the former Stenographic Pool, and in 1973 she became one of the first word processing operators in what was to become an expanded Word Processing Center. Diane left the administrative side of the house and joined the Photo Lab in 1975, where she combined her skills and interest in photography with her skills in dealing with people. She assisted many SYs with presentations and photos of their research before the Photo Lab was turned over to the onsite contractor in the A-76 process. After a brief absence due to a RIF, Diane returned to ERRC in 1985, where she joined the staff of the Animal Biomaterials Research Unit (ABRU) as the Research Leader's secretary. When ABRU split into two Units in 1987, Diane went on to be the secretary for the Research Leader of the newly formed Hides, Leather and Wool Research Unit where she remained until 1991. After a brief detail to the North Atlantic Area (NAA) Director's Office, Diane joined the North Atlantic Area as Secretary to the Associate Area Director working with many Associates. Diane was selected as the Executive Assistant to the Area Director in May 2006, where she remains today providing assistance to the Area and Associate Area Directors as well as the staff of the North Atlantic Area. Diane has received several honors during her career, both inside and out, including the Silver Medalist from the Philadelphia Federal Executive Board and the ARS Secretary of the Year, plus many performance and extra efforts awards.

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



ADMINISTRATIVE PROFESSIONALS DAY APRIL 24, 2013

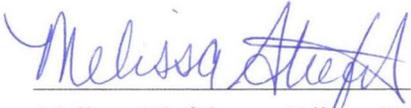
WE, THE NATIONAL ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR OFFICE PROFESSIONALS,
APPRECIATE YOUR TIME, TALENTS, AND DEDICATION.
THANKS FOR ALL YOUR HARD WORK!



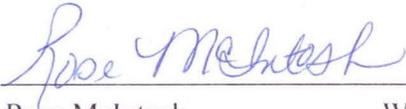
Jackie Kelly *Ex Officio*



Linda Parnell Junior Co-Chair



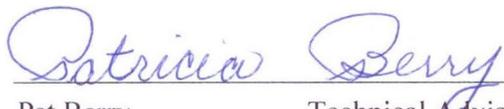
Melissa Stiefel Editor, *NACOP Notes*



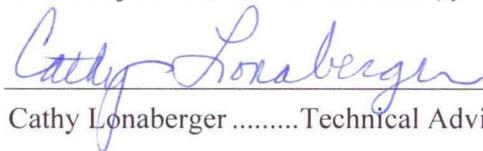
Rose McIntosh Webmaster



Kathleen Parker Member



Pat Berry Technical Advisor



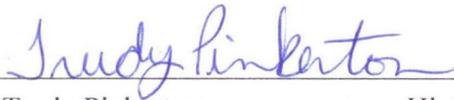
Cathy Lonaberger Technical Advisor



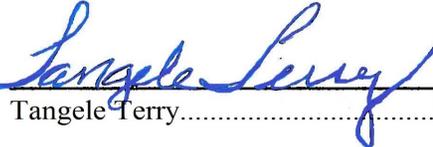
Linda Fulton Senior Co-Chair



Darleen Nelson Recorder



Trudy Pinkerton Historian



Tangele Perry Member



Brenda Holmes Member



"No one is more cherished in this world than someone who lightens the burden of another."

Author Unknown