



# NACOP Newsletter

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## Message from the Co-Chairs

By: Patricia Berry, HQ  
Drusilla Fratesi, MSA

The NACOP annual meeting was held in Peoria, IL, on July 24-26, 2007. The meeting was hosted by the Midwest Area (MWA) and Council member Heather Lewandowski and provided the opportunity to meet MWA Office Staff and tour the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research Center. The Council welcomed Sharon Peterson (NPA) and Elizabeth Jackson (NAL), both finishing terms for members that resigned and attending their first Council meeting.

Some time at the meeting was spent reviewing the NACOP website, with particular attention to the Training Guide and the Mentoring Guidelines. The Training Guide was revised to reflect training and sources available now to office professionals, with focus on the new direction the positions have taken in recent years and the changes in technology. The Mentoring Guidelines have been streamlined to reflect the way most Areas are utilizing the Mentoring program. We encourage you to visit both of these items on our website and hope they are useful.

The annual meeting provides the Council the opportunity to network about the operations of Area Councils, to review and work on NACOP goals, which focus on items such as the website, the newsletter and publicity, the establishment and maintenance of a historical record, and to discuss other avenues available to provide information and training for office professionals.

We are excited about the enthusiasm of the Council and look forward to working toward the goals.



## Design your space so work can 'flow'

DOES YOUR WORK FLOW? Professional organizer Liz Franklin says we all handle paper in pretty much the same way:

1. We look at it.
2. We sort it.
3. We begin working (with computer, phone, making notes, etc.).
4. We input it or record it.
5. We may store it for further action (sometimes called "latering").
6. We print it out or fax it.
7. We eventually get rid of it by filing it, shredding it, recycling it or throwing it away.

If you arrange your workspace around those seven stations, you won't have to double back and cross paper over its old path. And paperwork will flow in an organized way.

Adapted from Administrative PROFESSIONAL • April 2007





## Midwest Area Program Administrative Support Task Group (PASTG)

By: Heather Lewandowski, MWA

The Midwest Area Program Administrative Support Task Group (PASTG), was organized in 1995 and serves as a representative for office professionals throughout the Midwest Area. The Task Group is made up of the Area Director's Executive Assistant and five council members representing Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Missouri, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Ex-officio members include a representative to the National Council (NACOP), a PASTG Web Master, and a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) Manual Editor.

The PASTG has a two-fold mission of 1) serving the Area Directors in an advisory capacity on initiatives which impact employees across the Area; and 2) providing guidance and support to the office professionals through networking, training, mentoring, and acknowledging their value as team members.

Our accomplishments include:

- An SOP manual, a compendium of approved Agency procedures with examples, to assist office professionals with their day-to-day tasks. If you haven't already done so, take a minute to check out this valuable office tool, used Agency-wide, at <http://www.arsnet.usda.gov/pastg/sop>.
- A Mentoring Program was designed to assist new office professionals in becoming acclimated to ARS by building relationships between experienced employees and new employees striving to succeed within ARS. All new office professionals are assigned a mentor for a minimum of one year, although the relationships usually continue well beyond, creating lasting support networks.
- Training of new personnel which is organized and led by PASTG council members. Areas covered include travel, time and attendance, ARMPs, ARIS/AIMS, correspondence, purchasing, RPES, personnel, and general

information about ARS. Key Area personnel also meet with the group to provide additional specialized training.

- A Location Assistance Program was organized to provide temporary support to units with vacancies. The PASTG recruits volunteers to serve in the interim. This program ensures that MWA management unit offices operate smoothly when a position is vacated.
- A Training Scholarship Program was initiated to assist in professional development of individual(s) through funding for conferences, workshops, short courses, or other appropriate short-term experiences.
- Newsletters are published quarterly as a tool to increase communication and enhance working knowledge. Contents include a brief help section, articles, helpful hints, suggestions on various topics, and general network questions.

The Midwest Area Directors continually support education and growth and have graciously allowed office professionals to attend several Area-wide meetings. These meetings have been held in 1998, 2001 and 2004. The 1998 meeting focused on "Positive Attitude to Strive for Teamwork and Growth." The 2001 meeting focused on "A Commitment to Excellence for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." The 2004 meeting focused on "Discover Tools to Build a Better You."

The main objectives of the PASTG include:

- Updating the Standard Operating Procedures Manual
- Strengthening the Mentoring/Training Program
- Promoting awareness of the Scholarship Training Program
- Increasing communication and networking through:
  - Publishing quarterly Newsletters
  - Monthly conference calls
  - Area programs/support meetings
  - Location Assistance Program
  - Maintaining the PASTG web site
- Providing input & suggestions to implement Area-wide initiatives
- Performing special assignments as requested by the Area Directors
- Participating as a working partner with the National Council

The PASTG members are proud to devote time and energy to the group in the hope that all administrative support personnel will benefit.



**Along with spotlighting** one specific area in each newsletter, the members of NACOP thought it would be a great idea to put the spotlight on **YOU** also. If you are, or know of, an office professional who should be highlighted for a substantial length of service, please contact your area council member and we will be happy to recognize them.

...Betty Hoogerwerf



In November 2007, Betty Hoogerwerf will have served for 51 years with the Federal Government—7 years with the U.S. Army Military Subsistence Market Center and 44 years with the Southern Regional Research Center (SRRC), USDA-ARS-MSA. Of the 44 years at SRRC, she worked 37 years in the Office of the Center Director, first as Secretary to the Associate Center Director and ultimately as Executive Assistant to the Center Director (CD) (1982-present). During her tenure, she assisted five of the seven SRRC Directors. She received the following awards: New Orleans Federal Executive Board Distinguished Service Award for the Outstanding Federal Supervisor (Level 1) in 2005, Mid South Area Secretary of the Year Award in 2001, three SRRC Director's Special Service Awards in 1994, 2003, 2004, and the Sigma Xi's Excellence by Support Personnel in 1990.

Betty provides exemplary administrative/confidential assistance to the CD and serves as the single

control/coordination point within SRRC for the timely and orderly flow of documentation and information essential to the implementation, management, and evaluation of a vast array of research activities for approximately 100 research scientists, specialists, and Research Associates working on 30 in-house research projects and 82 extramural projects. She routinely handles domestic/foreign travel; liaison between CD and Center Staff, Mid South Area, and Headquarters personnel; annual reports; OSQR project reviews; performance appraisals; personnel evaluation cases (RPES) of scientific staff; and assists CD with preparation of the Center's annual budget.

During the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, she reported her location to the Mid South Area Director's office on August 30, 2005, having evacuated New Orleans on August 27<sup>th</sup>. She learned that the CD was enroute to Stoneville, MS, to set up temporary headquarters in facilities provided by the MSA. When the CD called her on September 1<sup>st</sup> with the request that she report to Stoneville, she arrived on September 3<sup>rd</sup>. Working with the CD, Research Leaders, other SRRC administrative and Area personnel, she assisted with the establishment of temporary headquarters for SRRC in the Conference Room of the MSA (which was subsequently moved to facilities of the Delta Health Alliance at Stoneville), and the group began the planning and execution of the post-Katrina plan for SRRC. Employees, who were scattered across the country, were located (none were lost) and placed on Administrative Leave until they were assigned to proper temporary duty stations at 22 locations of ARS, Land Grant and other universities, AMS, industrial laboratories and facilities. The Rapid Recovery Plan was begun by salvaging some equipment, repairing the facilities, replacing losses in equipment, obtaining necessary funds from ARS and Congress, and was completed in the summer of 2006—a year sooner than expected. In April 2006, Betty returned in the first wave to New Orleans and was located in temporary SRRC headquarters, along with a dozen other employees, at the National Finance Center until the major repairs were completed to the Center. When the building was declared safe for reoccupancy in July 2006, she returned to the Center.

Betty has thoroughly enjoyed working for the Federal Government, loves her work, especially the variety and the excitement and fulfillment of being a part of the team for 51 years. She hopes the City of New Orleans never experiences devastation such as Hurricane Katrina, but considers her participation in the recovery efforts of SRRC to be a privilege and an experience of a once-in-a-lifetime adventure.

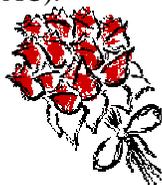
...Jannette Shuford-Reeves



Jannette recently celebrated 40 years of Federal service. While this is an important milestone to recognize, the fact that all of those years have been spent with the USDA/National Agricultural Library (NAL) is the amazing milestone.

Jannette Shuford-Reeves began her career with USDA in 1967 as a Clerk Stenographer and continued to grow within the Library gaining a vast and extensive knowledge of the operations and history of NAL. Her entire career has been in the office professional field where she started as a Clerk Stenographer and is currently the Executive Assistant to the Director of the Library.

Jannette's love and pride for the Library shows everyday in her work and activities and has received many awards and commendations as a result. She is a facilitator for the Professional Leadership Development Group (PLDG) which sponsors personal and professional training and growth seminars and serves on many other committees and events that benefit all NAL staff. Her core values have been an inspiration for others in the field and she is always ready to help and provide leadership to the support staff as well as all others at the Library. She has served on the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals (NACOP) and is a lifetime member and technical advisor to the National Agricultural Library Support Staff Advisory Council (NALSSAC).



For all your dedication and hard work.....  
NACOP recognizes and congratulates both Betty Hoogerwerf and Jannette Shuford-Reeves on wonderful and important USDA careers!

## Make an impression with 'rule of 12'

REMEMBER THE "RULE Of 12/12/12" to make a good impression on everyone you meet:

- **Consider yourself on stage from 12 feet away.** For example, when you first enter a room or approach a group at a business function, others will size you up from that distance. *Tip:* Give yourself a confidence boost as you approach by mentally playing your "theme song," or one that makes you feel like a million bucks.
- **Focus on your body's top 12 inches,** since that's what other people will be doing. People first notice your face and its expression, once you've gotten closer. Maintain eye contact, and make an effort not to distract others with nervous movements.
- **Make your first 12 words powerful.** If you've wowed them so far, you'll reinforce that impression when you speak. Give them a reason to know you better by asking a thought-provoking question. *Example:* "That was an interesting program. What did you think about it?"

Adapted from Administrative PROFESSIONAL • April 2007

## Connect with people on a sincere level

Earn people's trust by asking them to describe their activities, using simple who, what, why, when and how questions:

- ✓ "Who stands out on your team?"
- ✓ "What are your biggest challenges?"
- ✓ "Why is that a priority for you?"
- ✓ "When do you enjoy yourself most?"
- ✓ "How do you celebrate your team's success?"

The simpler your questions, **the** more you'll learn.

Adapted from *Executive Charisma*. Debra Benton, McGraw-Hill.

## Words to Remember

"If you lead through fear you will have little to respect; but if you lead through respect you will have little to fear."

Anonymous

## KINDNESS IN THE WORKPLACE

By: Linda Fulton, MSA

Definition of Kindness: Disposed to do good and confer happiness; Averse to hurting or paining; Benevolent; Gracious. Synonyms are: Compassion, Gentleness, Kindheartedness, Thoughtfulness; Consideration; Helpfulness. Antonym: Cruelty.

Benefits of Kindness in the Workplace: (1) Fosters excellent productive relationships, (2) Encourages intuition and sensitivity, (3) Promotes harmony in the workplace, (4) Promotes leadership qualities, and (5) Inspires trust and confidence.

As office professionals, we should promote kindness in the workplace. One of the synonyms as listed above – helpfulness – certainly defines a major role in our profession. It is important to remember that not everyone has the knowledge office professionals have about how to accomplish a task. Helpfulness is the key when someone asks, maybe even for the second or third time, about a “procedure” or a “form.” The individual requesting the information is most likely not involved in the process on a daily basis, and it is not commonplace to the individual. Also, temptation is such that often our comment to an inquiry is “didn’t you see your E-mail.” Try to bear in mind that many, many E-mails are received on a daily basis. Most often, if a person is not involved in the particular subject matter of the E-mail when it arrives, it is not something that is readily cataloged for future reference. On the other hand, office professionals keep abreast of administrative “procedures” on a daily basis. Therefore, we should be kind and helpful. Office professional expertise frees up research time for scientists, thereby contributing immensely to the mission and goals of the Agency. Indirectly, kindness is a cornerstone in accomplishing Agency milestones. Kindness is important on a personal basis as well as a professional basis in the workplace. A person may just need a sympathetic ear one day, a question about his/her family that shows you are interested, a ride to the mechanic shop, etc. Interest in the personal well-being of an individual promotes trust and confidence.

To sum up the merits of kindness, it demonstrates strength of character, encourages fairness and confidence, identifies you as a leader, teaches patience, and teaches enjoyment of the actions of giving and receiving.

Let us strive to be an office professional leader by being **helpful, gracious, and patient.**



### GRAMMAR Repair Shop

#### When to end a line with a preposition

“Whom did you work for?”

“Which department did you transfer from?”

What do you think about those prepositions dangling at the end of the sentences? Do they look like something your high school English teacher would have frowned upon? If you changed them (“From which department did you transfer?”), would they sound too stilted?

Many people were taught that ending a sentence with a preposition was flat-out wrong. But today’s grammarians actually would give the sentences a thumbs-up.

They would disapprove of ending the sentence with a preposition that doesn’t have an object. So, for example, it would be grammatically incorrect to say “Where’s the document at?”

The bottom line: It’s fine to end a sentence with a preposition, grammatically speaking, and it often makes your sentences flow more naturally. However, many people still believe the practice is incorrect. Best bet: End with a preposition only when it keeps you from sounding hopelessly stilted.

#### Autumn days are here again!

By: John Muir



In autumn when the trees are brown  
The little leaves come tumbling down  
They do not make the slightest sound  
But lie so quietly on the ground  
Until the wind comes puffing by  
And blows them off towards the sky.



The winds will blow their own freshness into you,  
and the storms their energy,  
while cares will drop away from you  
like the leaves of Autumn.