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Did You Know?

[Click here for HTML version.](#)

Please submit story ideas and national award items to Mina Chung, [mina.chung@ars.usda.gov](mailto:mina.chung@ars.usda.gov), or call 301-504-1653.

### Getting Social...and Welcome, ARS Social Media Ambassadors!

ARS has an active Twitter account ([www.twitter.com/USDA\\_ARC](http://www.twitter.com/USDA_ARC)). Twitter is a 24/7 tool and allows great flexibility for getting our messages out to the public. ARS tweets go out daily as a variety of items that have broad public appeal, like research news items and highlights, success stories, events, and pictures. ARS's **Information Staff** manages the account and uses the tool to quickly interact and share interesting items with ARS customers and stakeholders. We recently enlisted ARS field employees to help generate content and ideas for the site to keep our customers engaged, while covering information across ARS.

We encourage you to share your ideas—including pictures—for Tweets with your Area Social Media Ambassador (see list). Keep in mind that tweets are limited to 140 characters (less is better to allow for sharing)—think newspaper headline! Remember: in accordance with USDA policies, please do not sign up for social media accounts using your “.gov” email address; consult your ARS Social Media Ambassador (see list) or the [ARS Social Media Program Coordinator](#) if you have questions.

We encourage employees to use the “Social Media Address Bar” in their email signature line—it encourages sharing and seeking more information about ARS!

### Get more information: [www.ars.usda.gov](http://www.ars.usda.gov)



For questions about the social media address bar, social media in general, or social media policies, contact **Tara T. Weaver-Missick** at [tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov](mailto:tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov) or 301-504-1663.

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## Your Two Cents (Y2C)



[www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents](http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents)

The **Your Two Cents** Action Items management console is ready for your use! **Y2C** administrators are now able to track progress of action items, as well as run reports on status updates and incomplete action items. There is also a field in the console to write an “impact statement” for each action item—a summary of the issue, what staff did to take care of it, and the positive impact it had on ARS. This will be especially helpful when reporting to the Administrator’s Council and the Department about improvements and streamlining in our agency. There are other improvements in the works, and they will be ready to unveil just in time for **Y2C’s** third birthday this May, so stay tuned! The ARS Intranet is getting closer to completion as well. This is a huge project; the site’s design, functionality, and content should strengthen communication and information sharing among ARS employees. Look for more updates in future *ARS & You* issues! ❀

## Keep It Simple!

As part of ARS’s 3-month “Plain Writing Information Campaign,” which kicked off on April 1, employees should now see the “[Introduction to Plain Language](#)” course in their **AgLearn** “To Do” list. Please take the time to complete the course. This campaign is part of the Department’s effort to support the **Plain Writing Act of 2010**—which requires Federal agencies to use “clear government communication that the public can understand and use.” For more information, contact ARS’s Plain Writing Coordinator, **Tara T. Weaver-Missick**, at [tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov](mailto:tara.weavermissick@ars.usda.gov) or 301-504-1663.

**(Plain writing tip:** define unfamiliar, highly technical terms, and spell out acronyms!) ❀

## Around ARS

On March 21, 2013, employees from the **ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory** (NGPRL), Mandan, ND, participated in the Morton County Ag Day, an event geared toward school kids to help them appreciate where their food comes from. NGPRL representatives prepared an exhibit, handed out snacks made from local crops, and spoke to school kids and adults about their research. Billed as “North Dakota’s largest classroom on agriculture,” the event attracted about 4,000 adults and kids. ❀

An updated “Eat Smart, Live Strong” Activity Kit is available for download on the **SNAP-Ed Connection Web site**. The new kit is based on the **2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans** and **MyPlate**. Originally released in 2008, the education resource was developed by the **National Agricultural Library’s Food and Nutrition Information Center**. The latest kit is targeted to consumers 60 to 74 years old who are eligible for USDA Food and Nutrition Service nutrition assistance programs. It aims to increase fruit and vegetable consumption and encourage physical activity. ❀

USDA celebrated National Nutrition Month with a kick-off event on March 5, 2013, as well as with month-long activities. **ARS’s Information Staff, National Agricultural Library, and Beltsville Agricultural Research Center’s Food Quality Laboratory** participated in events held at USDA Headquarters in Washington, DC. Among the other participating agencies were USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service and Food Safety and Inspection Service, and the Food and Drug Administration’s Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition. ❀

## Notable Awards

### 2013 Federal Laboratory Consortium (FLC) National Technology Transfer Awards

FLC Awards for Excellence in Technology Transfer were presented to four ARS teams on April 25 at the FLC National Meeting in Westminster, CO.

Research Horticulturist and Lead Scientist **Fumiomi Takeda**, ARS Appalachian Fruit Research Station, Kearneysville, WV, and Richard Barnes, Trellis Growing Systems, LLC, Fort Wayne, IN, won for "Commercial Rotating Cross-Arm Trellis Technology for Blackberry Production."

Research Microbiologist **Phyllis Martin**, Research Entomologist **Michael Blackburn**, Research Leader **Dawn Gundersen-Rindal**, and Biological Science Laboratory Technician **Ashaki "Teddi" Mitchell**—all with the ARS Invasive Insect Biocontrol and Behavior Laboratory, Beltsville, MD—won for "Novel Microbial Insecticide *Chromobacterium subtsugae*."

Research Microbiologist **Xixuan Jin** and Biological Science Technician **Robert "Brad" Elliott**, both with the ARS Biological Control of Pests Research Unit, Stoneville, MS, and Dan Custis, Advanced Biological Marketing, Inc., Van Wert, OH, won for "Method for Encapsulation of Microparticles."

Research Entomologists **Juan A. Morales-Ramos** and **M. Guadalupe Rojas**, ARS Biological Control of Pests Research Unit, Stoneville, MS; Research Entomologist **David I. Shapiro-Ilan**, ARS Southeastern Fruit and Tree Nut Research Laboratory, Byron, GA; and W. Louis Tedders, Southeastern Insectaries, Inc., Perry, GA, won for "In Vivo Production of Entomopathogenic Nematodes." ❀



John Milner.

April 20-24, in Boston, MA. During the same meeting, Milner and REE Under Secretary **Catherine Woteki** also were inducted as new **ASN Fellows**. ❀



Catherine Woteki.



ARS Acquisition Branch Chief **Brandon Levin** presents the Eagle Award to Contract Specialist **Louise Levenson-Snitz**.

Each year ARS Acquisition and Property Division gives out the Eagle Award for Procurement Excellence in support of the Service Disabled Veteran Owned Small Business (SDVOSB) Community. On March 28, 2013, the FY2012 Eagle Award was presented to Contract Specialist **Louise Levenson-Snitz**, ARS Western Business Service Center, Albany, CA, for her efforts resulting in over \$1 million awarded to SDVOSBs. ❀



Stacy Mauzey, left, and Carolee Bull.

**Stacy J. Mauzey**, an undergraduate research intern mentored by Research Plant Pathologist **Carolee Bull**, ARS Crop Improvement and Protection Research

Unit, Salinas, CA, has been selected to receive a 2013 National Science Foundation (NSF) Graduate Research Fellowship. The Fellowship is the highest award in science for graduate students in the United States. NSF received over 13,000 submitted applications for this year's competition and made 2,000 award offers. Mauzey is currently pursuing a master's degree in the Department of Plant Pathology at Washington State University. While interning at the ARS lab in Salinas, Mauzey co-authored several publications of interest to the agricultural industry in the area. ❁

As members of the "Pakistan Team" (Office of Agricultural Affairs Pakistan), several ARS employees were recently selected for the Foreign Agricultural Service (FAS) Honor Award for Outstanding Cross-Agency Team. Representing ARS on the Pakistan Team were ARS Deputy Administrator **Kay Simmons**, Crop Production and Protection, Beltsville, MD; International Affairs Specialist **Marcella Witting**, ARS Office of International Research Programs, Beltsville, MD; Research Leader and Acting National Program Leader **David Marshall**, ARS Plant Science Research Unit, Raleigh, NC; Research Leader **Brian Scheffler**, ARS Genomics and Bioinformatics Research Unit, Stoneville, MS; Research Plant Geneticist **Jodi Scheffler**, ARS Crop Genetics Research Unit, Stoneville, MS; and Research Leader **Luis Rodriguez**, ARS Foreign Animal Disease Research Unit, Orient Point, NY. The team also included representatives from three other USDA agencies—Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, FAS, and Natural Resources Conservation Service—as well as representatives from USAID and the State Department. The award was presented on April 10 at the annual FAS Honor Awards Ceremony in the USDA Whitten Building, Washington, DC. ❁

Research Rangeland Management Specialist **David Toledo**, ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory, Mandan, ND, received the Distinguished Graduate Student Award for Excellence in Research from Texas A&M University (TAMU) for his outstanding academic record and contributions in teaching and research. He will be recognized at a reception on April 29 on the TAMU campus in College Station, TX. ❁



David Toledo.

## Did You Know?



Hog Island sheep at Mount Vernon, VA.

ARS maintains the National Plant Germplasm System and National Animal Germplasm Program, comprising genebanks like the National Center for Genetic Resources Preservation. These genebanks help preserve genetic diversity of agriculturally important plants, animals, and microbes. Heirloom varieties are included among the thousands of samples of tomatoes, apples, grapes, and other fruits, vegetables, plants and animal germplasm in these collections. Heirloom varieties are older varieties that our grandparents may have grown. ARS scientists are finding that these historical treasures might have important characteristics needed for today's crops and livestock to meet current agricultural production needs—like adapting to extreme weather conditions, diseases, insect pests, and of course, satisfying high consumer demands.

The importance of some of ARS's heirloom germplasm collections has increased with the discovery of valuable genes for plant and animal breeding that can be re-incorporated into modern varieties. In some crops, breeding efforts might have narrowed diversity, and the genes from heirloom varieties can be restored to provide important traits.

In one example, ARS helped return to cultivation Carolina Gold, a rice variety that was the gold standard in colonial America. Carolina Gold was known for its lovely subtle gold patina when milled correctly and observed in sunlight. ARS researchers used DNA markers to help purify rice samples until they had seed of the real heirloom variety. Today, Carolina Gold is grown under organic production conditions that resemble methods

used in the colonial era, and it is sold at a premium price as a niche market crop.

Heirloom animal breeds are also part of ARS's collections. Scientists have collected and preserved biological material from two rare sheep breeds—Hog Island and Leicester Longwool. Both Hog Island and Leicester Longwool sheep came from breeds raised during the colonial era—before the advent of modern breeds. They are smaller than today's sheep, with less meat and coarser wool, but they have other characteristics that newer breeds lack. Today, fewer than 200 registered Hog Island sheep remain, 54 of which currently live at George Washington's Mount Vernon in Virginia.

ARS scientists use a variety of high-tech storage techniques to ensure these cool jewels are preserved for decades to come. One such tool is cryopreservation, which involves keeping plant or animal germplasm alive by storing it at extremely low (below-freezing) temperatures. When needed, samples can be thawed and the germplasm can be used to grow out a plant or animal from the past. ARS scientists were pioneers in cryopreservation technology, and that tradition continues, making it possible to preserve these genetic gems!

*Written by Tara T. Weaver-Missick and Kim Kaplan, ARS Information Staff.*

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