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[Click here for HTML version.](#)

Please submit story ideas and national award items to Sue Kendall, [sue.kendall@ars.usda.gov](mailto:sue.kendall@ars.usda.gov), or call 301-504-1623.

Please submit photos for Photo Corner to Carol Nathan, [carol.nathan@ars.usda.gov](mailto:carol.nathan@ars.usda.gov), or call 301-504-1649.

### **Hoofin' It for Hunger**



Participants in Hoofin' It for Hunger run the course near Miles City, MT.

It was a cool, rainy morning for the “Hoofin’ It for Hunger” trail run on Sunday, October 12. The run was held at the USDA-ARS **Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory’s** 56,000-acre ranch west of Miles City, MT, in support of the [Feds Feed Families](#) food drive. In a team effort with the [American Farm Bureau Federation’s Young Farmers and Ranchers Program](#), Fort Keogh hosts the run, which includes a half marathon, 10K, 5K, and 1-mile fun run/walk. This year there were 197 registered runners, but a few did not want to challenge the elements that day. Those who did were rewarded with warm sun, fresh air, and a great day as clouds broke. This event is held to benefit the [Montana Food Bank Network](#). Over \$6,000 will be donated from proceeds raised through 38 sponsors and registration fees. Participants of the 1-mile fun run/walk provided 214 pounds of food items in lieu of registration fees, which were donated to a local Miles City food bank. After finishing the run, participants raved about the beautiful countryside route, which included scenic views of livestock barns, crop fields, pastures, banks of the Yellowstone River, an old railroad bed, and a prairie. Many of the runners, with little food-production knowledge, were fascinated with the location’s history, the lab’s agricultural research mission, and the collaboration with farmers and ranchers to sponsor the food-focused event. Hoofin’ It for Hunger is purely a trail run—no pavement here. The mud made it a bit interesting, but the participants’ smiles and the donations generated from the event made it worth all the effort!

Written by **Diona Austill** and **Mark Petersen**, USDA-ARS Fort Keogh Livestock and Range Research Laboratory. ❀

## Your Two Cents (Y2C)



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

Greetings from Y2C! We have some big changes coming with Y2C, though they're all behind the scenes. You will still be seeing the same helpful information, best practices, and thoughtful discourse on the things that matter most to you, such as new fiscal year activities like "Year of the RL," an initiative aimed at strengthening and supporting Agency Research Leaders; performance plan changes; [area consolidations](#); and the various ways we're disseminating information about those changes. Do you have something to say about any of those subjects? Questions? [Kudos](#) for someone who did a great job guiding ARS from FY14 into FY15? We're listening.

*Tip:* Did you know that AXON keeps an [archive of ARS-All e-mails](#)? If something found its way into your trash folder too quickly, check the archive. ❀

## Ethics



## CFC & Other Fundraising

It's that time of year again! The kickoff of the annual Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) was September 1, 2014. Also, local schools are busy fundraising for student activities. It's a good time to issue a reminder about fundraising in the Federal workplace. Private fundraising, even for the most altruistic community-oriented purposes, such as band candy, Girl Scout cookies, or bargain coupon books, are not permitted in official space or on government time. CFC is the only authorized workplace solicitation of government employees for a charitable contribution. Federal agencies traditionally take a very active role in encouraging employee participation in CFC and often come up with creative methods to involve not only employees, but also non-Federal entities. At the same time, employee participation cannot be coerced, and efforts to involve non-Federal organizations must not violate other existing ethical rules. If you are planning a CFC event, you are encouraged to look over the fundraising guidance provided on the [USDA Office of Ethics website](#) and to download the CFC Event Registration form (OE-109), listed [here](#). If you have any questions about fundraising, please contact your [Agency/Area Ethics Advisor](#). ❀

## Axon – the ARS Intranet



There's a lot happening in the [Administrator's Corner](#) of Axon. If you haven't perused that section in a while, you might want to take a look at the "Inform and Engage" webinar recordings and transcripts or the

REE News. Have you nominated a coworker for a "Shout Out" on [StARS](#) yet? StARS is our Agency's informal peer-recognition program. Nominate a coworker for going above and beyond, and he or she will get notified to check out the StARS page on Axon. You can also nominate a group of people by using the "Constellation" feature.

Updates to Axon are made daily, so check the [What's New](#) section on the home page often. Some new pages and information on Axon are listed below, however, there's a lot more, so be sure to visit [Axon](#).

[Area Consolidation & Mode Code Info](#)

[ARS Listening Sessions Notes](#)

[EAP & WorkLife4You](#)

[Electronic Lab Notebooks](#)

[State of the Agency Webinar Survey Results](#)

[Work/Life Programs & Child Care](#) ❀

## Around ARS

### Dairy Expo

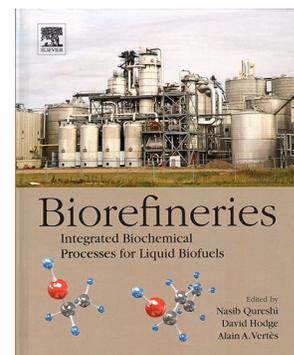


Students search displays for answers to the FFA Dairy Forage Quiz at World Dairy Expo, Madison, WI.

ARS's U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center (USDFRC) in Madison, WI, hosted several technology transfer and outreach efforts at the [2014 World Dairy Expo](#), held in Madison from September 30 to October 4. The show attracted more than 77,000 dairy producers and industry reps from across the United States and 94 countries. As an organizing partner for the [World Forage Analysis Superbowl](#), an event that encourages farmers to grow high-quality forage for dairy cattle, USDFRC organized a seminar series that attracted about 300 stakeholders. ARS Research Scientists **Wayne Coblenz**, **John Grabber**, and **Bill Jokela** were speakers. The Center also created an educational display about how economics and environmental sustainability go hand in hand. An "FFA Dairy Forage Quiz" brought 525 students to the display, where they searched for answers to the quiz questions. This event was organized by Agricultural Information Specialist **Lori Bocher**. Also volunteering were Biological Science Lab Technician **Jan Pitas** and Research Scientists **Geoff Brink** and **Ron Hatfield**. Biological Science Lab Technician **Diane Amundson** created another display, "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle," which highlighted the role dairy cows play in reducing waste by eating byproducts from the processing of food, biofuels, and fiber and turning it into milk. This display was part of tours given to around 1,500 Madison-area 4th graders. ❀

### Biorefineries Book

Research Chemical Engineer **Nasib Qureshi** and two university colleagues are co-editors of a new book, *Biorefineries: Integrated Biochemical Processes for Liquid Biofuels*, published September 1, 2014, by Elsevier. Qureshi is with the ARS National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research in Peoria, IL. *Biorefineries* outlines the processes and steps to successfully produce and scale up production of two types of biofuels, butanol and ethanol, from cellulosic agricultural residues for commercial purposes. Qureshi's co-editors are David Hodge of Michigan State University and Alain Vertes of the London Business School, NxR Biotechnologies, and Institut Pasteur. ❀



Biorefineries book cover.

### Science Rocks!



Michael Grisham advises local students on their science fair projects at "Science Rocks!" in Houma, LA.

Research Leader **Michael Grisham** of the ARS Sugarcane Research Unit in Houma, LA, participated in [Science Rocks!](#) a program sponsored by the Terrebonne Parish Library. The goal of the program, held September 6, 2014, was to help students strengthen

their science fair projects and connect with practicing scientists, science professionals, and engineers. Students came from a wide variety of schools, and some were home schooled. Project ideas ranged from better ways to clean windows, paper airplane experiments, robotics challenges, and best ways to eliminate bacteria. ❀

## Hispanic Heritage Event



Cultural artwork by Beltsville Academy students displayed at the Beltsville Hispanic Heritage event. See [Photo Corner](#) for more.

Support Scientist **Verneta Gaskins** and Office Automation Assistant **Adrienne Labega**, members of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force-Special Emphasis Subcommittee, took the lead in organizing a Hispanic Heritage Month “Lunch and Learn,” held September 17, 2014, on the Beltsville, Maryland, ARS campus. More than 75 people attended the event, which featured guest speaker Richard G. (Rick) Chavez, a former USDA employee with an interesting post-retirement career as a freelance photographer. Another highlight of the event was a gallery of art by 7th and 8th graders from the nearby Beltsville Academy. In their cultural studies of the traditional Mexican Day of the Dead, the children created skull pictures and a 20-foot-long “papel picado” (cut-paper banner). See [Photo Corner](#). ❀

## AWIC Offers Hands-on Training

**D’Anna Jensen** and **Tim Allen** of the National Agricultural Library’s Animal Welfare Information Center (AWIC) presented three 3-hour workshops and six 2-hour hands-on database searching classes for more than 150 scientists and veterinarians from Duke University, North Carolina State University, several campuses of the University of North Carolina system, members of the North Carolina Association for Biomedical Research, and members of the North Carolina Academy of Laboratory Animal Medicine. The workshops were held September 16-18, 2014, at Duke University in Durham, NC. ❀

## Science Olympiad

Research Molecular Biologist **Carole Bassett**, with the ARS Appalachian Fruit Research Station in Kearneysville, WV, took part in [Science Olympiad](#), an event attended by students from local schools. Bassett hosted a fruit-tasting station, where the students learned about pH, differences in the acidity of common fruits, and how humans perceive taste. They chopped fruit and squeezed the juices into tiny dishes before measuring pH to determine acidity. They determined that lemon was the most acidic, followed by strawberry, and grapefruit. Apple juice and orange juice were about the same. Students were also challenged to identify fruit juices and taste liquids that were salty, sweet, sour, and bitter. Fresh cotton swabs were dipped in the liquids and rolled around on the students’ tongues, first as they pinched their noses closed and then with their noses open, so they could identify the fruit volatile signatures of the different juices.



Carole Bassett hosts a fruit-tasting station for students taking part in “Science Olympiad.”

## People’s Garden



Fresh produce from the People’s Garden at the ARS lab in Brookings, SD. See [Photo Corner](#) for more.

than 5,200 pounds of fresh produce to two local groups that distribute it to people in need. The 3,600-square-foot garden incorporates many of the management practices studied at the laboratory, such as no-tillage soil management, cover crops, inter-seeding, water conservation, and mulch. Crops grown include tomatoes, corn, squash, broccoli, cabbage, and more. Lab employees volunteer their time for all garden-related activities, with assistance from community members. The garden project was started by Technicians **Kurt Dage**, **Chris Nelson**, and **Sharon Nichols**, and a former post-doc at the lab, **Sarah Stetson**. The People’s Garden Initiative was started in 2009 to challenge employees to create gardens at USDA facilities. See [Photo Corner](#). ❀

The staff of the Integrated Cropping Systems Research Laboratory in Brookings, SD, grow a [People’s Garden](#) on the laboratory grounds. Since starting the garden in 2011, they have donated more

## Water Savers

The **ARS Sugarbeet Research Unit (SBRU)** in Fort Collins, CO, was recently profiled by [Fort Collins ClimateWise](#) for a water-conservation initiative devised and used by employees of the unit. Sugar beets are root vegetables and are covered in dirt when harvested. It takes a lot of water to clean them off. SBRU employees worked together to design a new wash stand that uses about half as much water, cleans beets twice as fast, and is easier to operate. Water savings the first year of use were estimated at 10,000 gallons. ClimateWise is a free, voluntary, City of Fort Collins program dedicated to helping local businesses and the environment. The publication in which the SBRU profile appears will be promoted at various events throughout the year, bringing wider recognition to the work of the SBRU. Click [here](#) to view a pdf of the publication. ❀

## Notable Awards

### FOIA a Success Story

ARS was recognized by the Department of Justice (DOJ) in its 2013-2014 list of [Agency FOIA Success Stories](#), an important section of the Chief FOIA Officer Report. Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Officer **Stasia Hutchison**, with the ARS Information Staff in Beltsville, MD, administers the FOIA program for the REE agencies. For the second year in a row, ARS made the DOJ's list, which highlights agency efforts to increase transparency or proactive information disclosure. ARS was recognized for leading the effort to easily identify USDA research and researchers through the USDA VIVO system (developed and administered by a Board and Technical Team consisting of ARS, ERS, NASS and NIFA employees). VIVO enables scientists to network and find each other's research, grants, patents, publications, and more, ultimately making USDA research more accessible to the public. Hutchison also served on a subcommittee tasked with creating two FOIA training courses, one for non-FOIA professionals and one for FOIA professionals. The non-FOIA professionals course is now available on AgLearn and was also cited as a Success Story.

## AbilityOne Awards



In Beltsville, MD, ARS employees and local recipients of AbilityOne Awards gathered for the ceremony. See [Photo Corner](#) for more.

The ARS **Acquisition and Property Division**, on behalf of the REE Agencies, implemented a new Small Business and AbilityOne Awards Program to fill a gap in recognizing small businesses that have gone the extra mile in assisting the agencies in their mission. The first annual award ceremonies were held at three ARS locations: Beltsville, MD, on September 3; New Orleans, LA, on September 8; and College Station, TX, on September 9, 2014. Five companies, nominated by ARS employees, were recognized:

### *Small Business of the Year*

Rhodeside & Harwell, Inc., Alexandria VA  
Nominated by **Michael Wigfall**, Contracting Officer,  
Eastern Business Service Center

### *Service Disabled Veteran-Owned Small Business of the Year*

Four Points Technology, LLC, Chantilly, VA  
Nominated by **Rob Risch**, Contracting Officer, Western  
Business Service Center

### *Women-Owned Small Business of the Year*

Celta Services, Inc., Metairie, LA  
Nominated by **Kelli Lightfoot**, Contracting Officer,  
Western Business Service Center

### *Small Disadvantaged Business of the Year*

Integrated Network Solutions, Inc., Hockley, TX  
Nominated by **Cindy Cose**, Contracting Officer, Western  
Business Service Center

### *8(a) Concern of the Year*

Ultimate Construction, Inc., Jessup, MD  
Nominated by **Brian Brown**, Contracting Officer, Eastern  
Business Service Center. ❀



## Photo Corner

### Secretary Vilsack Visits ARS in Miami



Horticulturist Tomas Ayala-Silva (right), accompanied by Center Director Peter Teal (center), takes USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack on a tour of the ARS Subtropical Horticulture Research Station, in Miami, FL, on October 2, 2014.



During the tour, Horticulturist Tomas Ayala-Silva (center) and Center Director Peter Teal (right) show Secretary Vilsack some of the crops grown at the ARS station.

### Hispanic Heritage Lunch and Learn



The Hispanic Heritage Lunch and Learn event in Beltsville, MD, featured "Day of the Dead" artwork by students from the Beltsville Academy. See story in [Around ARS](#).



Left to right: Northeast Area Director Dariusz Swietlik, ARS scientist Talo Pastor-Corrales, and guest speaker Rick Chavez converse at the event. See story in [Around ARS](#).

### Morrison Lecture



ARS National Program Leader Gail C. Wisler presents the 2014 Benjamin Y. Morrison Memorial Lecture award to Cornell University professor William B. Miller. Click [here](#) for more information about the award program and on how to nominate a candidate. Current ARS employees are not eligible.

### Small Business and AbilityOne Awards



In College Station, TX (left to right): Rocky Derr, Integrated Network Solutions, Inc. (INS); John McMurtry, Associate Area Director, Southern Plains Area (SPA); and Tony Samper, INS. See story in [Around ARS](#).



In College Station, TX, Mark Buxkemper, SPA; Tony Samper, INS. See story in [Around ARS](#).



In New Orleans, LA (left to right): Thomas E. Cleveland, Director, Southern Regional Research Center (SRRC); Lynette Monterro and Patrick Gilmore of Celta Services. See story in [Around ARS](#).

### People's Garden in Brookings



Staff of the ARS lab in Brookings, SD, plant vegetables in their People's Garden on site. See story in [Around ARS](#).



Some of the bounty harvested from the Brookings lab's People's Garden. See story in [Around ARS](#).

### Future Farmer?



Solomon Johnson, son of ARS Acting National Program Leader Jane Johnson, rides his John Deere tractor on his grandparents' farm in west-central Minnesota. He represents the fourth generation to have lived on the farm, which is currently operated by one of his older cousins. His German ancestors homesteaded on the land in the mid-1800s. Now in 8th grade, Solomon is taking his first ag-tech class. Future farmer? Maybe!

## Did You Know?

### Pairing Plant “Buddies” With Biocontrol in Northern Florida



Sweet alyssum flowering plants intercropped with lettuce in demonstration field plots.

People generally don't go out of their way to attract insects. But on a few small farms outside Tallahassee, FL, that's precisely what some growers are doing—with guidance from ARS and Florida A&M University (FAMU) scientists.

Through the scientists' field demonstrations and technical

presentations, the growers are learning how to pair their crops with “companion plants.” Some of these, like sweet alyssum, a flowering annual, bolster populations of beneficial insects that prey on costly crop pests. Others, like giant red mustard, repel the pests, “pushing” them away from the main crop. Then, there are so-called “trap crops.”

“These are companion crops you can plant next to the main crop to ‘pull,’ or lure, the pest away to where it can be controlled with pesticides, biocontrol agents, or other means,” explains ARS Entomologist **Susie Legaspi**, who codirects FAMU's Center for Biological Control (CBC) in Tallahassee.



Demonstrating releases of spined soldier bugs at Turkey Hill Farm, Tallahassee, FL.

Companion cropping and biocontrol are complementary facets of an integrated pest management (IPM) approach that's become increasingly popular among the Tallahassee region's community of organic growers and sustainable farmers—many of whom market their produce directly to local chefs and farmers' markets, Legaspi says.

Legaspi and her colleagues have been demonstrating the principles of IPM to growers, home and urban gardeners,

students, and other interested parties since 2008. Among such groups is the Red Hills Small Farm Alliance. Some members there have begun using flowering plants like sweet alyssum and buckwheat to bolster hoverfly numbers following their release to biologically control whiteflies and aphids in vulnerable crops like collards, tomato, salad greens, melon, and cantaloupe.

“These companion plants are especially attractive to adult hoverflies, which feed on nectar,” says Legaspi, with the ARS Center for Medical, Agricultural, and Veterinary Entomology in Gainesville, FL. More adults, in turn, mean more larvae, which “are the predators that feed on pests in the main crop,” she adds.

Besides the Red Hills group, Legaspi says they've also begun similar projects involving spined soldier bug releases at Turkey Hill Farm in Tallahassee and Crescent Moon Organic Farm in Sopchoppy, FL. Data resulting from growers' trials of companion cropping will also be used to assess cost-effectiveness and impact on pest populations.

Pest control isn't the only potential gain, though: Companion plants can shelter shade-loving crops from direct sunlight, provide structural support (think beans on corn stalks), suppress weeds, and share nutrients in the form of nitrogen-fixing root bacteria and organic matter.

At the end of the day, it's a buddy system worth encouraging.

Written by **Jan Suszkiw**, ARS Information Staff.

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