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Your Two Cents (Y2C)



www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents

Focus Group Members Needed

Greetings from Y2C! We don't know about you, but there's a certain groundhog that we'd like a word with. Brrr.

Exciting news—[Your Two Cents](#) is looking for a few good Focus Group members!

Are you interested in making ARS a better place to work? The Y2C team needs you for its Focus Group—the folks in the field who serve as a reality check for our program team by discussing ideas and responses with us. You will have access to all of the ideas that come in to Y2C, and our responses. The Focus Group checks in with the Y2C team weekly via teleconference with the aim of keeping responses meaningful and relevant to ARS locations.

Your commitment to the Y2C Focus Group includes:

- an hour or so each week to review what has come in to Y2C and the responses that have been posted.
- a weekly conference call of about an hour.

If you're interested, please send us:

- your name and that of your immediate supervisor,
- your position title, and
- the city and state you're located in.

We will need to contact your supervisor to get his/her approval for you to spend the time necessary to be on the team. The demographic information is needed so that we can keep the group an effective cross-section of the agency as a whole. We need everyone from RLS to OAAs; from Techs to Area Directors, and everything in between!

Finally, we'll need a 1- to 5-sentence statement on why this is an opportunity you want to pursue. What do you hope to get out of being on the Focus Group? What do you hope ARS gets from your being on the Focus Group?

Please send us your "application" at yourtwocents@ars.usda.gov by March 13, 2015. ❖

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

Please submit photos for Photo Corner to Carol Nathan, carol.nathan@ars.usda.gov or call 301-504-1649.

Axon—the ARS Intranet

“ARS in the News” Is Now on Axon!



You probably remember receiving ARS News Clips every Friday for the past year or so. They came from the Information Staff Director via an e-mail sent to all ARS employees, with the subject line “ARS in the News.”

The News Clips still exist. They’ve just migrated to [Axon](#). The clips serve to provide you with a glimpse of how much media coverage ARS generates. Sometimes in just 1 week, a popular story can be picked up by a dozen newspapers and a half dozen magazines.

Often the stories originate from ARS’s in-house [Agricultural Research](#) magazine or from news feeds that are generated from the magazine. Feeds that go out on the ARS news service are received by over 2,000 subscribers who choose to receive it daily and almost 4,000 who prefer it weekly. Most subscribers are with the news media.

Axon is your one-stop shop for so many sources of information, and the ARS News Clips are one of the most recent additions.—By **Robert Sowers**, ARS Information Staff.

Axon URL: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov>

Username: arsnet\firstname.lastname

Password: (same password as email) ❖

Ethics

Letters of Reference

Have you ever been asked by a friend or former colleague to write a letter of reference and were not sure whether you could use agency letterhead or your official title? What about an immigration support letter? To find out the answers to these questions and others, please look over the [guidance](#) on the [Science Ethics](#) website. ❖

Around ARS

Editor’s Pick

Research Microbiologist **Maria Brandl**, Research Geneticist **Ivan Simko**, and Biological Science Lab Technician **Yaguang Zhou** coauthored a paper that was selected as an “Editor’s Pick” in the February 4 issue of [BMC Microbiology](#). The title of the paper is “Downy mildew disease promotes the colonization of romaine lettuce by *Escherichia coli* O157:H7 and *Salmonella enterica*.” Brandl and Zhou are in the Produce Safety and Microbiology Research Unit in Albany, CA, and Simko is in the Crop Improvement and Protection Research Unit in Salinas, CA. ❖

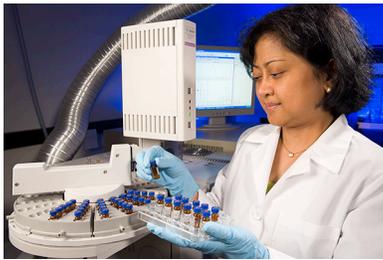
Science Over a Cup of Coffee



A bee on borage, an oilseed crop. Photo by Jim Eklund, ARS.

Matt Thom, Postdoctoral Research Entomologist at the ARS North Central Soil Conservation Research Laboratory in Morris, MN, was a guest presenter at the January 27, 2015, local meeting of [Café Scientifique](#), a community forum for informal discussion of science and technology. Thom’s presentation was titled “Oilseeds for You and Me: Crops that Provide Food for Bees.” The event was held in the evening at the Common Cup Coffeehouse in Morris, MN. Learn more about Thom’s talk [here](#). ❖

Rimando Gives Webinar Talk



Agnes Rimando in her lab.

Research Chemist **Agnes Rimando** was invited by the [American Chemical Society](#) (ACS) to present an hour-long webinar on her research on pterostilbene, a natural compound found in blueberries

and other plants. The webinar, titled “Natural Product Chemistry: Benefits of Pterostilbene on Health, Memory, and Anxiety,” was held February 5. There were 648 logins, some from Europe and Asia, and it received numerous positive comments. Rimando is in the Natural Products Utilization Research Unit in University, MS. ❖

New Work Group Formed

Researchers from four ARS units met in Kimberly, ID, on February 10 and 11 to form the “Dairy AgroEcosystem Work Group” (DAWG).

Nineteen scientists from the four locations shared

information about their current research and research capacity and looked for cross-cutting issues and opportunities to expand current or develop future research collaborations. Their first project will focus on reactive nitrogen (ammonia and nitrates) in dairy production systems. Participating were the Northwest Irrigation and Soils Research Lab, Kimberly, ID; the Pasture Systems and Watershed Management Research Unit, University Park, PA; the Soil and Water Management Research Unit, St. Paul, MN; and the U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center, Madison, WI. ❖



Leaders from the four participating ARS units (left to right): Mark Boggess, Madison, WI; Dave Bjorneberg, Kimberly, ID; John Baker, St. Paul, MN; and Pete Kleinman, University Park, PA. Photo by Lori Bocher, ARS.

Interns Hosted in Albany



Back row, left to right: CCSF students Sarah Su, Cheuk Tam, Matthew Taylor, Jeffrey Stauffer, and Prisca Cheng. Front row, left to right: WRRC mentors Debbie Laudencia-Chingcuanco, Sylvia Hua, David Brandon, and Yong Gu. Photo by Delilah Wood, ARS.

Scientists **David Brandon**, **Yong Gu**, **Sylvia Hua**, and **Debbie Laudencia-Chingcuanco** at the ARS Western Regional Research Center in Albany, CA, hosted 5 student interns from [City College of San Francisco's](#) (CCSF) Biotechnology Program. At the CCSF Biosciences Symposium in December 2014, the students completed their Bridge to Biosciences Certificate Program, with the presentation of posters based on their semester's work with WRRC mentors. Student Prisca Cheng (mentored by Yong Gu) received the Poster Award. Also participating in the program was **Bill Orts**, Research Leader of the Bioproducts Research Unit, who led a networking roundtable on the role of federal government research labs in biotechnology. ❖

Science Fair Judges



Science fair judges Meg Allen, Brian Peterson, Vijay Nandula, and Jason Corbitt.

In January 2015, several ARS scientists in Stoneville, MS, volunteered their time and expertise to serve as judges in science and engineering fairs at local elementary and middle schools. Scientists from the Jamie Whitten Delta

States Research Center are regularly invited to lend a hand in judging these local scientific educational events, in which students in grades 3-8 prepare poster projects in behavioral science, biochemistry, botany, chemistry, engineering, medicine/health, physics, and team categories. This year, the judges included Research Entomologist **Meg Allen** (Biological Control of Pests Research Unit), Research Plant Physiologist **Vijay Nandula** and Physical Science Technician **Jason Corbitt** (Crop Production Systems Research Unit), and Research Molecular Biologist **Geoff Waldbieser**, Research Physiologist **Brian Peterson**, and Research Geneticist **Brian Bosworth** (Warmwater Aquaculture Research Unit). Says Peterson, "We had an excellent experience interacting with the students and teachers and plan to judge next year."



Science fair judges Geoff Waldbieser, Brian Peterson, and Brian Bosworth, surrounded by students' posters at an elementary school in Cleveland, MS. ❖

Notable Awards

ARS Scientists Honored by Weed Science Society

Three ARS scientists were among the more than two dozen honored by the [Weed Science Society of America](#) (WSSA) at its annual meeting, held this year in Lexington, KY, February 9-12.

Research Agronomist **Wiley Carroll Johnson III**, was presented with the Fellow Award—WSSA's highest recognition—for his research accomplishments in weed ecology and weed-management strategies and systems. Johnson is in the Crop Protection and Management Research Unit, in Tifton, GA.



Wiley Carroll Johnson.



Franck Dayan.

Franck Dayan, Plant Physiologist in the Natural Products Utilization Research Unit, Oxford, MS, was honored with WSSA's Outstanding Research Award for a career devoted to the study of synthetic and natural herbicides and exploring how plants evolve resistance. Dayan was also invited to give a symposium presentation on a natural herbicide.

Research Ecologist **J. Franklin Egan** was honored with an Outstanding Paper Award by WSSA. Egan is a coauthor of the paper, published in *Weed Science*, titled "A meta-analysis on the effects of 2,4-D and dicamba drift on soybean and cotton." Egan is in the Pasture Systems and Watershed Management Research Unit, in University Park, PA.

[WSSA](#) is a nonprofit professional society established to encourage the development of knowledge concerning weeds and their impact on the environment, working to promote research, education, and extension outreach activities related to weeds. ❖

Range Management Society Honors Two ARS Scientists

Two ARS scientists received high honors at the 68th Annual Meeting of the [Society for Range Management](#) (SRM), held January 31-February 6, 2015, in Sacramento, CA. Both honorees are in ARS's Range Management Research Unit in Las Cruces, NM.



Kris Havstad.

Supervisory Research Rangeland Management Specialist **Kris Havstad** received the W.R. Chapline Award for Research—the second highest award that SRM bestows—for exceptional and sustained research accomplishments related to rangelands.

Research Soil Scientist **Jeff Herrick** was made a Fellow of SRM. The Fellow honor is conferred upon long-term members in recognition of their exceptional service and contributions to the Society and its programs. ❖



Jeff Herrick.

Kistler Elected AAAS Fellow



Harold Corby Kistler.

Research Geneticist **Harold Corby Kistler** was awarded the distinction of Fellow by the [American Association for the Advancement of Science](#) (AAAS). He was recognized for distinguished contributions to the

field of fungal genetics and genomics, especially of phytopathogenic species of *Fusarium*. Fellows are elevated to this rank because of their efforts toward advancing science applications that are deemed scientifically or socially distinguished. Kistler received the honor on Saturday, February 14, at the AAAS Fellows Forum during the 2015 AAAS Annual Meeting in San Jose, CA. Kistler is with the Cereal Disease Laboratory in St. Paul, MN. ❖



Photo Corner



Research Molecular Biologist Frank Harmon (standing) and Center Director Sarah Hake (seated) teach kids about gardening and plant growth at the community garden at the ARS Western Regional Research Center in Albany, CA. See this month's ["Did You Know?"](#) for details.



Children of ARS employees help plant vegetables in the Albany center's garden during "Take Your Child To Work Day."



Marie Franc (formerly with ARS) and ARS employees Sarah Batt Throne and Teresa O'Keeffe display produce from the Albany center's garden.



Did You Know?

WRRC Volunteers Help Feed Families, Teach Gardening Basics



At a community garden on the grounds of the ARS Western Regional Research Center in Albany, CA, local students help prepare the soil and plant seeds.

With help from a handful of ARS volunteers, a small patch of earth at the Western Regional Research Center (WRRC) in Albany, CA, is serving a dual purpose: educating area schoolchildren about where their food comes from and providing food to those in need.

The volunteers spend an hour or two each week weeding, planting, and harvesting vegetables, legumes, squashes, and cover crops at the WRRC community garden. It is part of an effort that began 4 years ago to raise both food and awareness about the important connection between our food supply and the soil that we need to produce it, says Rebecca Haussmann, who helps coordinate the ARS volunteers and school visits to the garden.

“The school groups, and even our ARS employees, are seeing firsthand how food is connected to the land and how the land is connected to the food,” says Haussmann, who is manager of the Plant Gene Expression Center, co-located with the WRRC in Albany.

Produce from the garden on Buchanan Street is donated to City Ministries, which operates a food bank that serves the Albany area. The most serious threats to bountiful yields are squirrels and geese, but the garden has become a dependable source of produce for the food bank. About 2,000 pounds of food are donated to it every year.

The garden usually plays host to children from nearby Ocean View Elementary School a few times each year. Children who tour this 80-by-120 foot patch see and hold different varieties of seeds and seedlings, hear how those plants grow, and do most of the planting.

They will come back months later either to harvest what they planted or to pick the fruits of another group’s labors.

Their visits are scheduled to ensure an adequate number of adult supervisors, often a mix of parents and ARS volunteers. Harvests are sometimes delayed a week or two so that kids coming for tours will have something to pick. As a rule, every child visiting the garden goes home with vegetables of some sort.

The garden offers an assortment of crops, including corn, tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, pumpkins, lettuce, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, kale, kohlrabi, artichoke, garlic, onions, fennel, carrots, squashes, and beets. Vetch, barley, and fava beans are planted as cover crops in the fall.

As you might expect, the site is a routine stop for ARS employees participating in the WRRC’s annual “Take Your Child to Work” day. “It’s become a very popular spot,” Haussmann says.—By **Dennis O’Brien**, ARS Information Staff. See [Photo Corner](#) for more.

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