



July 2012

SPOTLIGHT ON DIVERSITY

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force

Visit us at:

http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/BA_Diversity_Task_Force

United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Research Service

Task Force Promotes Diversity to Mirror Society as a Whole

Learning about the makeup of the ARS workforce may help you understand why diversity is a priority at the Beltsville Area (BA).

Would it surprise you to know that among the 27 percent of all ARS employees who occupied scientific posts in 2010, 80 percent were male and 20 percent were female?

The figures in this article come from *A Guide to the ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity*, posted on the ODEO website (http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/files/USDA_ODEO_Brochure_060211.pdf, page 7).

Between 2005 and 2010, there were modest improvements in the percentages of the ARS workforce that are Hispanic males and females, white females, black males, Asian males and females, and American Indian males. Those increases ranged from 0.05 to 1.67 percent.

However, the percentage of white males in ARS (nearly 47 percent) is higher than in the civilian labor force (39 percent), while percentages of Hispanic males and females, white females, and black males in ARS remain lower than in the civilian labor force.

For ARS as a whole, wide gender disparities are also seen among GS-13, -14, and -15 employees and in the Senior Executive Service.

For additional reading on this topic, the Annual EEO Program Status Report for fiscal year 2011 is available at <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/files/ExecSummary2011.pdf>.

Since 2008, the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF) has been part of the BA effort to address these disparities. In a 2008 memorandum to BA employees, Area Director Joseph T. Spence wrote, "As a part of our long term vision of the future of BARC, management at all levels is committed to enhancing the research environment and achieving a workforce that is reflective of the

composition of society as a whole... An important part in the development and implementation of this vision is the establishment of the BARC Diversity [Task Force]" (http://www.ars.usda.gov/sp2UserFiles/ad_hoc/12000000BADiversityTaskforce/Establishment.pdf).

A recent executive order (see box) issued by President Obama underscores the timeliness of efforts to promote diversity.

The next article in this month's *Spotlight on Diversity* ("Novel Best Hiring Practices Initiative: The Power for Progress Is In Your Hands") outlines the *Best Hiring Practices* developed by BADTF, an easy-to-use tool to assist selecting officials to recruit from a diverse pool of applicants.

— Cecilia Wilkinson Enns

In August 2011, President Obama (*shown right*) ordered Federal departments and agencies to create a government-wide initiative to "promote the Federal workplace as a model of equal opportunity, diversity, and inclusion."



"To realize more fully the goal of using the talents of all segments of society, the Federal Government must continue to challenge itself to enhance its ability to recruit, hire, promote, and retain a more diverse workforce."

[Such efforts] "...should include a continuing effort to identify and adopt best practices, implemented in an integrated manner, to promote diversity and remove barriers to equal employment opportunity, consistent with merit system principles and applicable law."

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/08/18/executive-order-establishing-coordinated-government-wide-initiative-prom>

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Novel Best Hiring Practices Initiative: The Power for Progress is in Your Hands

Attention, Beltsville Area (BA) employers!! Are you looking to reach a broad, highly-qualified pool of applicants for your non-SY, temporary, or volunteer position openings? The Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF) has developed a tool, the **Best Hiring Practices for Non-SY Positions** (Beltsville Area Policy #09-04, <http://staffonly.ba.ars.usda.gov/policy/p09-04.html>), that will help you achieve your goal. The **Best Hiring Practices** (BHP) policy provides a nearly effortless means of distributing your position announcements to a large and diverse audience of potential applicants, in order to ensure that the Area can select the most qualified persons to support its scientific mission.



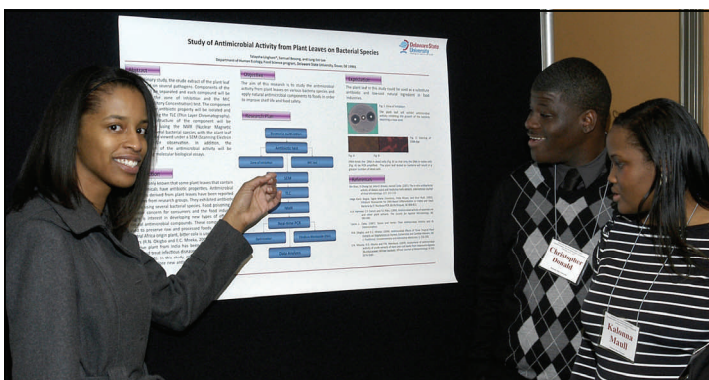
Contacts from all these institutions have been organized into an e-mail group so that job vacancy announcements (created in accordance with Administrative and Financial Management's Research, Education and Economics Policies and Procedures #412-0 – AFM REE P&P 412-0, <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/pdf/412-0.pdf>) can be easily distributed via Outlook.

To take advantage of this program, simply e-mail your job announcement to Jenny Allen (jenny.allen@ars.usda.gov) at the BA Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity and indicate that you wish it to be sent to the BHP group. You will receive a confirmation e-mail when your job announcement is distributed. It's that easy!



The complete listing of local institutions and organizations participating in the BHP program can be viewed at <http://staffonly.ba.ars.usda.gov/policy/p09-04.html>. We welcome your input! If you have a suggestion for a new contact or institution,

please contact the BA Office of Diversity and Equal Opportunity (jenny.allen@ars.usda.gov) or BADTF (BARC.Diversity@ars.usda.gov).



The BHP were developed to target groups who are currently underrepresented in non-SY positions as determined by the results of an informal survey conducted during 2008-2009 and by data provided by Headquarters. These groups include persons with disabilities, as well as both male and female members of the Hispanic, African-American, and Native American/Alaskan Native communities.

Local institutions that educate predominantly underrepresented populations have been identified, including (but not limited to) Bowie State University, Coppin State University, Gallaudet University, Morgan State University, and the University of Maryland.



BADTF 2010-2011 Members Honored

ARS Administrator Ed Knipling awarded a group of BADTF members the 2011 ARS Administrator's Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity Awards Program for the Non-Supervisory/Non-Managerial Category. The honorees (*shown at right*) are Edith Blackwell, Eton Codling, Verneta Gaskins, Martha Tomecek, and Lewis Ziska, who were recognized for their contributions to organizing the Beltsville Area Graduate Student Agricultural Research Symposium and creating the Student Discovery Garden.



BA Director Joseph Spence extended this recognition to the other members of the 2010-2011 Task Force. Shown above are BADTF 2010-2011 members Lew Ziska, Martha Tomecek, Dave Luthria, Eton Codling, Monica Santin-Duran, Tanya Zastrow, Ken Deahl, Jenny Allen, Martha Edens-Schmidt, Valorie Akuffo, Edith Blackwell, Talo Pastor-Corrales, Eunhee Park, Catherine Parsons, Ann Simpkins, Verneta Gaskins, Savi Natarajan, Mary Ann Guaragna, Tasha Sprague, and Cecilia Wilkinson Enns. (Not pictured: Darryl Baxam, Katherine Darlington, Bill Hare, Wendy Jacobs, Moon Kim, Bill Kustas, Sue Mischke, Tunesha Phipps, Tom Sexton, Manan Sharma, and Frances Truth.)

From the 2012 Diversity/Equal Employment Opportunity Policy Statement sent to ARS employees on March 9, 2012, by Administrator Edward B. Knipling:

"I encourage all employees to participate in mentoring, career development, special emphasis programs, serving on EEO Diversity Committees, and other innovative activities to help prevent and eliminate barriers hindering our diversity goal."



With Deep Gratitude

The Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF) hosted its annual Fitness Walk, Student Discovery Garden Season Opening, and International Food Festival Potluck on May 24th. Students from Genesis Christian Day School (*shown right*) toured the garden early and observed the festivities while enjoying a picnic in the shade.

Dr. Jim Anderson, president of Friends of Agricultural Research-Beltsville (FAR-B), gave a moving introduction to the dedication of a Crimson Rocket peach tree in grateful memory of FAR-B's late past president, Dr. Vernon Pursel (*shown right*). Anderson spoke of the staunch support that Dr. Pursel gave to educational programs directed toward children. Dr. Pursel's son, Mr. Tim Pursel (*shown below*), gave remarks during the ceremony with his wife at his side. Mr. Pursel gave a heartfelt tribute to his father, honoring his father's positive attitude, vision, and generosity. BADTF holds Dr. Vernon Pursel and FAR-B in the highest regard and wishes to express sincere thanks for the constant support. The following website is linked to the FAR-B newsletter with an article in memory of Dr. Vernon Pursel on pages 6-7: http://www.far-b.org/FARB_nwsltr_Jun_2011_BW.pdf



In addition, Dr. Ellen Harris, acting director of the Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center (BHNRC), spoke eloquently and warmly in support of BADTF activities. Representatives from BHNRC were well received as they offered participants information on nutrition and healthy lifestyle choices.



Halia Jones from the USDA Health Unit was also present to provide free blood pressure screenings.

BADTF would also like to extend a warm "thank you" to Jeneva and Tigor Lettsmore, students who have helped tend and harvest the garden since its inception; to Jay Green (ARS Information Staff) for his help with giving tours of BARC; to Jennifer Woodward-Greene (Office of International Research Programs) for her skill with scheduling; to Jim Plaskowitz (BA Information Technology Section) for proficient photography and website expertise; to ARS Information Technology staff in general for keeping us well connected; to Security staff for ensuring seamless event planning; and to Facilities for everything from picnic tables to electricity to the (much-loved) farm-truck-tire flower pots. BADTF also wants to thank the unsung heroes who come out during their lunch hour to tend the Student Discovery Garden and everyone who has volunteered in support of our events.

Thank you, Beltsville Area! Your generosity keeps us growing!



The Toilet is Growing Flowers!

Yes. Yes, it is. And some of the 450 students from Berwyn Heights Elementary School who visited the Student Discovery Garden on May 3, 7 and 8th really enjoyed trying to flush the toilet-turned-flower-pot in the Urban Garden Plot.

The goal of the Student Discovery Garden, created and maintained by the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF), is to introduce future scientists to the wonders of agriculture and give them a hands-on experience of what Beltsville Area scientists are working on. The kindergarten students harvested radishes to take home with them (and enjoy eating, we hope!). Second grade students independently established that when you pick them yourself, white strawberries taste just as good as red ones. All the students visited the Dairy as well and came up with some interesting questions such as, "If girl cows make milk, what do we need boy cows for?"

After all the beans were planted, the rain barrel depleted, the mint munched, and the kites flown, the Berwyn Heights Elementary Science Coordinator wrote, "Our new USDA Friends! Thank you, thank you, thank

you! Our...students came home so happy with their trip. Our teachers appreciated how informative all of the presenters were and how well organized everything was! Yeah!"

The Student Discovery Garden fosters agricultural education and outreach to the community. It is, and will continue to be, a powerful tool to showcase

USDA talent and engage future scientists. The garden functions as an arm of BADTF, whose overall mission includes offering information, inspiring communication, and developing programs that support employee recruitment and advancement. If you would like to learn more about the Student Discovery Garden or the Task Force, please contact us at

BARC.Diversity@ars.usda.gov



From the document *Administrative Leave and Excused Absence* (P&P 402.4.v.2– REE):

3.1.17 Volunteer Activities

An employee may be granted administrative leave for short periods of time (1 to 4 hours) to participate in volunteer activities that are:

- a. Mission-related;
- b. Officially sponsored or sanctioned by the employing agency; or
- c. Deemed to enhance the professional development and/or skills of the employee in his or her current position.

Agencies are encouraged to support their employees' volunteer efforts that do not meet the criteria set forth above by ensuring that all employees are aware of the various work scheduling and leave flexibilities available to them and by allowing them the flexibility to adjust their schedules to accommodate the volunteer activity when possible.



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Asian American & Pacific Islander Month

The theme this year was “Striving for Excellence in Leadership, Diversity, and Inclusion,” and this year’s celebration encompassed all of those aspects. The celebration was held May 16, 2012, at the National Agricultural Library. Over 100 people were in attendance. Invited speakers were Dr. Qi Huang (FNPRU, USNA) and Dr. Moon Kim (EMFSL, ANRI), along with the guest key-



note speaker, Dr. Rajan Natarajan (*shown left*). Dr. Natarajan shared with all in attendance his progression from businessman to his position as Maryland’s Deputy Secretary of State for Policy and External Affairs, as well as

beautiful photos of his wedding and family. He has coined the term “Bitizitian” to describe himself as a business person with strong ties to politicians. He has received numerous commendations and awards, has authored over 30 articles, and holds a US patent.

All who gathered had the opportunity to see some wonderful demonstrations and displays by Nit Malikul (SEL, PSI), who used fruit and vegetables to design very beautiful art sculptures, as well as Walter Stracke (HRSL, ANRI), who showed all onlookers how to make paper swans and cranes by way of one of the art forms in Japan, origami. The audience also had the pleasure of viewing a traditional Korean gown, which was modeled.

The cuisine was delicious; participants were able to sample over 20 different dishes, desserts, and drinks. There were dishes from Korea, India, and other Asian countries – all pleasing to the palate. A special “thank you” goes to the BARC Community and FAR-B for their support of this program. Thanks are due also to Dr. Moon Kim, who helped with coordination and organization of the event.

The Special Emphasis Subcommittee did a remarkable job of showcasing three fantastic speakers, great food, and wonderful exhibits.

-Tasha Sprague



Putting the “Special” in Special Emphasis Programs

The Special Emphasis Subcommittee of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF) has a goal of increasing Beltsville Area (BA) employees’ knowledge and appreciation of diversity. In keeping with that mission, they hosted a “Lunch and Learn” program in honor of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month on June 20. Dana Beyer, M.D., (*shown below*) executive director of Gender Rights Maryland (<http://www.genderrightsmaryland.org>), answered attendees’ questions in an informal discussion about transgender employment and civil rights issues. Dr. Beyer, a retired eye surgeon, is a well-known advocate for public health, good government, women’s rights, and LGBT civil rights. The discussion covered topics such as the protection of transgender people under the Title VII prohibition of discrimination based on sex, how to create an open and supportive environment for transgender employees and co-workers, the current same-sex marriage debate and how marriage equality affects transgender people, and Dr. Beyer’s own experience with gender transition.



OPM guidance regarding transgender Federal employees is available at <http://www.opm.gov/diversity/Transgender/Guidance.asp>. More information on transgender issues is available on the websites of Gender Rights

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Maryland (<http://www.genderrightsmaryland.org>) and the National Center for Transgender Equality (<http://transequality.org> and http://transequality.org/Resources/NCTE_UnderstandingTrans.pdf). Videos of transgender people sharing their personal experiences of being transgender can be viewed at <http://www.transpeoplespeak.org/>.

Other events held recently, with generous support from the Friends of Agricultural Research–Beltsville (FAR-B; <http://www.far-b.org/>), include:

May– Student Discovery Garden (SDG) season opening: The SDG's third season opened on May 24, with a tree dedication in honor of Vernon Pursel, recently deceased past president of FAR-B. The celebration also included the annual BA Employee Fitness Walk and Cultural Food Festival Potluck. (For more Student Discovery Garden news, see the article "The toilet is growing flowers!" on page 5. To read about another Special Emphasis event in May, see "Asian American Pacific Islander Heritage Month" on page 6.)



Fitness walk 2012

March–Women's History Month: On March 21, the audience of BA employees and FAR-B members was joined by local high school and college students and representatives from USDA/ARS' Aglearn Services, Ergonomic and Wellness Programs, and Employee Development Programs for a forum on "Women's Education – Women's Empowerment." Following is a selection of the advice panelists offered to both job seekers and supervisors:

"It is important to encourage others to believe in themselves and that they can succeed." – Dr. Le Ann Blomberg (*shown right*), Animal Bio-sciences and Biotechnology Lab.



"Be proactive in reaching out to prospective mentors." – Sherawanda Esuke (*shown left*), a lawyer in the firm of Es-sien and Esuke in Baltimore, MD.

"Give subordinates credit for their work." – Dr. Colien Hefferan (*shown right*), U.S. National Arboretum.

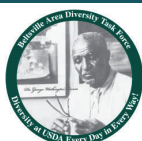


"To make yourself stand out as a job candidate, try to get hands-on experience or look for a roles as a volunteer in your prospective profession." – Theresa Ridgeway, USDA/ARS Office of Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity.



"Don't be afraid to pursue your chosen field. Figure out what you want to do and pursue it." – Dr. Stephanie A. Yarwood (*shown left*), University of Maryland (College Park) Department of Environmental Science and Technology.

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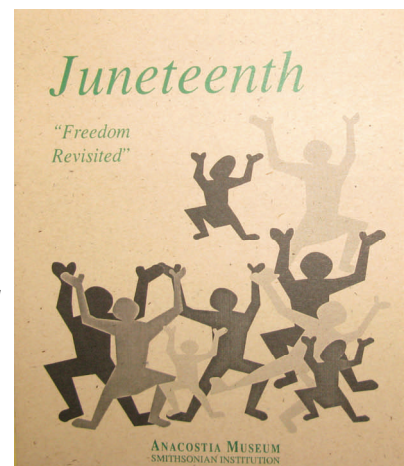
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February—Black History Month (BHM): Museum resources and slice of local history were highlighted by two guest speakers at the Feb. 15 BHM celebration. Speakers were John Peter Thompson, president of the National Agricultural Research Alliance in Beltsville and Sheila Montague Parker, community outreach coordinator/curator of the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum (<http://anacostia.si.edu/>). Thompson spoke about a Prince George's County plantation before the Civil War as an illustration of connections between African American history and agriculture.

To learn more about African Americans in agriculture, visit <http://www.nal.usda.gov/learn-about-african-americans-agriculture>. Parker's exhibit highlighted African

American celebrations from 1860 to the present, including the freedom celebration of Juneteenth. Did you know that it was not until June 19, 1865, that many slaves in Texas were informed that they had been emancipated (by President Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation of 1863) for over two years?

— Linda Reynolds and Kate White (with Cecilia Wilkinson Enns)



“Diversity is the rule rather than the exception”



Dr. Marcial (Talo) Pastor-Corrales was interviewed for *Spotlight on Diversity* by Tasha Sprague. Pastor-Corrales is a research plant pathologist in the Soybean Genomics and Improvement Laboratory (PSI). The focus of his research is to find, study, and use new genes for resistance to common bean diseases. He has always been a part of the different versions of the BA Diversity Task Force since he started at ARS twelve years ago.

Sprague: Why did you join the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF)?

Pastor-Corrales: To contribute my grain of sand to the mission of the BADTF, which is to recruit and retain a workforce that is the most effective but also representative of the diversity of this nation.

Sprague: What does diversity mean to you?

Pastor-Corrales: For me, diversity is the rule rather than the exception. I believe that the strength of the U.S. society is its ethnic, cultural, educational

diversity. I believe that we should celebrate this diversity and strive to strengthen this diversity.

Sprague: In your opinion, how is BADTF improving and benefitting BARC?

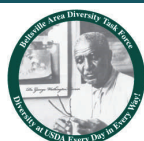
Pastor-Corrales: In many ways – educating children and many others about the research at BARC, the benefits of a garden, good nutrition; reaching out to young high school and college students to consider BARC as a place for future work; and bringing awareness by having days in which we celebrate the great diversity of the U.S.

Sprague: What direction would you like to see BADTF go in the near future?

Pastor-Corrales: More emphasis on recruitment of a diverse workforce that is representative of the U.S. diverse population.

Sprague: Any other thoughts or ideas regarding BADTF that you would like to share?

Pastor-Corrales: Serving in the BADTF is very rewarding and fun.



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Calendar of Events

August – Women's Equality Day - August 26, 2012

September – BA Diversity Task Force 2012-2013

Kick-Off Meeting - September 11, 2012, Building 003, Room 020, 9:30-10:30am

September – National Hispanic Heritage Month - Lunch and Learn - September 19, 2012, Building 003, Room 020, 12:00noon - 1:00pm

October - National Disability Employment Awareness Month – Lunch and Learn – October 17, 2012, Building 003, Room 020, 12:00noon-1:00pm

November – Native American/Alaskan Native Heritage Month - Lunch and Learn – November 15, 2012, Building 003, Room 020, 12:00noon-1:00pm

BADTF Committee and Subcommittee meetings (September - June)

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force - Second Tuesday of each month, Building 003, Room 020, 9:30-10:30am

Communications Subcommittee - First Thursday of each month, Building 003, Room 238, 1:00-2:00pm

Leadership Advisory Subcommittee - First Wednesday of each month, Building 173, Conference Room, 9:30-10:30am

Science and Technical Education Outreach Subcommittee - Third Tuesday of each month, Building 001, Room 342, 1:00-2:00pm

Special Emphasis Subcommittee - Second Tuesday of each month, Building 003, Room 020, 10:30-11:30am

Helpful Websites

BARC:

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=17502>

Spotlight on Diversity – diversity news for the Beltsville Area

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=20124>

ARS:

ARS & You – news about ARS

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/services/Introduction/ARS%20and%20You.htm>

Your Two Cents – cultural transformation in ARS

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents/>

Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO):
Cooperative Resolution

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/programs/coopres/>

EEO Complaint Process

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/complaintprocess.htm>

Outreach and Recruitment

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/outreach.htm>

Reasonable Accommodation

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/reasonableaccommodation.htm>

USDA:

USDA Connect (social networking) - Create your profile!

<http://connections.usda.gov/homepage/web/homepageRedirectAction.action>

(requires e-authentication login)

USDA news and information

<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>

USDA's Roadmap to Diversity

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=17506>

(link near bottom of page opens 5.46 MB PDG file)

MyUSDA – cultural transformation in USDA

<http://culturaltransformation.usda.gov/oc/ctdiscuss.nsf/dx/about>

(requires e-authentication login)

Other:

Smithsonian diversity information and events

http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/heritage_month/index.html

Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities

<http://www.wrp.gov>

AsKEARN.org - Resources to Help Employers Hire and Retain People with Disabilities

<http://www.askearn.org/>

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Annual Conference

http://www.hacu.net/hacu/Annual_Conference1.asp



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Thank you for reading Spotlight on Diversity. Your comments and contributions for future stories are welcome. Please e-mail us at BARC.Diversity@ars.usda.gov.

BADTF

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force

Spotlight on Diversity is produced by the Communications Subcommittee of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force. Members of the Communications Subcommittee are Ken Deahl, Kamal Chauhan, Rose McIntosh, Linda Reynolds, Frances Truth, Catherine Parsons (*Spotlight formatting and production*), Tasha Sprague (*co-chair*), and Cecilia Wilkinson Enns (*co-chair*).

