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Volume 1, Issue 2



Unity: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in PWA

PWA Workforce Diversity Committee Update

In February the PWA Workforce Diversity Committee (PWA-WFDC) held its quarterly conference call and received updates on the following initiatives that were outlined from the 2016 April Workforce conference in Albany, CA;

- ◆ Hiring/Retention – PWA Hiring Program (Roadmap: L/A Appts-Pathways -Permanent Positions)~~ *Update: The subcommittee has developed the framework and outreach plan to include underrepresented groups (i.e. Hispanics and African Americans). The planning of this project involves coordinating efforts/approvals across various organizational functions therefore it will require more time to plan and secure approval. Implementation goal is targeted for FY 2018.*
- ◆ PWA Publication – PWA Diversity Publication ~~ *Update: The name selected for the publication via an Area-wide survey is **Unity: Cultivating Diversity and Inclusion in PWA**. Submissions of photos are encouraged in addition to stories. Stories should be related to diversity and inclusion and can include those stories about outreach initiatives, recruitment, and special observances. The publication will be issued three times a year: March, July, and November.*
- ◆ Employee Development – New PWA Mentoring Program (for all non-SY employees)~~ *Update: This subcommittee has collected information to create a PWA Employee Handbook that will provide new/old employees a one-stop overview about the agency and its functionality. It will also be a guide for implementing a new PWA Mentoring Program for all non-SY employees. The creation was inspired by experiences of location employees (new & old) by lack of consolidated information about the agency's mission, goal, operations, organizational structure, etc. The plan is to have it available via AXON. Implementation goal is targeted for FY 2018.*

The PWA-WFDC welcomes **any employee who would like to volunteer** to participate on these Sub-Committees to contact Jan Lewis, PWA/ODEO Program Manager, jan.lewis@ars.usda.gov or 510-559-6003, for more information.



AREA DIRECTOR'S CORNER:

It's my pleasure to give a few words of introduction to the Unity. I've recently returned to PWA after being the Midwest Area Director since 2012. During that time, MWA also developed an outreach and diversity communication that we called "Medley". These publications are an excellent way to raise appreciation and awareness of diversity and to share successful approaches across the Area.

As PWA Associate Director before moving to MWA in 2012, I worked closely with the PWA Diversity and Outreach program manager and Workforce Diversity Committee. I was continually impressed by the Area's commitment to improving workplace diversity and student outreach. The examples in this edition of Unity certainly reflect that commitment. The rich diversity of the Western US creates great opportunities for our outreach and diversity programs.

I look forward to working with you.





VOLUNTEER WORK-ALBANY, CA

The Albany office is strategically located in the East Bay of the San Francisco area with proximity to several communities that are underserved in parts of Richmond and Oakland. On Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday Holliday (Jan 16, 2017), several ARS employees joined forces with Forest Service to help Urban Tilth, Inc. revitalize the North Richmond Farm project. Some volunteers turned the soil, added manure and compost, dug holes and planted fruit trees. Others painted, planted pollinator garden and veggies. The volunteers bonded over work and may have used some muscles that have been long forgotten. The event brought together hun-

dreds of volunteers from non-profit, governmental, and corporations to work with local youths in nearby communities.



"We are all different, which is great because we are unique. Without diversity life would be boring." ~Catherine Pulsifer

DIVERSITY NOTES: Did You Know??...

- ◆ In 1987, after being petitioned by the **National Women's History Project**, Congress passed Pub. L. 100-9 which designated the **month** of March 1987 as **Women's History Month**.
- ◆ May is **Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month** – a celebration of Asians and Pacific Islanders in the United States. A rather broad term, Asian/Pacific encompasses all of the Asian continent and the Pacific islands of Melanesia (New Guinea, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Fiji and the Solomon Islands), Micronesia (Marianas, Guam, Wake Island, Palau, Marshall Islands, Kiribati, Nauru and the Federated States of Micronesia) and Polynesia (New Zealand, Hawaiian Islands, Rotuma, Midway Islands, Samoa, American Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Cook Islands, French Polynesia and Easter Island).

SPECIAL OBSERVANCE-ALBANY, CA

The USDA Albany ODEO Committee celebrated African American History Month on February 28, 2017 with a variety of sensory treats. First, in keeping with this year's theme: *The Crisis in Black Education*, the Committee hosted an all-day Poster Exhibit with artwork and posters that honored many African American Educators and Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Secondly, employees sampled foods commonplace from the African American experience and cuisine such as dessert staples: Sock-It-To-Me Cake and 7-Up Cake (types of pound cake). Lastly, while exploring the exhibit and dining, attendees enjoyed contemporary and gospel music performed by local musicians, Ulis and Dayan Redic, from the nationally acclaimed Light House Gospel Choir of Marin County, CA.



USDA INITIATIVE

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE

From the classroom to the farm to the boardroom, women in agriculture are helping to pave the way for a better future. As leaders, it is our responsibility to make sure the next generation of women are educated, encouraged and empowered to take on the challenges of meeting the world's growing food, fuel and fiber needs. To help women across the country connect with other women leaders in agriculture all across the country, the U.S. Department of Agriculture has established a women in ag mentoring network. Join the conversation by emailing AgWomen-Lead@usda.gov or check out #womeninag on Twitter and on the [USDA blog](#). To celebrate and honor the contributions of women in agriculture, USDA has released a series of factsheets detailing the impact women have on agriculture in each state and across the country.



ARS SPECIAL EMPHASIS

OBSERVANCES

March – National Women's History Month

May – Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month

June – National Gay and Lesbian Pride Month

September – National Hispanic Heritage Month

October – National Disability Employment Awareness Month

November – National American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month

OUTREACH-SALINAS, CA

The Crop Improvement and Protection Unit in Salinas, California participated in two career fairs aimed at promoting inclusion in the sciences. Marina Ramon, Ph.D., Biological Science Lab Technician, coordinated participation in both events. The California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) Natural Sciences and Math Internship Showcase and Networking Conference took place on November 7, and attracted 200 students. The event was sponsored by the School of Natural Sciences and the Department of Mathematics and Statistics at CSUMB, a Hispanic-Serving Institution where 56% of the students are first-generation college students. USDA-ARS was represented at the career fair by Ramon and Polly Goldman, Agricultural Science Research Technician, and Ramon also participated in an employer panel.

The Unit also participated in the Expanding Your Horizons (EYH) Conference, sponsored by the Lyceum of Monterey County on November 19. This fair was aimed at promoting interest in STEM fields among middle-school girls, and attracted the participation of 250 young women aged 11-15. Girls attended workshops run by volunteers on topics as far ranging as computer programming to bat ecology. They met with Ramon and postdoctoral scholars Alyssa Burkhardt and Renée Eriksen during the career fair, where some lucky girls had a chance to score a pig-shaped stress relief toy with the ARS logo.

Ramon was invited to give the keynote speech at the EYH Conference, which was met with an enthusiastic response from event organizers. "Dr. Marina Ramon gave the most inspiring keynote address that the EYH event has ever had . . . what a supreme role model!" said Tom Nelson, EYH Conference Coordinator. Ramon suggested girls should set goals for themselves, but to be flexible, because they grow when they learn things they don't expect. "Never forget to believe in yourself because we all believe that you are the next generation of scientists. And don't ever let anyone tell you that you can't do something because you're a girl!"

~Submitted by Renee Eriksen



Marina Ramon (left) and Alyssa Burkhardt (right) from the Crop Improvement and Protection Unit in Salinas, CA representing the USDA-ARS at a career fair for middle-school girls.

WORKFORCE RECRUITMENT PROGRAM (WRP)

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Veterans Employment Program Office (VEPO)

USDA's Veterans Employment Program was established as a result of the President's Executive Order 13518 signed on November 9, 2009.

USDA's Veterans Employment Program Officer provides leadership and guidance on the employment of veterans within USDA.

USDA's Veterans Employment Program Office does not accept applications for vacancies; conduct inquiries; nor, process complaints related to non-selections.

Helpful Links:

- VA for Vets: www.vaforvets.va.gov
- Feds Hire Vets: www.fedshirevets.gov

REE Veterans Programs brochure provides information on hiring flexibilities and types of Veterans' preference with ARS and other REE Mission Area offices, as well as contact information for the ARS Human Resources point of contact.



Coming Up Next Issue:

- ◆ Overview: What *is* Diversity and Inclusion?
- ◆ Celebrating — Hispanic Heritage Month
- ◆ Unconscious Bias — what does *that* mean?

The Workforce Recruitment Program (WRP) is a recruitment and referral program that connects hiring managers with highly qualified, pre-screened college students and recent graduates with disabilities. The Office of Personnel Management recently revised its hiring freeze guidance to include the hiring of students only (not recent graduates) via the WRP on a temporary basis. These Schedule A appointments may be made for a period not to exceed one year with the option of a one year extension.

If you would like to utilize the WRP to hire students with disabilities, please go to www.wrp.gov and click on "Employer Registration Now Open." You will then be e-mailed a password to access the WRP database to begin your search. Once you have identified a potential candidate, please contact your servicing human



resources specialist to determine candidate qualifications and hiring/ placement activities.

This notice can also be accessed on the Axon website/page: <https://axon.ars.usda.gov/HRD/Pages/HRD-Notifications.aspx>.

Contact: Mary Weber,
mary.weber@ars.usda.gov

SPOTLIGHT-BOISE, IDAHO

The purpose of Boise's Diversity Advisory Committee (DAC) is to serve as a communication link between staff and management at the location concerning issues affecting equal employment opportunities, outreach, and workplace diversity in ARS.

The committee's greatest goal is the prevention of discrimination based on age, ethnicity, gender, physical handicap, race and religion at the Location. Additionally the committee assists in the facilitation of outreach activities. Finally the committee provides hiring information in an effort to broaden our advertisements thereby increasing the size of our applicant pool.

Joining the DAC is optional but it is a very rewarding experience. Being a part of DAC consists of monthly meetings, helping organize certain activities around the office and brainstorming for future events.

