



NACOP NOTES

April 2010

Message from the Co-Chairs

By: Diona Austill, Sr. Co-Chair, NPA
Sandy Groneberg, Jr. Co-Chair, MWA

Spring is finally arriving! What a welcome site it is for those of us from the north!

We want to thank all office professionals for the great job you are doing and hope you have a very Happy Administrative Professionals Day! April 21st is the 58th annual Administrative Professionals Day – renamed from Secretaries Day in 2000. Remember, NACOP is here to provide you with resources and information! Our website (www.arsnet.usda.gov/nacop) and the Area council's websites, which are linked from the NACOP site, have loads of information just waiting for you to use.

We also want to recognize Nina Ahmad, National Agricultural Library (NAL), Beltsville, MD, who received the Office Professional of the Year Award for outstanding performance and significant contributions to improve and streamline the operations at NAL's Collection Services Branch. Congratulations Nina!

If you ever have suggestions or concerns, please do not hesitate to voice them. Our email addresses:
diona.austill@ars.usda.gov
sandy.groneberg@ars.usda.gov

2009 ARS Office Professional of the Year

By: LaTasha Burl, NAL

Nina Ahmad, Office Automation Assistant at the National Agricultural Library (NAL) in Beltsville, MD, has been selected as the 2009 ARS Office Professional of the Year. Nina works in the Collection Services Branch (CSB) and is known for being friendly, reliable, a team player, and most importantly a hard worker.



Ms. Ahmad has been a key member of CSB for 8 years. As the Office Automation Assistant, she is responsible for greeting branch visitors, performing quality control of scanned images for NAL's digital repository, fulfilling Special

Collections product orders, completing the branch's time and attendance, and modifying documents on the NAL website. In addition to assisting her own branch, Nina has also taken on the responsibility of assisting other branches within NAL when needed.

Nina consistently works on improving her skills by requesting and attending training sessions. She has received her Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from the University of Maryland, College Park, and has taken specialized coursework as a Legal Office Assistant at Howard Community College in Columbia, MD. Ms. Ahmad recently attended the Administrative and Financial Management Workshop to broaden her knowledge of the role Office Professionals play in everyday operations.

Ms. Ahmad feels extremely honored and privileged to have been chosen as the 2009 ARS Office Professional of the Year. Asked what advice she offers to other Office Professionals, Ms. Ahmad suggested to prioritize and not to procrastinate in doing assigned duties. She also stressed the importance of effective communication and follow through!

Congratulations, Nina! You are indeed very deserving of your award!



Southern Plains Area (SPA) Office Support Advisory Council

By: Sherry Dewald, Whitney Adams, and Ruth Treat, SPA

The Southern Plains Area (SPA) Secretarial/Program Support Council was established in May 1996. Dr. Chuck Onstad, Area Director, along with Wanda Paradowski, our technical advisor, selected the secretaries to develop this council. During the initial meeting, which was held at the USDA Lab in College Station, we developed our charter, elected officers, and set goals.

The mission of the SPA Office Support Council is to: 1) provide a resource for the Area Director's Office, SPA office professionals, research leaders, and administrative management teams for matters relating to office professionals; and 2) identify and provide tools that will ensure a high level of knowledge and skills to strengthen office professionals to better serve the research programs.

The SPA Advisory Council of Office Professionals has recently initiated a monthly teleconference for the Office Support Personnel. The purpose of these calls was to encourage networking among the locations, as well as a means for providing mini-training session on specific topics. We have utilized several of the Area Office staff on topics related to GovTrip, grants and agreements, and webTA's to name a few. These calls have been very well supported and the discussions have led to a better understanding of how we do our jobs and who we can contact at the other locations for help.

Some of the council's accomplishments include:

- Established a Shadowing Program to ensure new employees have the opportunity to be trained and skilled in the key aspects of their positions or assisted with problem areas of their jobs.
- Developed a welcome packet which is sent to each of the new SPA hires to introduce the Council and to provide them with a resource for help.
- Established a scholarship to assist with training
- Developed a secretarial manual and made it available to every location on a CD
- Developed a Web page
- Updates via newsletters
- Developed a directory of email addresses for the Southern Plains Area
- Annually recognize all SPA office support personnel during Administrative Professionals Week
- Chaired a session at an RL, AO, Secretary Leadership Conference
- Made templates available of commonly used forms

Main Objectives

- Improve communication, awareness, and skills among office professionals and strengthen programs and opportunities for their career development. Produce and disseminate a newsletter with input from locations.
- Provide advice and recommendations on Agency and SPA policies and programs related to the employment, development, and advancement of office professionals.
- Improve recognition of the office profession and promote professionalism within the occupation.
- Assist in the development and presentation of required and appropriate training for office professionals.
- Develop and maintain a network available to SPA office professionals.

We currently have seven council members from the states of Arkansas, Texas and Oklahoma as well as our Area Office Representative and Technical Advisor.

ARIS 115 Citations Information:

<http://www.arsnet.usda.gov/acop/ARIS.htm>



Correspondence Preparation Notes

Prepared by: Cathy Lonaberger, TA
Contributed by: Sandy Groneberg, MWA

The following correspondence notes were presented by Cathy Lonaberger at a Midwest Area meeting in 2004, and are helpful to review from time to time.

1. Letterhead: Be sure the letterhead is appropriate for the signer.
2. Do not use “justified” margins.
3. Always use title (Dr., Mr., Mrs., Ms.) on letters. Do not use two titles on the same line (Dr. John Doe, President – not acceptable)
4. Do not abbreviate State name in the inside address. Always show the zip code in the address.
5. Do not use titles on the TO: line in memos (TO: Dr. John Doe – not acceptable)
6. Correspondence of a single paragraph and 10 lines or less: Double space the body of the letter.
7. Acronyms: The first time referring to a word to be abbreviated, write it out with the acronym following in parentheses. For example, Agricultural Research Service (ARS); fiscal year (FY).
8. Federal Government – always capitalized.
9. State is capitalized when referring to States in the United States (State of Maryland; State,

- Federal, local). Do not capitalize when used in a general sense (state of mind; a foreign state).
10. Dates – a comma is needed after the year when you have the complete date in a sentence (In your letter dated April 22, 2003, you requested information...). When only the month and year are used in a sentence, no commas are used (April 2003).
 11. Agency is capitalized when referring to our Agency (ARS). When referring to other agencies, put in lower case.
 12. ARS' (not ARS's) when showing possession.
 13. We do not use "the Department" in outgoing correspondence. The USDA acronym is to be used.
 14. Use a comma (,) before the conjunction in a compound sentence.
 15. Use a comma (,) after each member within a series of three or more words, phrases, letters, or figures used with and, or, or nor.
 16. "Agencywide" is one word, not Agency wide."
 17. Try to avoid typing part of a personal name at the end of a sentence. If you must divide names, title, first name, and middle initial should be on the same line.
 18. Always include a legend line on the file copies.
 19. On the yellow file copy that will be returned to the originating office, please have the author initial and date near the legend line, as well as cleared by appropriate level of authority within the office.
 20. If the document is returned for correction, **always** include the old yellow file copy – no matter how many times it has been returned for corrections. Always add another legend line with current information.

For example:

Draft: ARS:OA:CLonaberger:lg:720-3656:4/9/03:h/bebest.docx

Final: ARS:OA:CLonaberger:lg:720-3656:4/10/03:h/bebest.docx

Rewrite: ARS:OA:CLonaberger:lg:720-3656:4/12/03:h/bebest.docx

Newest NACOP Council Member

Contributed by: Christa Meier, PWA



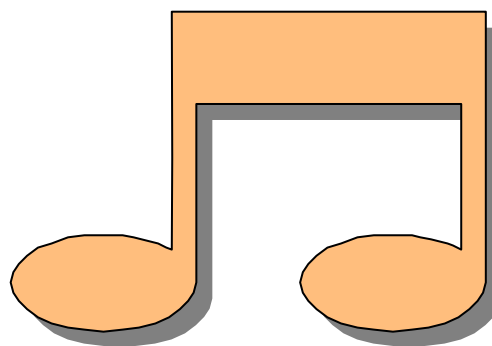
PLEASE WELCOME...

Christa Meier, Pacific West Area (PWA) to NACOP! Here's a little about Christa: She started her career with the USDA, ARS, PWA in Albany, CA, on February 2, 2009, as the Executive

Assistant to Dr. Robert Matteri, Associate Area Director of the Pacific West Area. Prior to joining USDA, Christa worked for UBS Investment Bank as the Facilities/Office Manager for 11 years.

She attended Contra Costa Community College in San Pablo, CA, and received an Associate Degree in Liberal Arts in 2009. She has since transferred to the California State University Eastbay in Hayward, CA, and is currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Studies with a Minor in Business Administration.

In her pastime, she likes to go on long walks with her dog, Maggie, and enjoys nature, music, and soccer.





April 22nd is Earth Day

**Contributed
by: Drusilla
Fratesi, MSA**

This is an appropriate time to promote recycling and discuss energy

savings. Some facts about recycling include:

- Paper can decompose in 2-5 months. If the paper is inside a plastic bag, it will take at least 20 years for the bag to deteriorate. It takes up to 250 years for a plastic cup to decompose, 500 years for an aluminum can to decay, and 4,000 years or more for a glass bottle to decompose.
- About 80% of what Americans throw away is recyclable, yet our recycling rate is only 28%. The good news is that this is double what it was 10 years ago.
- Recycling helps. If every American recycled just one-tenth of their newspapers, we could save about 25 million trees each year. Each ton of recycled paper can save 17 trees, 380 gallons of oil, 3 cubic yards of landfill space, 4000 kilowatts of energy, and 7000 gallons of water. Using recycled glass uses 40 % less energy than making products from all new materials. Recycling one aluminum can saves enough energy to run a TV for three hours. It takes 90% less energy to recycle aluminum cans than to make new ones. Recycled paper requires 64% less energy than making paper from virgin wood pulp.

So what can we do in our homes and offices to help?

- If offices throughout the country increased the rate of two-sided photocopying to 60%, we could save about 15 million trees.
- Appliances/equipment on standby consume up to 10% of the electricity bill. 30-40% of

office equipment is left on at night and on weekends. How much do you leave on at the office when you go home? And how much is still on at home while you are at work?

- Just one quart of motor oil that is disposed of improperly can contaminate up to 2,000,000 gallons of fresh water. Oil gets dirty, but can be recycled and used again. Find a place to recycle used motor oil.
- A 1° C adjustment in the setting of the thermostat could reduce household energy consumption by as much as 10%.
- Compact fluorescent light (CFL) bulbs last up to 12 times longer than ordinary bulbs and use much less energy. However, it is best to use them in places where they will stay switched on for long periods. Switching CFL bulbs off after only a few minutes of use can reduce their lifespan. (Fluorescent bulbs are rated for lifespan based on an estimate of being turned on and off 3 times each day.)
- Use dimmers suitable for your fixture and/or type of bulbs when possible. Having the highest wattage bulbs rated for your fixture doesn't mean you need that much light all the time. Not only do you save electricity, but dimming an incandescent bulb by 10% doubles the life of the bulb while dimming it by 20% quadruples the life of the bulb.
- Discourage/eliminate junk mail whenever possible. Notify companies if you do not want to receive their catalogs or correspondence. It may take more than one time to be removed from their mailing lists. (The energy used to produce one day's junk mail in the U.S. is enough to heat 250,000 homes.)

Even little changes will help. Look around the office to see what YOU can do.



Council Representatives:

Mary Dailey (BA)
Drusilla Fratesi, Ex-Officio (MSA)
Sandy Groneberg, Jr. Co-Chair (MWA)
LaTasha Burl, Webmaster (NAL)
Christa Meier (PWA)
Wanda Rohrer, Recorder (SAA)

Sherry Dewald, Historian (SPA)
Diane Koch (NAA)
Diona Austill, Sr. Co-Chair (NPA)
Jackie Kelly, NACOP Notes Editor (HQ)
Cathy Lonaberger, Technical Advisor
Rhonda Sampson, Technical Advisor

