

# MyUSDA

## A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 2, Issue 11

September 2012

### USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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### Secretary's Message: An Update on the Budget



I would like to take this opportunity to update you on the status of the Department's funding for Fiscal Year (FY) 2013 which begins October 1, 2012, and issues raised by a potential sequestration on January 2, 2013. In addition I would like to briefly address the failure by Congress to act on comprehensive, multiyear Food, Farm and Jobs legislation or an extension of programs authorized under the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008.

In February, 2012 the President released the Administration's proposed budget for FY 2013. As you likely know, to date Congress has not passed any full year appropriations bills that fund Federal agencies for FY 2013. However, on September 22, the Senate approved a Continuing Resolution (CR) previously passed by the House which provides funding for the Federal government through March 27, 2013. The President signed it on September 28. The CR provides funding for most Department programs to continue at a level that is equivalent to 0.6 percent above the amount provided for in FY 2012. Entitlement programs, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, are funded under the CR at a rate that maintains current program levels.

Despite enactment of the CR, there is a significant level of uncertainty surrounding funding levels that will ultimately be provided for the Department's activities during FY 2013. This is due in part to the potential for an across-the-board reduction,

known as a sequestration, under terms of the Budget Control Act of 2011. Absent further Congressional action, a sequestration will occur on January 2, 2013. It is estimated that a sequestration would reduce the Department's budget by more than \$3 billion in FY 2013 alone.

To add to this uncertainty, Congress has not taken action to pass multiyear, comprehensive Food, Farm and Jobs legislation. Beginning October 1, the authority or funding provided under the 2008 Farm Bill for USDA to operate a number of programs has expired, and the authority and funding for additional programs will expire over the coming months. Not only does this create uncertainty in terms of USDA programs, it leaves thousands of farming families exposed at a time when U.S. agriculture is fighting to maintain the tremendous momentum it has built over the past three years.

With the uncertainties of final Congressional action on the Department's FY 2013 budget request and the sequestration, it is critical that all offices and individuals remain vigilant to ensure that there are absolutely no unnecessary expenses by USDA offices.

Because of your efforts, USDA has been a leader in saving taxpayers' dollars through the Blueprint for Stronger Service and the Administrative Solutions Project. This includes a reduction to USDA's travel ex-

penses alone by approximately 45 percent in 2012 from 2010 levels, a highly commendable effort. We must continue these efforts to operate at the minimum level necessary to deliver critical services, while maintaining the flexibility that could be needed to absorb further potential cuts later in the fiscal year. I expect that your work to reduce operational expenses such as contracts, travel, supplies, and conferences will continue throughout FY 2013.

I am confident that all of us will continue to deliver historic results and outstanding service to the American people at this critical time, even with significant uncertainty and under these fiscal constraints. I will continue to update you on Congressional actions as they occur regarding funding for the Department for FY 2013, the possibility of a sequestration, and the status of USDA's authorizing legislation. In the meantime, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation for your continued service to the Department and the American people.

Sincerely,

Tom Vilsack



## USDA's FUTURE STARS!

Throughout the newsletter, we are pleased to highlight future “movers and shakers” of USDA.

### *Our Interns!*

We are proud of all of our interns and encourage them to strive to be the very best in their chosen fields.



**Colin Beckford**, a Maryland resident, is a Business Administration major with a concentration in Finance, at Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He excels in his studies and maintains several on-campus leadership roles. Beckford interned with Rural Development's (RD) Office of the Deputy Administrator for Operations & Management. During the 2012 Summer Intern Program, he worked on several projects, including updating and redesigning various Microsoft SharePoint websites and was an integral member of the Cultural Transformation Day Planning Committee. After graduation, his goals are to strengthen his work experience in the Federal Government while pursuing a Masters in Business Administration and later obtain a Juris Doctorate with a focus in Corporate Law. *The sky's the limit for Colin!*

## USDA Establishes Partnership with the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation, Inc.

*By Francesca Yabraian  
OHRM Diversity Program Specialist*

On August 28, 2012, the USDA and the Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation, Inc. (CANAR) came together and signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The MOU allows USDA and CANAR to enhance their goals by giving quality services to American Indians and Alaska Native persons with disabilities. The new partnership will provide outreach and education and unite CANAR to USDA's critical job mission by increasing hiring numbers of individuals with disabilities from student employment to permanent job opportunities. The MOU also offers guidance on preparing Schedule A documentation and on



*Signing the MOU, Treva Roanhorse, President, CANAR and Dr. Gregory Parham, Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration, USDA*

between USDA and CANAR strengthens USDA's Diversity Program and will serve as a rich resource to benefit Secretary Vilsack's Cultural Transformation Initiative. Further, it will provide the necessary strategies and support for Human Resources Managers, Recruitment Managers, and Disability Program Managers across USDA to effectuate the hiring of persons with disabilities, allowing them representation in USDA's workforce, especially American Indians and Alaska Native individuals.

applying to USDA job announcements. Additionally it will provide on-the-job training programs, activities, special community events, and collaborative efforts between USDA and CANAR. This joint relationship



**Current or former nursing mom with a success story to share?**

Send us an email to: [wellness@dm.usda.gov](mailto:wellness@dm.usda.gov)



## USDA GETS TOP HONORS IN 2012 FEDS FEED FAMILIES FOOD DRIVE!

by Susan Carter, Acting Communication Coordinator, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Administration

The Department of Agriculture regains bragging rights. USDA is back atop the throne, taking the crown away from the Department of Defense in this year's Feds Feed Families food drive. USDA collected an impressive 2,772,825 pounds of food with the help of employees, volunteers, and partners from across the country. That great work is 154 percent of the 1.8 million pound goal and was accomplished during severe drought.

Kudos goes to all of the USDA agencies, offices, and organizations that made the win possible. The top three are Risk Management Agency that got 345 percent of their goal, with a strong showing from Departmental Management weighing in with a total of 20,472 pounds and Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services rounding out third with 11,554 pounds.

A big shout out to Sue Bussells, who'll be joined by more than 150 USDA employees who'll also be recognized in the OPM Hall of Fame for contributing 250 pounds or more to Feds Feed Families. She contributed just under three-thousand pounds of food as an individual donation, totaling out at 2,822 pounds.

Congratulations to all and thanks for your efforts!



Secretary Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Merrigan proudly "showing off" food items donated by employees of the Office of the Secretary.

## FNCS Medals at USDA's *Feds Feed Families* Olympics

by Susan Siemietkowski,, Food, Nutrition & Consumer Services

Move over Michael Phelps and Misty May Trainor. In early August members of FNCS became medal winners as well, earning silver in the food hat competition and bronze in miniature golf at USDA's Olympic themed "Food-Raiser" in Washington, DC, to benefit **Feds Feed Families**. FNCS also fielded teams in the ring toss, relay race and food sculpture contests. Participants donated over 1300 pounds of nutritious food. **Feds Feed Families** and this type of activity reinforces USDA's and FNCS' commitment to Cultural Transformation (CT) specifically, to CT's "Community Outreach " pillar.



From left to right: Under Secretary Kevin Concannon and Brenda Lisi pose behind a replica of London's Tower Bridge constructed from donated food items; Deputy Under Secretary Janey Thornton cheers on TEAM FNCS at the August 9<sup>th</sup> event; Richard Bumpers, Susan Siemietkowski and Troy Meyers, along with Dan Christenson, won a team bronze medal in miniature golf; and In the spirit of the London games and British tradition, Molly McClanahan shows off the silver medal winning "food" hat that she made with her colleagues, Kristen Caulley and Catherine Benvie.

## DEPARTMENTAL MANAGEMENT PREPARES FUTURE LEADERS THROUGH PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE PROGRAM (PEP)

On August 15, 2012, Departmental Management held a graduation ceremony for forty summer interns who completed the Professional's Excellence Program (PEP). Dr. Gregory Parham, Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration, was the keynote speaker. The Program was designed by the Office of Cultural Transformation. The goal was to initiate a transformational process for mentoring and cultivating today's young leaders, strengthening their understanding of the USDA, and preparing them for opportunities within the Department.



Acting Assistant Secretary for Administration Dr. Gregory Parham congratulates an intern on completing the PEP while Dr. Alma C. Hobbs, Associate Assistant Secretary for Administration, and Oscar Gonzales, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Administration look on.

This is the first year of the PEP, which delivered a framework of competence to high-performing students in the form of weekly one-hour seminars, team projects, and group mentoring. The Program supports several key pillars of the Cultural Transformation initiative, including the Department's efforts to attract a diverse workforce that has experience with various mission areas. The Program was also created to support a culture that promotes employee retention by giving participants the chance to gain work-related experience and to learn about the various agencies within USDA.

On-boarding efforts to familiarize participants with USDA continued throughout the entire Program in the form of guest speakers who serve in a variety of capacities with the Department. The PEP supports the Department's commitment to engaged learning that benefits not only students but strengthens its mission of improved succession planning. This year's PEP program was very successful and is expected to continue to meet future student, Departmental, and public needs.

*By Kathryn Quillen, Office of Cultural Transformation*



Dr. Gregory Parham, Dr. Alma C. Hobbs, and Oscar Gonzales listen as Delonte Gamble shares his personal quote.



Interns prepare to receive graduation certificates.



**Torrie Mitchell** is a Maryland resident and began her career with the USDA shortly after high school in 2007. Having started her internship as a Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) Intern in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights. She is currently making a positive impression in Rural Development's Office of Operations & Management under the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP). Having focused in the area of media production, Mitchell graduated from Bowie State University, Bowie, MD, last spring with a Bachelors of Arts in Communications. She continues her studies at the University of Maryland pursuing a Master's degree in Technology Project Management. She plans to remain at USDA to one day become a Senior Leader. *Move over y'all – here comes Torrie!*

## 2012 NRCS American Indian Heritage Poster Artwork Presented to Choctaw Nation

by Jacqueline Padron, OHRM Diversity Program Specialist

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) recognized and celebrated the many different cultures, which we have the opportunity to offer our services and programs to, including American Indians. November is designated American Indian Alaskan Native Heritage Month. This provides an opportunity to make people aware of the history of American Indian and Alaskan Natives and their contributions to the world. One way NRCS celebrates on a national level is to sponsor a contest for American Indian artists, with the winning artwork being produced into a poster and distributed nationwide. June 6, the winning artwork was selected for the 2012 American Indian Heritage poster that will be released during American Indian Alaskan Native Heritage month in November. The title

for this year was *"Our Past, Present, and Future"* with the theme being *"Tell me and I'll forget. Show me and I may not remember. Involve me and I'll understand."* This year's winner of the American Indian Heritage Poster contest is Kathy Sturch, of Durant, Oklahoma. Sturch is a member of the Choctaw Nation.

"Selecting the artwork is just one of the many steps involved to develop the poster that will be released during American Indian Heritage month in November, and will be distributed to all NRCS offices in the 50 states plus the Caribbean and Pacific Basin," said National American Indian/Alaskan Native Special Emphasis Program Manager Dr. Carol Crouch. "Although the poster will

not be released until November, NRCS Oklahoma decided to present the winning artwork to the Choctaw Nation during their annual Choctaw Festival" said Jamey Wood. Crouch added, "Not all winning artwork is presented to the artist's Tribe; however, NRCS leadership felt that presenting the artwork to the artist's Tribe provided the opportunity for the Choctaw tribal members to enjoy the artwork, as well as, recognize Choctaw artist, Kathy Sturch." The Choctaw Nation has an art museum located within their 1884 Capitol Building in Tuskahoma, Oklahoma. The museum houses vintage clothing, tribal documents, Choctaw pottery and jewelry and is a Choctaw art gallery.



On August 29, a presentation of the artwork was made to Chief Gregory E. Pyle, in his office, at Choctaw Nation Headquarters in Durant, Oklahoma. Presenting the artwork was Jamey Wood, Assistant State Conservationist for NRCS. Also present were; Dr. Crouch, National AI/AN SEPM; Ann Colyer, Choctaw Nation NRCS Liaison; Valerie Hannon, NRCS district conservationist for the NRCS Durant field office and Choctaw administrative staff. Chief Pyle and NRCS will be working together to plan an autograph signing of the poster with poster artist Kathy Sturch in November.

Photo Left to Right:

Kathy Sturch, Choctaw Artist,  
Jamey Wood, II, NRCS  
Chief Gregory Pyle, Choctaw Nation

## FNS' "Walking Each Other Home" Diversity Training Offered to Several USDA Agencies in Puerto Rico

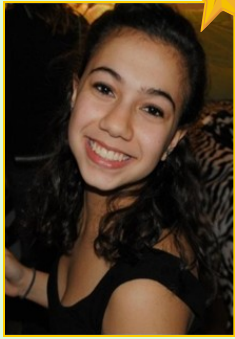
by Susan Siemietkowski,, Food & Nutrition Service

On September 7th, Food & Nutrition Service's (FNS) Caribbean Area office and FNS University collaborated to present the *"Walking Each Other Home"* diversity training to USDA staff in San Juan, Puerto Rico. FNS facilitators Vince Loran and Henry Bourgeois offered three sessions for local staff from several mission areas from FNS, the Natural Resources and Conservation Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the International Institute of Tropical Forestry of the Forest Service, the National Agriculture Statistics Service, Rural Development, and the Farm Service Agency.

The training for more than 70 participants was held at a Forest Service facility which is part of the Botanical Gardens complex at the University of Puerto Rico. The workshop focused on the goal of building relationships and the importance of respecting, valuing, and appreciating fellow workers. Such activity directly supports Cultural Transformation's development and diversity/inclusion pillars. All participants expressed great satisfaction with the session and the wonderful opportunity to participate as "ONE USDA".



Attendees engage in a communications exercise that focuses on empathic listening.



## Laura Rodriguez

- This summer, she worked in the Office of Human Resources Management's Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/Life Division as the Student Programs Assistant. In her role, Rodriguez coordinated the summer intern activities consisting of touring Washington, DC's historical attractions. She is a resident of Chevy Chase, MD and a junior at St. Mary's College of Maryland. When it comes to being active, the list goes on and on for this young lady – from Teaching Assistant for the Department of Mathematics, Vice President of the Dance Club (ballet), to Ambassador for the Office of Admissions. This semester, Rodriguez will study abroad at L'Institut d'études politiques de Paris (known as Sciences Po) in Paris, France, studying Economics, Political Science, and French. *Shoot for the stars, Laura!*



## Summer Interns Take it to the Streets and Experience DC



*By Wendy Carrasco, Student Programs Manager  
Office of Human Resources Management, (OHRM)  
Diversity, Recruitment & Work/Life Division*

This summer, the Diversity, Recruitment and Work/Life Division coordinated extracurricular activities in the DC metro area for USDA interns. These activities included touring the U.S. Capitol, Library of Congress, the Pentagon, and the White House. The tours were organized to afford students the opportunity to learn and explore the contents of buildings that help shape the Federal Government and the nation.

Approximately 500 summer interns had the chance to explore this historic city and network with other interns and employees. The Pentagon tour was the most popular among our interns. "The tour guides were funny and great at walking backwards," said Kenneth Nakamoto, AMS Intern.

At the White House, everyone enjoyed the chance to wander through the notable rooms on the first floor. Each had a unique story. "It was a wonderful experience to walk through so much history," said Tamara Johnson, OHRM Intern.

Touring the Library of Congress, interns learned the number of books, research archives, movies, films, and even art that is stored and showcased throughout several of its buildings. For Victor Lamas, FAS Intern, this was the most impressive tour.

Laura Rodriguez, OHRM Intern, shared "As one of many who live in the area, yet never took the opportunity to explore Washington, DC, it was incredible to experience all the history in each of the buildings. Washington, DC, has so many hidden secrets and wonders."

For summer interns not living or going to school in the Washington, DC metro area, it was a great way to get a feel for the historic city and to network with other USDA interns scattered throughout the metropolitan area.

These activities serve as an opportunity for hiring managers, division directors, and other USDA employees to get involved with our programs. For suggestions and/or feedback, please send to [wendy.carrasco@dm.usda.gov](mailto:wendy.carrasco@dm.usda.gov).

Our office is always open to suggestions and feedback to improve our summer intern activities.



*Visitor's area of the Pentagon*



*Outside the Library of Congress*

**You can contact the staff of My USDA via email at: [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov) and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).**

## Native American Youth Get Behind-the-Scenes Look at Forest Service Careers

*By Susan Blake  
Public Affairs Specialist  
National Forests in Florida*

"It's kind of like giving them a day in the life of a Forest Service landscape architect," said Landscape Architect Kristen Johnson. Johnson was one of five employees of the National Forests in Florida that gave insight into their specialized field of work to a group of Native American teenagers from the Florida Indian Youth Program. Sponsored by the Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs, this annual event gives the youths the opportunity to consider careers in natural resources.



*From the left, Kaitlin Billy from the Seminole Tribe of Florida and Trey Kinard from the Crow Tribe of Montana listen intently as Civil Engineer Toni Addison explains recreational site planning at Trout Pond on the Apalachicola National Forest near Tallahassee, Florida.*

First stop for the group, Munson Hills Off-Road Bicycle Trail south of Tallahassee, Florida. This popular mountain bike trail was renovated with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds in 2011. National Forests in Florida Heritage Program Manager Rhonda Kimbrough gave an overview of the site and the preliminary processes that went into expanding and renovating the trail. "I wanted them to understand all the components that have to come together in order to prepare a site for renovation, which include archaeological surveys. A lot of care is taken to make sure we've crossed our t's and dotted our i's," said Kimbrough.

As the group eased further into the forest, they headed over to Trout Pond. The wheelchair accessible nature trail is a pier that extends into the lake and scenic views of the pond surrounded by cypress and pine trees. Underneath a picnic shelter, students were given an overview of the recreation site planning by Civil Engineer Toni Addison. "I want to impart my excitement, experience, and career with the Forest Service to young adults. I'm always glad to give of my time to help others find their way in life," said Addison.

The final stop, Leon Sink Geological Area, a unique geological site also

renovated in 2011 with American Recovery and Reinvestment Act funds. To cap off the day, Forest Service employees led a group hike through the renovated trails.

The National Forests in Florida have been involved with the program since 1994 and, over the years, employees have stepped up to the plate to speak about careers in the Forest Service.



*Nathan Wadlinger from the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina reads an interpretive sign at the Big Dismal Sinkhole at Leon Sinks Geological Area recreation site.*

"We just want to give them an opportunity to talk to people working in different professions," said Training Coordinator Rick Whitfield of the Florida Governor's Council on Indian Affairs. "Like all of us, you start out thinking I want to do one thing, then you're exposed to something else and you change your mind."

### ARMED SERVICES BLOOD DRIVES

- ⇒ Oct. 24th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.
- ⇒ Dec. 27th – 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

**Online Registration is Available.**

Registered donors may log in and new donors may create a profile by visiting: [www.militarydonor.com/index.cfm](http://www.militarydonor.com/index.cfm). Enter sponsor code (USDA), and follow the instructions for scheduling an appointment.

For further assistance, contact Charlene Raley, USDA Medical Services, at (202)720-3893 or [charlene.rale@dm.usda.gov](mailto:charlene.rale@dm.usda.gov), or Vikki Fernetto, ASBP, at (301) 295-2109 or [victoria.fernetto@med.navy.mil](mailto:victoria.fernetto@med.navy.mil).

### Kimble Brown, Jr.

is from Salisbury, Maryland. He is currently a senior, Ag-Business Major in the 1890 Scholars Program at the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. This summer, Brown worked with Rural Development's (RD) Support Services Division, analyzing Freedom of Information Act requests. This was his third summer with RD, enabling him to see the agency through different aspects, previously working with the Budget Division and directly with customers from the Delaware State Office. Brown is thankful for the opportunity to become an 1890's Scholar and looks forward to starting his career with USDA after graduation. YAY!



## Join USDA's National Work & Family Month Extravaganza!



by Mika J. Cross  
USDA Work/Life &  
Wellness Program Manager  
worklife@dm.usda.gov

On July 30, 2012, [Senate Resolution 533](#) designating October 2012 as “**National Work & Family Month**” was passed by unanimous consent in the U.S. Senate. Dedicating a month to work and family issues encourages employees across the nation to pause once a year and reflect on the progress already made on the journey to work-life effectiveness, to celebrate, and then raise the bar moving on to even more pervasive progress.

This year, USDA is planning an exciting line-up of free, interactive events throughout the month of October to celebrate National Work & Family Month. Be sure to check the [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community homepage frequently for updates on events and activities and contact your Agency Work/Life Coordinator to plan ways for celebrating at your work specific work location!

### Here's how you can join in on the fun:

- ◆ Post your personal photos, testimonials and blog posts on how USDA's Work/Life Programs have had a positive impact on your life on our [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community;
- ◆ Tune in to Deputy Secretary Merrigan's [Story Exchange](#) to listen to her discussions about Telework and USDA's Nursing Mothers Program;
- ◆ Register in AgLearn to attend the “Balancing Work and Family” webinar on October 11<sup>th</sup> from 12:30-1:30 EST—more details will follow soon!
- ◆ Nominate your Supervisor for the “**Supervisor Shining Star**” by sending an email to [worklife@dm.usda.gov](mailto:worklife@dm.usda.gov).

## Tell us about Telework—Take the Telework Survey!

In October, all USDA employees will have the opportunity to complete OPM's first Telework Satisfaction Survey. The survey is designed to capture key perceptions and experiences about the current USDA Telework Program and will be used to make strategic program enhancements for the future. The survey link will be emailed and will only take a few minutes to complete. All employees, including USDA leadership, are encouraged to take the survey— even if you do not currently participate in Telework. Be on the look-out for the October email, and feel free to contact us at [telework@dm.usda.gov](mailto:telework@dm.usda.gov) with any questions.



by Mika J. Cross  
USDA Work/Life &  
Wellness Program  
Manager

## Meet September's “Supervisor Shining Star”



USDA's first “Supervisor Shining Star” goes to **Raymond Covino**, District Conservationist for NRCS in Windham County, Connecticut. He is a firm believer that for employees to succeed, they must be provided the appropriate tools and be supported. For his staff, Covino has created an atmosphere where work/life and wellness is a priority. Quite conscientious of his employees' workloads, strengths, and needs, this month's “Supervisor Shining Star” strives for a setting where everyone has the necessary means required to exceed performance expectations.



Raymond Covino describes the negative effects of conventional tillage on soil health at a recent field workshop

Covino actively promotes a healthy and happy working environment. He offers support to new parents with part-time work opportunities and ensured a lactation space was created within the workplace for nursing mothers. A team player, he covers the office while encouraging his employees to take power walks during their lunch breaks — giving them an opportunity to re-energize as well as exercise. This forward-thinking supervisor has promoted a work environment that inspires NRCS employees to achieve optimum performance. *Thank you, Ray!*



## Nominations Still Open for the “Supervisor Shining Star”

We will be accepting nominations throughout October for the “Supervisor Shining Star”! If you have a shining example of a supervisor or manager who makes work/life balance a priority, consider submitting their name and photo today by sending an email to: [worklife@dm.usda.gov](mailto:worklife@dm.usda.gov) with the following information:

1. Your Name and Organization
2. Your Supervisor's Name, Position, Title, and Organization
3. How long as a supervisor and how many people he/she currently supervises
4. Description of Category for nomination; telework, wellness, and/or work/life balance
5. Description of the impact the supervisor/manager has had on you or your organization





## National Disability Observance

**October 17, 2012 10:00 - 11:00 am**  
**Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC**  
**Department-Wide Event**

*Save the Date!*

### 2012 USDA Intern Day Ends Summer on Positive Note



*By Wendy Carrasco,  
Student Programs Manager  
OHRM Diversity, Recruitment & Work/Life Division*

The Intern Day and Panel Discussion is an annual event for all summer interns to honor their hard work and contribution to USDA. This year, our theme was “Transforming USDA’s Tomorrow Today”, and interns were honored by the presence of Secretary Tom Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan, along with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Administration Oscar Gonzales, and Associate Assistant Secretary for Administration Dr. Alma C. Hobbs.

Secretary Vilsack’s address to the students showed his enthusiasm and dedication to the Student Employment Programs (SEPs) and their future at USDA. He emphasized the importance of being involved in public service by tying the USDA intern’s experience with his own when campaigning for Joe Biden in his youth; “People less qualified than you end up governing you.” Paraphrasing a quote from Theodore Roosevelt, Secretary Vilsack stated how important it is to “spend your life in a worthy cause, to give everything you’ve got, to know at the end of the day that you are not a cold and timid soul who doesn’t know neither victory nor defeat. Working for the public, working in a department of government, making a difference in people’s lives, improving the world, protecting the envi-



*Audience members and interns had the opportunity to hear USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Dr. Kathleen Merrigan speak at the 2012 Intern Day and Panel Discussion held in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday, July 11, 2012. [Photos by Bob Nichols, Office of Communications.]*

*ronment; all worthy causes and something you can be proud of having spent your precious time doing.”*

Deputy Secretary Merrigan and Dr. Alma C. Hobbs continued Secretary Vilsack’s message of using the internship opportunity as a gateway to a future career. Deputy Secretary Merrigan shared a personal story of how an internship in high school connected her throughout her career to the position she holds today. Dr. Hobbs emphasized how important it is to work for a worthy cause and to make a difference in the world

through public service and at USDA.

The Panel portion allowed current and former USDA interns the opportunity to share their experience and advice to the new interns. New interns had the chance to ask panelists questions about being an intern at USDA and, in turn, the panelists shared insight into the USDA internship program and how it has helped them grow professionally and personally. Enthusiasm was so high about the opportunity to ask questions that the line extended out of the Jefferson Auditorium.

The Intern Day and Panel Celebration was a great success. Our interns left encouraged and eager to expand their horizons within their USDA internship and beyond.

In order to transform USDA’s tomorrow, interns must be informed of their significance and importance today.



*Mistress of Ceremonies Cynthia Cuellar, Office of the Executive Secretariat, moderated a panel of current and past interns. From left: Robert Bruton, Danielle Collier, Jonathan Kim, Laura Sepulveda, Brendan Gregorie, Emmabelle Kenyon, and Joshua Crockett. Cuellar interned at USDA with the Office of Faith Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.*

**Great Cultural  
for 8 Transformation**

## USDA Forest Service Offers Internal Coaching for Cultural Transformation



by  
*Carol Richmond*  
Supervisory Human  
Resources Specialist  
Forest Service

Forest Service upper-level leaders now have the opportunity to attend Internal Coach Training. ICT is a communication tool that helps leaders with initiative, creativity, and enhanced decision-making skills. Internal Learning Coaches who utilize coaching skills rather than giving direction experience more significant returns on their investment in employee development and engagement and contribute significantly toward creating an inclusive culture of coaching in the Agency. They also enjoy a significant increase in their own satisfaction with their supervisory and management role.

The value of Forest Service coaches has proven itself year after year, especially in the Forest Service Senior Leader and Middle Leader Programs. The Forest Service has a pool of over a hundred trained Learning Coaches located all over the country. By having upper-level leaders in the Forest Ser-

### **MARO Wellness Event Highlights Eastern Medicine**

by *Susan Stmietkowski, Food & Nutrition Service*

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (MARO) of USDA's Food & Nutrition Service continues to offer programs that inspire employees to adopt positive health behaviors and take advantage of a variety of culturally-based resources. On August 8th, one such event held at MARO recently provided key insights into the value of integrative medicine in promoting health, preventing disease, and managing troubling symptoms. Acupuncture and other techniques based in traditional Chinese medicine are becoming more common as adjuncts to Western approaches. The session was led by Kimberly Dong, daughter of MARO employee Lau-Sheung Dong and a third

vice learn how to coach Senior and Middle Leader program participants – and coach them for 6 to 12 months, the Forest Service is creating the next generation of leaders who:

- have stepped into a higher level of leadership skills
- have examined and adjusted their impact on others for greater effectiveness
- hold themselves accountable
- consciously utilize their previous training, experience and skills
- are strong decision-makers
- are more clear on their desired career path
- employ coaching skills in their own supervisory roles.

By training and utilizing internal coaches, the Forest Service is continuing to create a “culture of coaching”. Unlike typical training where participants take one or two key learning skills back to the workplace, coaches are growing their coaching skills over a half year to yearlong timeframe, while applying them regularly in their own supervision.

year medical school student at Drexel University in Philadelphia. During her presentation, which was very well received by employees, Dong discussed acupuncture as a treatment method for a variety of physical and emotional health concerns.



*Kimberly Dong demonstrates the placement of acupuncture needles to address pain and discomfort.*

Now, the Forest Service is seeking a way to train more coaches faster and more cost effectively. The next step is to develop higher skilled Learning Coaches to participate in future coach-training opportunities and to serve as an internal coaching resource for the Agency. Learning Coaches can take the next level of training and become an internal certified Forest Service Learning Coach. Ultimately, all employees in the Forest Service will have the opportunity to benefit from a coaching experience ensuring that everyone has equal access to the highest level of success and service.

The Forest Service is participating in a cross-Departmental working group, led by the Virtual University, to collaborate and engage in developing a viable coaching environment across USDA.

If you have any questions about the Forest Service Coaching Programs, write to [Carol.Richmond@fs.fed.us](mailto:Carol.Richmond@fs.fed.us).

If you have questions about the cross-Departmental working group, write to [Marisol.Rodriguez@dm.usda.gov](mailto:Marisol.Rodriguez@dm.usda.gov).

**Scott Cessarich** is from Santa Fe, New Mexico. Currently an Ag-Business major at New Mexico State, Cessarich is thrilled to have had the chance to further develop his skills and gain real life experience at USDA. This summer, he worked on the Hispanic and Women Farmers and Ranchers Claims Process (RD) and was able to support USDA's commitment to Civil Rights. Cessarich assisted those groups to obtain the loan and grant funding needed to further their farms and livelihoods. His plans are to take what he learns and help his community back in New Mexico. *Make a difference, Scott!*



If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, Telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov) or visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).

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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov).

#### Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for October submissions is Friday, October 12, 2012.

#### Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to *MyUSDA* should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant Work Life issue with an accompanying photo. Send photos as separate attachments and make sure they are high quality.

**The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it. Maximum length of articles is 250 words.**

Email submissions or further inquiries to [MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov](mailto:MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov)