

SOUTHERN PLAINS AREA

ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR OFFICE SUPPORT PROFESSIONALS

2002 Annual Meeting —

The annual meeting for the Southern Plains Area Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals was held June 11–13, 2002, in Hot Springs, Arkansas. New assignments were given to the returning members and new appointees. The newly elected officers for this year are —

Olivia Pedraza has completed her term as Chair and will begin her new endeavor as Technical Advisor to the National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals. Olivia is filling the position previously held by Rhea Fryar. Sharon Sheffield is the new Council Chair; she was the Co-Chairperson. She has been busy making plans for this year and has already initiated several new projects. Jackie Stone, a new member to the Council, has been elected Co-Chair. Sandy Sims will continue as Recorder, Davee Crowell, Training Coordinator, (both are returning members) and Carole Perryman, also a new member, will be the Information Coordinator. Rayma Erickson will fill a vacant member spot so she can continue with the SPA Handbook.



will be missed very much by the Council.

Notes from Sharon —

As the new Chair of an enthusiastic Council, I would like to welcome our new members and share some of our goals for the coming year. With the resignation of Rhea Fryar (Lubbock, TX), Olivia Pedraza (Weslaco, TX) was appointed as replacement on the National Council Position. We wish Rhea well and know she will be a great asset to the Department of Commerce and at the same time congratulate Olivia on her new appointment. Olivia's appointment to the National Council created an unfilled office for the Member's Position (one year term left). In agreement with the council, and with Dr. Onstad's approval, Rayma Erickson (Stillwater, OK) volunteered to fill the member position, welcome back Rayma. Also, I want to welcome our two new members, Jacquelyn Stone (Stuttgart, AR) and Carole Perryman (Bushland, TX)

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Congratulations to Wanda Paradowski and Ruth Treat. Wanda will be our new contact person for information from the Area Office, and Ruth will be the contact person for new office support personnel.

Goodbye and Thank You to Justine Flowers, Phyllis Hoffman, and Rhea Fryar.

Justine Flowers and Phyllis Hoffman have completed their three-year terms and Rhea Fryar has taken a job with another government agency. They

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

2002 Annual Meeting.....	1
Notes From Sharon.....	1
New Council Members.....	2
New SPA Employees.....	2
Goodbye.....	3-4
Accomplishments & Goals.....	4-5
From Wanda Paradowski.....	5
Council Members.....	6
Web Page.....	6
Membership to Council.....	6
Disclaimers.....	6

Notes from Sharon Continued

Jacque will be serving as Co-Chair and Carole as Information Coordinator. They are all enthusiastic and excited as are our other members to making a difference for the rest of the support staff within the Area.

One of the goals set this year was to obtain approval for an appointed position from the Area Director's office to serve as a permanent member on the council and revise the charter with the approval of the position. Wanda Paradowski has accepted this position as the permanent member appointed by Dr. Onstad. We want to welcome her as our first permanent member and know she will be a valuable asset for the council.

Plans are underway for a national conference of the office support professionals. We are looking forward to this conference and plan to provide assistance in whatever capacity needed. We continue to fine-tune previous accomplishments and continually update information. I believe this is an ongoing task and one that the Council will certainly continue to carry out.

New Council Members —



Jacquelyn H. Stone serves as Office Automation Clerk for Harry K. Dupree Stuttgart National Aquaculture Research Unit in Stuttgart, AR and Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute in Fort Pierce, FL. Between the two locations, she works with 15 scientists. She directly assists the Center Director/Research Leader. She is responsible for multiple tasks that are essential for the operation of the research units, which include Payroll, Travel, ARIS, Purchasing, etc.

Jacque began her career with USDA-ARS in 1996. In 1992 through 1996 her location was under USDI, NBS, a total of ten years at her location. When she is not at work she spends her time with her two daughters, Mary Claire, five years old and Madelyn, four years old. Jacque is extremely fam-

ily oriented. She loves the summer, mainly to relax at the pool! She also likes to travel whenever there's an opportunity.

She serves on the Employees Association Committee for the Stuttgart National Aquaculture Research Center. She participates in the Equal Opportunity/Civil Rights functions at her location. She also serves as Co-Chair for the SPA Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals.

H!!! My name is Carole Perryman and I work at the Conservation and Production Research Laboratory in Bushland, Texas. I began my position in November of 1988. Prior to that time, I worked for an oil and gas corporation and held positions in various accounting departments. Prior to the closure of the Amarillo office, I was an executive secretary.

Since I began my tenure at Bushland, I have worked with every Unit. Currently, I am a member of the Soil and Water Research Unit. Terry Howell, my supervisor, was instrumental in my opportunity to be a Council member. The scientists and engineers in this Unit are very active in research, in the needs for our laboratory, and as member of professional organizations. Because of them, I am able to learn and do new things and never become bored.

My personal goal is to make my job the best it can be and to be instrumental for others to *want* to apply to the Council as new vacancies develop. This is a wonderful opportunity to meet and learn from others in the Southern Plains Area.

New SPA Employees —

The Southern Plains Area has three new employees. They are: Brenda Carlson in Bushland, Texas; Brenda Irish in Las Cruces, New Mexico; and Beverly Tucker in Pine Bluff, Arkansas.

Brenda Carlson: I am married with two daughters ages 19 and 18. I am enjoying my new
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New SPA Employees Continued

Job and learning all the new procedures, if only I could magically understand all the acronyms and numbered forms. Before coming to ARS, I worked for Texas A&M Research & Extension Center/Texas Agricultural Experiment Station. I enjoy camping in the mountains with my family and traveling.

Beverly Tucker has a B.S. degree in Music Education K-12 and has worked in the public as well as private school districts for the past four years. She has also worked with special needs children. In her words, "I love working for USDA and have met some extraordinary people since coming on board in May 2002. Everyone has been very helpful and I am so grateful for the camaraderie of the secretaries. I look forward to getting to know more of the SPA staff members."

Goodbye —

Rhea Fryar

As you are all aware, I have accepted a position outside of ARS. I wanted to take this time to express my feelings about the SPA Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals and hopefully to let other people see the benefits of the Council's efforts. I started my career with ARS in 1995 and became an active member with the Council in 1997. Still considered new in the Agency, I didn't think that I had much to offer but wanted to learn whatever and wherever I could. I was wrong about not having much to offer, because I had the "new" employee's insight and the appreciation of training needs in the Agency. There is a certain sense of purpose that I felt when working on the Council and contributing to new ideas and programs. A training program is in place with the training scholarship and shadowing program. This is not only useful to new Office Support Professionals (OSP), but for OSP's who are taking on new duties or want to learn something new. This program is only beneficial if it is utilized to its full extent. I know I have said this a hundred times, but the knowledge I gained from networking alone is priceless. I encourage each of you to get involved. Be a mentor

or volunteer to become a member. Get to know your representatives and share ideas within the SPA. NETWORK, NETWORK, NETWORK!

Our positions in the Agency, more specifically the Area, are very important. It is our job to take the program support/administrative burden away from the scientific staff. I always felt that this was my number one goal every day. I encourage all of you to get involved with the research that is performed. The more you know about what is going on at your location, the more sense your job will make. Solicit work during not so busy times. Play around on the new software programs to become more efficient and confident in your work. Teamwork within a location is a very important piece of the puzzle.

I could go on and on, as most of you know, but I won't. I have made some wonderful lifelong friends in ARS and leaving was an extremely hard decision. I will miss each of you more than you know! I was proud to say that I worked for ARS because I saw the benefits of our Agency. I feel that ARS is a special agency and as a taxpayer, I am happy to know that some of my tax dollars support such an Agency.

You have to love your job and make it as fun as possible. Whoever said that work couldn't be fun?

Phyllis Hoffman

This is Phyllis Hoffman here, program assistant for the Grassland, Soil and Water Research Laboratory in Temple, Texas. I was appointed to serve on the SPA Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals by Dr. Onstad in April 1999, at which time the Council was only three-years old. Just this past June, I ended my three-year appointment during which I served as Co-Chair, Chair, and member. Of course, my most active year was the year I held the position of Chair, and a lot took place during that time: past accomplishments were strengthened and continued; the Council's web page was developed; the shadowing program really took off; a brochure and poster were created; an

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Goodbye Continued

area-wide contest was held to find a design for the Council logo; the Area Office started giving the Council some financial support; we were involved in the SPA Leadership Conference; and the scholarship program was approved and implemented to assist in professional development of the secretarial/office support of individual(s) through funding for conferences, workshops, short courses, or other appropriate educational opportunities. Whew—seems like a lot took place then, and it did, but you have to also realize that some of it was ongoing from the previous years. To pick out one accomplishment and say it was the most important would be very hard to do as all are essential in our growth and development as office support persons in our locations and in our Area. We've come a long way since the creation of the Council six years ago, and what I see for the future is a stronger, more visible Council working very hard to continue our mission. I believe the commitment of the present and future Council will insure that happens. If you have not had the opportunity to serve on the Council, I hope that you will strongly consider submitting your name to be considered by Dr. Onstad in the spring 2003. We need persons to help keep our Council alive and strong so that we can continue to support the objectives we have set for all of us and to be able to interface with others in SPA and all the other ARS areas – just like a puzzle.

Olivia Pedraza

I cannot believe that three years have gone by since I joined the SPA Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals. I joined the Council in 1999 as a member. In June of 2000, I served as the Co-Chair and June of 2001 as Chair. A lot of excellent things have come out of the Council such as the Shadowing Program, Scholarship Program, Directory, soon-to-be finished Handbook, orientation packages for new office support professionals and our very own web page. Also, the Councils had their very first National Conference for ARS Office Support in Hunt Valley, MD, on May 1-4, 2000. What an experience! It was a huge success. I encourage all office support professionals to volunteer to serve on the Council. It is a wonderful and learning experience. I strongly encourage all to

take advantage of the Shadowing and Scholarship Programs. If you need information on these programs or anything else, please contact a Council member. In June of this year, I was nominated to serve on the National Council to replace Rhea Fryar who transferred to the National Weather Service. I am excited about the appointment. I hope to bring more to our Area Council from the networking and sharing of ideas on the National Council.

Accomplishments and Goals —

Accomplishments for This Past Year:

We were *one of three* Areas to respond to the secretary initiative.

We were the *only* Area Council to send in an Annual Report.

Members divided the SPA Handbook into chapters and made the necessary corrections so that the Handbook could be completed and distributed once it is approved.

Orientation packages were mailed to new employees.

Rhea Fryar elected to Co-Chair the National Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals.

Goals for the New Year:

The North Atlantic Area needs help with getting their Council started. We will provide assistance and help.

Group net conference training instead of travel.

Networking on a regular basis with individuals within the 0300 series.

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Accomplishments and Goals Continued

Teleconferencing between Council members on a quarterly schedule.

Updating of the Advisory Council for Office Support Professional's web page.

Add the SPA-ACOSP logo to the web page.

From Wanda Paradowski —

After the July SPA ACOSP meeting in Hot Springs, AR, the Council requested Dr. Onstad to consider appointing a permanent council member from the Area Office. I volunteered and Dr. Onstad accepted so here I am. Then I found out one of the duties is to write articles for the Council Newsletter. Oh, boy! In this first article, I'll tell a little of my ARS background. I was hired as a GS-3 PPT clerk-typist September 1980 in the Oklahoma-Texas Area Office. Dr. Rex Johnston was the Area Director and the Area consisted of two states - Oklahoma and Texas. In 1982-83, ARS underwent a major reorganization; the Area name changed to Southern Plains Area (SPA) and included Texas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and Screwworm Research in Mexico. By 1987, New Mexico joined SPA. I hung in there through all the changes and happened to be in the right place at the right time and advanced from GS-3 PPT to a full time position, serving as secretary to the Assistant Area Director under Dr. Bob Hoffman and then under Dr. Paul Murrman. At the time of the reorganization, Ella Flynt, secretary to the Area Director (AD), filled the Program Analyst position and I was promoted to AD secretary. We had several "actings" (AD) for quite some time - then Dr. Floyd Horn, Dr. Earl King, and Pat Jackson moved in as permanent AD, Asst. AD, and AAO and things settled down. June Williams replaced Pat when she moved on and eventually Dr. Chuck Onstad come on board as Associate Area Director (AAD). After Dr. Horn transferred to Headquarters, Dr. Onstad was promoted to Area Director; then, Dr. King retired and we were again working with "actings".

Carrying on the day-to-day business of the Area Office (especially when the AD and the AAO are in travel status) with an "Acting" can be challenging but is a wonderful experience getting to work with some of our Area research leaders and laboratory directors on a daily basis. After Dr. James Coppedge was hired as AAD, things settled down again as far as the "chain of command." We have a great team in the Area Office and I am especially fortunate to work with Anne Steele and Rhonda Wells. Originally this article was to be about me, but seems I've given a mini-history on the Southern Plains Area. My husband Sam and I have seven children between us and so far eight grandchildren. We love them all dearly and enjoy doing things with them - camping, fishing, birthday parties, etc. We recently graduated from tent camping to a travel trailer with all the "perks" - AC, bathroom, microwave oven, refrigerator, queen size bed. We love it! I have been with ARS-SPA for 22 years and think about retiring but would miss all my friends and colleagues throughout the Area and ARS. I work with a great bunch of folks, ARS is a great government agency to work for, and SPA is the best Area in the Agency.

Before closing, I would like to promote the Weekly Report to the Secretary and provide a few hints for better coverage of SPA news. My deadline for submission to ARS Information Staff is 3:00 p.m. Eastern Time, every Thursday. Nothing more than 10 days old (unless the item is very significant) will be included in the Weekly Report. The format changed recently - headings for Congressional Contacts, Climate Change, and Secretary/Administrator's Schedule were eliminated and Homeland Security was added. Congressional contacts, constituent or stakeholder meetings, on-going news, and upcoming events (look ahead as far as possible on upcoming events) are now reported under Section I "Key Department News". Please submit Congressional contact information to me in brief paragraph form (this does not replace the requirement to report on the ARS 213).

COUNCIL

CROWELL, DAVEE R.
USDA-ARS
RICE RESEARCH UNIT
1509 Aggie Drive
Beaumont, TX 77713
(409) 752-5221 ext. 2233
Fax: (409) 752-5720
Email: dcrowell@ag.tamu.edu

ERICKSON, RAYMA M.
USDA-ARS
LOCATION SUPPORT STAFF
1301 N Western St.
Stillwater, OK 74075-2714
(405) 624-4141 ext. 241
Fax: (405) 624-4142
Email: rerickson@pswcr1.ars.usda.gov

PEDRAZA, OLIVIA Z.
USDA-ARS
LOCATION SUPPORT STAFF
2413 E. Hwy 83, Bldg. 200
Weslaco, TX 78596
(956) 447-6301
Fax: (956) 447-6345
Email: opedraza@weslaco.ars.usda.gov

PERRYMAN, CAROLE
USDA-ARS
SOILS AND WATER MGMT RESEARCH
P.O. Drawer 10
2300 Experiment Station Road
Bushland, TX 79012
(806) 356-5749
Fax: (806) 356-5750
Email: cperryman@cpri.ars.usda.gov

SHEFFIELD, SHARON A.
USDA-ARS
GENETICS AND PRODUCTION RESEARCH
Hwy 3 West
P.O. Box 159
Lane, OK 74555
(580) 889-7395 ext. 228
Fax: (580) 889-5783
Email: ssheffield-usda@lane-ag.org

SIMS, SANDY M.
USDA-ARS
FOOD AND FEED SAFETY RESEARCH
2881 F&B Road
College Station, TX 77845
(979) 260-9362
Fax: (979) 260-9332
Email: sims@ffsr.tamu.edu

STONE, JACQUELYN H.
USDA-ARS
HARRY K. DUPREE STUTTGART NATIONAL
AQUACULTURE RESEARCH CENTER
2955 Highway 130 East
Stuttgart, AR 72160-0860
(870) 673-4483 ext. 271
Fax: (870) 673-7710
Email: jstone@spa.ars.usda.gov

WEB PAGE

The SPA ACOSP homepage is updated periodically and has information about the council members, our charter, newsletter, SPA directory, an approved actual subsistence table, information about the shadowing program, information about the orientation packet, and many useful web site links. We are going to keep the directory up to date so if you see something in the directory that needs to be changed, please let Sharon Sheffield know and she will make the changes immediately. The web page is located at

<http://www.spa.ars.usda.gov/acosp.htm>

MEMBERSHIP TO COUNCIL

Would you like to serve on the SPA Advisory Council? Each year as some members rotate off the Council, new members come onboard to continue the mission of the Council which has set out to serve the SPA Secretaries/Program Support employees, Location Research and Administrative Team, and Area Director in an advisory capacity. The Council also strives to strengthen and improve the professional image of all SPA secretaries and program support employees through orientation, training, and networking. Membership to the Council is for a three-year period. In order for our Council to continue its mission, new members are needed each July. Anyone interested in joining the Advisory Council, please contact a current Council member. Your name will be submitted to the Area Director for consideration and appointment.

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Please contact Carole Perryman if you would like to contribute an article that *supports* the SPA ACOSP mission.