

2003 A New Year —

By Carole Perryman

On January 30, 2003, the SPA, Advisory Council for Office Support Personnel had their first teleconference call for 2003.

Members participating were: Sharon Sheffield, Jacque Stone, Sandy Sims, Davee Crowell, Carole Perryman, Rayma Erickson, and Wanda Paradowski.

Prior to the meeting, Sharon provided each member with a list of topics to be discussed. Each item was addressed by the participating members. The items discussed were:

- ◆ Webpage Update
- ◆ Brochure Update
- ◆ Poster Update
- ◆ Contact Update
- ◆ Employee Package Update
- ◆ Handbook Update
- ◆ Newsletter Update
- ◆ Scholarship Program Update
- ◆ Shadowing Program Update
- ◆ National OSP's Report - Olivia Pedraza
- ◆ National Conference
- ◆ Leadership Meeting-2003

Each item has been completed or being updated. In the future, these changes will be seen at: <http://www.spa.ars.usda.gov/acosp.htm> our web page; at our upcoming meetings which are the 2003 National Conference for ARS Office Support

Professionals, April 22-24, 2003, in New Orleans, LA; at the SPA Research Leadership Conference, October 28-30, 2003, in Las Cruces, NM; a new handbook; through our SPA Advisory Council for Office Support Professionals Newsletter; and the personal contacts we have amidst ourselves.

Chair's Corner —

By Sharon Sheffield

A teleconference was held the last of January with updates on goals set for the year. Plans for the national conference of ARS Office Support Professionals, April 22-24, 2003, in New Orleans, LA, are well underway. A display with information about our council using an educational theme will be set up at the conference. The first national conference was a huge success, and I feel this one will be equally motivational and informational. Also, a display will be set up for the SPA Research Leadership Conference scheduled for October 2003 in Las Cruces, NM.



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Chair's Corner Continued

Each year as some members rotate off the Council, new members come onboard to continue the mission of the Council. Membership to the Council is for a three-year period. In order for our Council to continue its mission, new members are needed each June. I want to encourage 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.

The Council continues to strive to strengthen and improve the professional image of all SPA secretaries and program support employees through orientation, training, and networking. Please feel free to contact a council member if we can be of help in any of these areas.

Tips, Hints, How Do YOU Do It?—

By Davee Crowell

Hi, my name is Davee Crowell and I'm the Unit Secretary for the Rice Research Unit in Beaumont, TX, and I'm also the Training Coordinator for the SPA ACOSP.

We all have questions about how other locations "do things" and what is the right way to do certain tasks. So, I'm asking for *YOUR tips, hints and how you do things!* Sort of like Heloise! Ruth Treat is a fountain of information and knowledge - and we all love her emails - but there are also many, many of YOU who have interesting methods to accomplish your jobs. If you have any ideas you'd like to share, please email them to me (dcrowell@ag.tamu.edu) or fax them (409-752-5720). I'll be compiling everything and sharing them with all of you.

Recently I have mailed a packet with some helpful information that I found in Sharon Sheffield's handbook from the last National Conference. Some of the things in there are correspondence guidelines for e-mail, telephone etiquette, grammar hints, correspondence formats, tips for being a facilitator, ARIS forms, personnel forms, handy websites, travel information, and some other stuff.

If anyone would like a copy, e-mail or call and I'll get it out to you pronto.

I'm looking forward to getting some really good hints from lots of you!

Congratulations to Jacque —

Jacquie Stone, formerly Office Automation Clerk for the Harry K. Dupree Stuttgart National Aquaculture Research Center (HKD SNARC) in Stuttgart, AR, and for Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institute /Aquaculture Center for Training, Education, and Demonstration (HBOI/ACTED) in Fort Pierce, FL, was recently promoted to Secretary, effective December 29, 2002. Jacque served as Office Automation Clerk for HKD SNARC since 1992 and for HBOI/ACTED since 2000. In her words, "I have finally accomplished one of my goals in life! I guess it's time to set another one. In the last few years my supervisor, also the Center Director for HKD SNARC, Dr. Donald W. Freeman, has given me opportunities to gain more ARS knowledge and skills through training and hands-on experience. I was able to apply what I have learned to the benefit of our research units. I am very excited and eager to learn more. To all the secretaries out there ...wow!"

News From the SPA Area Office —

By Wanda Paradowski

Preliminary plans are in the making for the 2003 Leadership Conference which will be held October 27-31, in Las Cruces, New Mexico, with Monday the 27th and Friday the 31st for travel days. The Conference is a biennial meeting of the leadership from all Southern Plains Area (SPA) locations. Attendees from SPA include Research Leaders/Laboratory Directors/Center Directors, Location Administrative Officers, Management Unit Office Support Personnel, and a number of Area Office folks. Meetings will be held at both the Range Management Research Unit and the Cotton Ginning Research Unit facilities. Dr. James Coppedge is in the process of appointing the Planning Committee, developing a tentative agenda, identifying speakers, etc. If anyone has ideas for the upcoming Con-

News From the SPA Area Office Continued

ference, please contact Dr. Coppedge, Anne Steele, or Wanda Paradowski in the Area Office, or Dr. Kris Havstad, Planning Committee Chair.

Update on reporting foreign visitors: In the past we have been required to report all foreign visitors to Jim Lawrence with the ARS International Research Programs. Jim has retired and the new person is Linda Seckel. We need only report to Headquarters those foreign visitors who WORK in our locations. Foreign visitors who are just passing through, actually visiting and not working, do not need to be reported; HOWEVER, we should keep a log of these short-term visitors. Any questions regarding this can be directed to Wanda at 979-260-9346 or wparadowski@spa.ars.usda.gov.

From the Equal Employment Opportunity/Civil Rights Desk

By Debra Thomas

Civil Rights Policy Statement

Please ensure all employees have a copy of Dr. Onstad's recent policy statement dated January 21, 2003, and Acting Administrator Dr. Knipling's current policy statement dated October 21, 2002. Secretary Veneman's statement, which is not dated and was sent via email during the first quarter of FY 2002, is still in effect. Additionally, all Locations should have recently received an 11" X 17" poster of Dr. Knipling's current statement. All three policy statements should be posted to your official bulletin boards.

Quarterly Reports

Thanks to everyone for a great job in mastering the new results-oriented reporting requirement for the EEO/CR reports that was implemented in FY 2002.

Due dates for the remainder of FY 2003 and inclusive reporting periods are as follows:

- ◆ March 21, 2003 (report January, February, and March initiatives)

- ◆ June 20, 2003 (Report April, May, and June initiatives)
- ◆ August 22, 2003 (Report July, August, and September initiatives)

Special Observances

Upcoming observances are as follows:

- ◆ Black History Month (February)
- ◆ Women's History Month (March)
- ◆ Professional Secretaries Week (last full week in April)
- ◆ Professional Secretaries Day (celebrated the Wednesday of Professional Secretaries Week)
- ◆ Take Our Daughters To Work Day (4th Thursday of April)
- ◆ Asian/Pacific Heritage Month (May)

DEAR and ARS EEO Awards

Congratulations to the South Central Agricultural Research Laboratory, Lane, OK as the winner of the FY 2002 DEAR Award. In addition to successfully recruiting and hiring from under-represented groups, participating in several outreach activities, and supporting special emphasis activities during FY 2002, the Location created a Special Emphasis Committee. Honorable mentions are the Harry K. Dupree Stuttgart National Aquaculture Research Center, Stuttgart, AR; the Grazinglands Research Laboratory, El Reno, OK; and the Cropping Systems Research Laboratory, Lubbock, TX.

Be sure to advise Debra Thomas as you establish and implement Special Emphasis/Diversity Committees. And don't forget to nominate your committee for the Administrator's EEO/CR Award when the nomination call is requested this upcoming Spring.

Congratulations are in order for Dr. Michael Hume of the Southern Plains Agricultural Research Center, College Station, TX as the recipient of the 2002 ARS Administrator's National EEO/CR Award in the Non-Supervisory/Non-Managerial category. Thanks to all for their efforts!

EEO/Civil Rights Desk Continued

SPA Research Highlight (Reprint #2)

By Phyllis Hoffman

Keep your eyes open for our second reprint, as we should have copies available for distribution by this Summer. Reprint #2 will include SPA articles from July 1999 to June 2002.

2003 Summer Mentoring Programs

Please ensure all scientists receive a copy of Dr. Coppedge's memo (Solicitation of Proposals for Summer 2003 Mentoring Programs) dated February 4, 2003. Interested parties should submit the completed Proposal Form to Debra Thomas no later than April 4, 2003.

Online Training (Understanding Conflict)

Thanks for all of your hard work in helping SPA to meet its civil rights training deadline. Remember that all new employees must complete the online training, as well as, the two booklet courses, Handling Diversity in the Workplace and Prevention of Sexual Harassment.

The online site will be unavailable to users on Friday, February 7, 2003, from 1:00 p.m. EST to 3:00 p.m. EST due to program revisions and upgrades. One change will be posting of the notice related to Section 508 compliance on the front page of the training site.

Questions and Answers

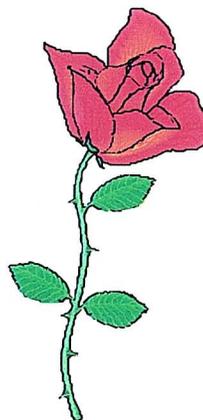
Please contact Debra Thomas via phone at 979-260-9416; fax at 979-260-9415; or email at dthomas@spa.ars.usda.gov for additional information as it relates to the EEO/CR arena.

Shadowing Program —

By Carole Perryman

The Shadowing Program is just one of the things your Council supports. A new secretary in our area asked her boss if she could participate in this training. He gave his permission and Phyllis Hoffman went to the secretary's location and provided the training. Here is an account of what happened.

Implemented to offer training to new office support staff, as well as a refresher for veteran staff, the Shadowing Program is in place to offer assistance in all areas related to our jobs whether it be ARIS, travel, office procedures, etc. This past December, I had the opportunity to serve as a mentor in the Shadowing Program. I spent some time in Lubbock working with Judy Moody, secretary to the Lab Director of the Cropping Systems Research Laboratory. While Judy is not new to government work, she is new to ARS and the systems and procedures that we use. During my visit, I was able to give Judy suggestions in file management, show her some of the how-to's of ARIS, and offer information on other subjects. When I left Lubbock, I felt that Judy had a much better understanding of some of the tasks she is responsible for and knew that she would contact me should she have any questions or concerns. Lucky for Judy that she has Barbara Hodges there in Lubbock to consult with over work matters, but I know that it can be overwhelming when we're the only ones in the office and performing everything solo. Just keep in mind that the Shadowing Program is there and is available. Approach your supervisor with the request to have someone come to your location, or you to theirs, for some hands-on work together. Once the supervisor has given his/her approval, contact any Council officer; that person will take it from there and see to it that a mentor is provided to you. Bottom line—we are here to be of support to one another in order that we can effectively do our jobs to the best of our ability and ARS ways.

*Thought for the Day*

If a man had two pennies,
with one penny he would
buy a loaf of bread to
sustain his life.

With the other penny he
would buy a flower to
make life worth living.

Administrative Trends —

Here are a few things to think about regarding trends in the administrative support professions:

Several years ago, a trend began toward the *professionalization* of the clerical staff and the *clericalization* of the professional staff.....sort of a role reversal. At a recent on-site visit to Hallmark Cards Inc., based in Kansas City, Missouri, IAAP representatives learned the same thing.

- Managers are doing their own e-mail and voice-mail. It takes up a lot of their time (and will surely get worse) and secretaries lose track of their bosses' schedules, correspondence, etc., so they are more out-of-the-loop.
- Secretaries are more into Internet use, for travel scheduling (making air, car, and hotel reservations and downloading maps of areas visited, etc.), researching, using references, some purchasing, etc. They are the predominant business users.
- Secretaries are getting into web design and updating. When they do, they lose that title and become something else. Nothing fixed at this point on the new title.
- Lots of Intranet use (between facilities). Some companies have only this and not Internet use.
- May be some policies about who gets Internet use and what they can/can't use it for. There may already be some hierarchical and status arguments over this. Some say, "Let them play with it. It introduces them to its wide use," while others say, "Limit its use to business only." Two schools of thought.
- More managers are doing their own correspondence (composing at the keyboard and actually sending it out), bypassing the secretary. Less work for the secretary, but again, out of the loop and what happens if the manager needs a copy? Guess who will be searching for it.
- Needs to be more education on co-authoring and use of computer networks. More people inside and outside departments are working jointly on projects that bounce back from one to another, each adding, deleting, and changing.
- Secretaries are seen as the final formatters...to make something look good. They import, add graphs, charts, fix margins, select fonts, etc. They will need some graphic design fundamentals. At some point, a document may go to them for making it look "professional" and readable!
- Secretaries are the primary applications users and therefore train their managers. They are also troubleshooters for computer hardware and software problems and the first people managers "in trouble" call for help.
- Many secretaries have home computers and can be connected with traveling execs. 24-hours a day. Good for time zone changes. Can make for long days (and nights) if material is needed. Also...a new fear of leaking corporate data out of the office by workers with laptops and at-home access (like telecommuters).
- Since many companies are moving to workstations (even for lower managers), computers and add-ons may be the new status symbols. Need to have some policy on who gets what, related to the kinds of work done.
- Computers make for better monitoring of at-home workers since you can track log on/off and work done by time.
- Younger managers and younger-generation secretaries are coming into the workplace more computer savvy. They often know more than the tenured staff, since they just learned the latest in their school classes.
- People used to complain about not "getting paid for computer skills." Now companies are "paying for results" and not "what you know"...it's more "what you produce." Skills must be related to job objectives.
- Computer skills can open doors to lateral and other moves. New jobs are coming about because of new computer applications. We may not ever KNOW where the new jobs are...they simply evolve due to software and company needs.
- People throughout the company now have access to information...it is what you do with it...creative use of information. Information is no longer such a status thing that is valued because of its limited availability.
- Filing is done more and more electronically...but workers still procrastinate cleaning up files (moving, deleting, etc.). The world never changes.

Source: *International Association of Administrative Professionals*

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WEB PAGE

The SPA ACOSP homepage is updated periodically and has information about the council members, our charter, SPA directory, 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 Davee Crowell 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.