

Advisory Council for Office Professionals



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Annual Meeting Held in Weslaco, TX



Bottom: Jacquelyn Synco, Carole Perryman ; Top: Noelia Martinez, Olivia Pedraza, Wanda Paradowski, Beverly Tucker, Barbara Hodges, Karen Wilcox.

The annual meeting for the Southern Plains Area Advisory Council for Office Professionals was held July 13 – 15, 2004, in Weslaco, Texas.

Two new members, Barbara Hodges from Lubbock and Beverly Tucker from Pine Bluff, were welcomed. New assignments were given to the returning members and new appointees. The newly elected officers for 2004-2005 are:

- Chair – Karen Wilcox (College Station)
- Co-Chair – Barbara Hodges (Lubbock)
- Recorder – Beverly Tucker (Pine Bluff)
- Training Coordinator – Carole Perryman (Bushland)
- Information Coordinator – Noelia Martinez (Weslaco)
- Member at Large - Jacquelyn Synco (Stuttgart)

Other members of the Council include Wanda Paradowski as a permanent member representing the Area Office, and Olivia Pedraza who is the SPA representative to the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals and the technical advisor for the SPA Council.

Ideas were exchanged and discussed:

We are working on guidelines/information for each position on the Council. Once completed, this information will be available to anyone upon request.

A copy of the brochure will be mailed to each office professional in the Southern Plains Area.

If you have any questions, suggestions or concerns, please contact one of the Council members.

New Council Members

Beverly Tucker

I began my career with ARS May, 2002, I currently serve as the office automation clerk for the Aquaculture Systems Research Unit, co-located on the campus of the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff. Our Unit consists of eight, soon to be nine, employees. Dr. Bartholomew W. Green is the Research Leader. My responsibilities include travel, purchasing, time & attendance, all ARIS activities, receptionist duties and serving as administrative assistant to Dr. Green, who has encouraged me to continue to gain training to better equip myself in my current position as well as help me continue to advance my career in ARS.

I obtained an A.A. degree in general studies from Williams Baptist College in Walnut Ridge, AR, and a B.A. degree in music education K-12 from Lyon College in Batesville, AR. After graduating from Lyon, I returned to Williams as an admissions counselor for the Southwest Missouri and Northeast & Northwest Arkansas. I met my husband while employed at Williams. After we were married, we moved so that he could complete his education at Palmer Chiropractic College in Davenport, Iowa.

Prior to accepting the ARS position, I taught 27 first graders at St. Peter's Elementary School which came on the heels of working in the White Hall Public School District with special needs children. I also have worked on an as needed basis for my husband's Chiropractic practice for the past 21 years. My three children keep me very active attending sporting events and various school activities. Andrea and Bart are currently in college and Kate will graduate from high school this year. With the remaining time, I enjoy reading, traveling to Strawberry, AR, to spend time with my parents and sister and spending summer weekends on the water and fall & winter at our hunting club.

Barbara Hodges is the program Analyst and secretary to the Laboratory Director at the Cropping Systems Research Laboratory in Lubbock Texas. She has worked for ARS for 7 1/2 years. She has been married to her husband, Greg for 24 years and has two daughters.

Thank You



We would like to thank
Davee Crowell
 &
Sandy Sims
 for their outstanding contribution to
 the council.



NACOP's 10 - Year Anniversary

By: Olivia Pedraza

The National Council for Office Professionals (NACOP) met in Albany, CA for their annual meeting. In conjunction with the annual meeting, the Council hosted NACOP's 10-Year anniversary, Stepping Into the Future, Proud Past and Promising Future. Former members were invited to attend this celebration. The Council had a breakout session and asked former and current Council members to address two questions as follows:

What do you see the strongest challenges that the ARS Office Professional must meet as we strive to manage and support research in the near future (next 5-10 years)?

How can NACOP help prepare the office professional to

meet these challenges?

The current Council members then worked on setting goals to meet these challenges. The Council came up with 6 short term goals as follows:

- Expand the newsletter visibility
- Renew mentoring effort
- Scholarship training program
- Records management
- Ask the Expert

All in all, it was a very productive meeting and the Council will be busy accomplishing the goals that were set.

Steps To Effective Listening

It takes practice to become a good listener. Regardless of how you listen, here are a few hints that may prove helpful the next time you have a conversation with an associate:

- Learn to recognize how important listening is to you and your job.
- Relax when you feel tense.
- When you're impatient to get something off your chest, count to 10.
- If you find yourself preoccupied, use empathy to force yourself to listen.
- Tell yourself you're interested in what the person is saying.
- Judge the work of what you've heard afterwards.
- Ask the other person for his or her ideas.
- Don't doodle or try to do two things at once.
- Listen for total meaning.
- Briefly restate what you've been told.
- Pay attention!
- Avoid preconceived ideas.
- Disciple yourself.
- Want to listen.
- Don't interrupt.
- Make listening a major component of your communication.



From Lemons to Lemonade

By Carole Perryman

My first year on the Southern Plains Area Advisory Council for Office Professionals, I was chosen as the Information Coordinator. In layman’s terms, I was responsible for compiling the Newsletter. My predecessor Davee Crowell mailed me a version of Microsoft Publisher and what became my ever faithful copy of Microsoft Publisher for Dummies. During this first year, I composed and edited two newsletters that were sent to all the SPA locations. This was challenging for me because I had the opportunity to learn a new software that I had not used before, design the layout, gather information and interact with others in the Southern Plains Area, and the satisfaction that the Newsletters could be helpful for other office professionals.

The beginning of my second year, I was given the position of Member/Webmaster. I was excited and regarded this as a new opportunity for self-development and growth. From the beginning, my new position became a real challenge for my time and energy. My IT person Jennifer Sublett contacted Wendy Jones. It was decided that the web pages would be converted to a more user-friendly software. I installed Easy HTML from the internet on my computer at work and at home. I then purchased another book for Dummies and started on my new adventure. The conversion was successful but still required a lot of time cross-referencing text, adding new information, plus trying to determine ‘why it didn’t work the way I wanted.’ At times I really struggled, but I finally got the finished outcome I wanted. My greatest obstacle was updating the Directory that contained all the SPA personnel’s names, locations, e-mails, phone numbers, and fax numbers. Names needed to be added, deleted, or changed. Even area codes were changed and the e-mail addresses needed to be updated. I also discovered we had some new locations that needed to be included.



After I had everything ready to be submitted to Wendy, I was told to wait. **Guess what!!** All the web pages are to be changed to another software. Disappointed? Yes for a minute or two. But now I will begin a new adventure and have the opportunity to learn and do something new. I have now removed all those countless tons of obsolete paperwork, disks, and CDs from my home office. (Somehow, my office seems larger than I remembered.) I have now begun packing my files away in my office at work. Everything will remain on my computer for awhile longer. I’m not ready to delete it yet even though I have backed up all my files. I am accustomed to seeing my icon on my desktop each morning when I turn on my computer and at night when I turn my computer off.

What I accomplished and learned is something I will remember for a long time. It’s nice now to reflect on all the problems I encountered and overcame, my experiences - both good and bad -, and just knowing I did what I set out to do. I am looking forward to my third year and a new opportunity to learn and participate in the SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals.

 * From Lemons to Lemonade is just what I need to *
 * make my life happier, richer, and more productive. *

SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals Shadowing Program

The SPA ACOP has a shadowing program within the area. This program is used for training purposes, but can be utilized as a refresher for veteran personnel. If you feel you need training in a certain area of your job duties (ARIS, traveling, T&A's, etc.), the Shadowing Program would be to your benefit. This program could be very beneficial for new office professionals or for existing office professionals who might be taking on new duties.

To be approved for the Shadowing Program, you will need to secure approval from your immediate supervisor and complete the Shadowing Form. After the form is submitted, the Council could help determine who the best person would be for you. This would mean the mentor would travel to your location, or you to their location, to work together for a time period to be determined by you and the mentor. Your location would be responsible for the traveling expenses.

If you are interested in the Shadowing Program, please fill out the Shadowing Program Application; you can find the application on the ACOP's website <http://www.spa.ars.usda.gov/Shadow.htm>

Perfection

Perfection is being right.

Excellence is willing to be wrong.

Perfection is control.

Excellence is spontaneous.

Perfection is anger and frustration.

Excellence is powerful.

Perfection is taking.

Excellence is giving.

Perfection is destination

Excellence is the journey.

Perfection is fear.

Excellence is taking a risk.

Perfection is doubt.

Excellence is confidence.

Perfection is judgment.

Excellence is accepting.

Perfection is pressure.

Excellence is natural.

SPA Area Advisory Council For Office Professionals Scholarship Program

PURPOSE:

The Southern Plains Area Training Scholarship Program is intended to assist in professional development of the secretarial/office professionals individual(s) through funding for conferences, workshops, short courses, or other appropriate educational opportunities.

ELIGIBILITY:

Applicants for this scholarship must be permanent ARS Southern Plains Area employees who have successfully completed one year of continuous employment with the Agency.

Applicants must have a current, fully successful or above performance rating.

CRITERIA:

- A competed application form describing the training, purpose, timetable, and budget shall be submitted. An individual/group can receive only one scholarship per year.
- Each scholarship will not exceed \$1000.

- Applications will be evaluated using the following criteria: relevance of the training to the applicant’s position, ability to enhance the applicant professionally/personally, and the benefit to others.
- Scholarship recipients will submit a written report to the Area Director, through appropriate supervisory channels, summarizing the activity within 30 days following completion of the training.

APPLICATION

PROCESS:



- Application forms can be obtained on the SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals homepage which is accessible through the SPA homepage web address www.spa.ars.usda.gov.
- Submit completed forms to the SPA Area Director’s Office, 7607 Eastmark Drive, Suite 230, College Station, TX 77840.
- Recipients will complete a Form SF-182 (Request, Authorization, Agreement and Certification of Training).



“Your belief at the beginning of a doubtful undertaking is the one thing that insures the successful outcome of your venture.”

William James

Council

Hodges, Barbara., Co-Chair

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WEB PAGE

The SPA ACOP 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 website 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 Noelia Martinez 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 is 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.

DISCLAIMERS

“Use of company or product name by the Department does not imply approval or recommendation of the product to the exclusion of others which also may be suitable.”

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Please contact Noelia Martinez if you would like to contribute an article that supports the SPA ACOP Mission.