

Southern Plains Area

Advisory Council for Office Professionals

NOVEMBER 2005



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Annual Meeting held in San Antonio, TX

The Advisory Council for Office Professionals (ACOP) met in San Antonio, Texas, July 12-14, 2005, for their annual meeting.

The Council welcomed two new members. Davee Crowell from Beaumont and Justine Flowers from Little Rock. The following members will serve on the council for 2005-2006

Chair—Barbara Hodges (Lubbock)

Co-Chair—Beverly Tucker (Pine Bluff)

Recorder—Justine Flowers (Little Rock)

Training Coordinator—Davee Crowell (Beaumont)

Information Coordinator—Noelia Martinez (Weslaco)

Technical Advisor—Olivia Pedraza (Weslaco)

Webmaster—Karen Wilcox (College Station)

Permanent member representing the Area Office—Wanda Paradowski (College Station)

Agenda items discussed at the meeting were:

In the coming year we will continue to send out our newsletter. Noelia Martinez does a great job of compiling this newsletter and is always looking for helpful tips and news from the locations.



Bottom: Justine Flowers, Davee Crowell, Noelia Martinez, Wanda Paradowski; Top: Karen Wilcox, Beverly Tucker, Olivia Pedraza, Barbara Hodges

If you would like to see an Office Professional (OP) featured in the "Spotlight," please contact any council member.

We will have a display board at the Southern Plains Area Executive meeting in College Station in November 2005. It will have information pertaining to the different area of service that the Council provides. Karen Wilcox had done an excellent job of putting this together.

We are revising the SPA ACOP handbook. We hope to have it completed and new copies made by September 15, 2005. All new OP's will receive a copy of the handbook. The manual will be available online by January 2006.

The Council continues to pursue new goals to better inform all OP's to enable them to better serve and understand the mission of ARS. Please feel free to contact a council member at any time with questions, suggestions or comments. We're off to a great start!!!

THOUGHT: No one can help everyone, but everyone can help someone!!

Farewell

by: Wanda Paradowski



June Williams
Deputy Area Director

The Southern Plains Area gave June Williams, Deputy Area Director (DAD), a fun send off on October 5, 2005, at the 7F Lodge near College Station. Approximately 85 people turned out for the festivities—including at

least one or more representatives from each SPA location. For those of you who were unable to attend, we thought you might be interested in a little background information on June. Her ca-

reer with ARS, from farm worker to DAD, is certainly an inspiration—especially for folks just starting out in ARS.

June was hired by ARS in Prosser, WA, as a farm worker under the Broadform Cooperative Agreement Program in 1978. In 1980 she became the Administrative Clerk at the location, and in the early eighties was promoted to the LAO position. In the mid-eighties, June transferred to Tifton, GA, as their Location Administrative Officer. In 1990, June became the Area Administrative Officer for the Southern Plains Area. She was promoted this year to the Deputy Area Director.

Facts Unique to an SPA State

This is the first in a series “Facts Unique to (an SPA state);” the following was included in the program for June Williams’ farewell party. We challenge folks from the states of Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and of course, Panama/Mexico, to send us information for future newsletters. Send to any member of the ACOP via Email.

Facts Unique to Texas

The Constitution of 1845, which was the resolution that allowed Texas into the Union, stated that Texas had the right to divide into 4 states in addition to the original Texas. That legal right still remains true.

There have been 6 flags to fly over Texas. The Spanish controlled Texas from 1519-1685 and 1690-1821. The French from 1685-1690. The Mexican 1845-1861 and 1865-present. The Confederacy from 1861-1865.

In the Texas state song, the word “boldest” replaced the word “largest” after Alaska became a state.

The state capitol building is the largest state capitol building in the country.

There are actually five state flowers of Texas. Before 1971, there were debates over which variation of bluebonnet was the actual state flower. (Only two variations were known at that time). In 1971, the state legislature solved this confrontation by making both variations and “any other variety of bluebonnet not heretofore recorded” the state flower. Currently five variations of bluebonnet are known: lupinus subcarneus, lupinus texensis, lupinus havardii, lupinus concinnus, lupinus plattensis. There are also several colors of state flower. Blue, white,



pink, lavender, and maroon being the primary colors, with several other minor variations found in nature.

The people of Texas usually call themselves Texans. However, Texian was generally used in the early period of the state’s history.

Texas is the only state whose state flag flies as high as the United States flag.



“SPA Spotlight”

by: Barbara Hodges

A couple of weeks ago an email was sent out asking for information on co-workers that you felt deserved a pat on the back for the contribution support they give to your location and others. The USDA-ARS is filled with outstanding employees and the Southern Plain Area is fortunate to have so many of them working in our locations. The emails poured in with people to be spotlighted and I assure you that with each newsletter sent out you will eventually see the person you sent in to be spotlighted.

Our spotlight for this newsletter is an employee that is thought very highly of at the Southwestern Cotton Ginning Research Laboratory in Las Cruces, NM. I received numerous emails conveying the same thing about this employee and that is Billy Armijo is highly respected for this hard work and his kind heart towards others in times of need. The following is some of the things that makes Billy Armijo who he is and why his co-workers wanted to see him in the “Spotlight.”

Billy Armijo works at the USDA-ARS Southwestern Cotton Ginning Research

Laboratory in Las Cruces, NM. He has been employed with ARS for 30 years as a Supervisory Mechanical Engineering Technician. According to Billy’s co-workers, Billy takes that extra step to help out his fellow peers in and out of work. Billy is a member of the Optimist Club which is an organization for youth. Billy is also a member of Knights of Columbus fraternal organization. He volunteers for numerous organizations around the community. Billy is not only a fellow worker, but is seen by many as a friend. There has been many times when Billy has taken the initiative to be there for people in their time of need. When asked what people most admire about Billy Armijo, it is a consensus; Billy has a great attitude no matter what the circumstances. He always sees the job all the way to the end. He truly deserves to be spotlighted.

Thanks Billy for the work you do and for teaching others by your example!!

ARS is lucky to have you on our team.

Dear Smurfy:

by: Ruth Treat

Dear Smurfy:

I'm setting up a new SCA, and my Program Analyst just sent me an e-mail saying that she's peeking at my work and I've messed up on the performing institute info. I didn't even touch that field. What is she talking about?

I Didn't Do it in the Field

Dear Didn't Do It:

ARIS has a tendency to default info into some of the fields on a 416 record, and depending on the type of project, it's not always correct. On a new 416, ARIS defaults your location in as the performing institute. That's perfectly fine if we are the ones doing the research. But when we are giving funds out on an SCA or a Grant, or we are cooperating with no funds exchanged, on a NFCA or MOU, then we aren't the performing institute. It's the cooperator. Unfortunately, at this point in time, ARIS doesn't check to see what type of project you are working on and then give you an error if you have the performing institute wrong. Would be nice, eh? Maybe in the future. In the meantime, just remember that for S, G, N, or M, the cooperator is the performing institute...not ARS.

Dear Smurfy:

I need to transfer funds into one of my SCA's, but ARIS won't let me into the fund transfer tab. What gives?

Flipping Dough

Dear Flipping:

Putting funds into an SCA (or Grant) is not a fund transfer. It's actually a procurement action...there's an AD-700, right? A fund transfer is done only between D projects. To add funds to an SCA, you must access the budget tab on the 550. There you enter the project or 425-only info, the amount, the FY, and the accounting code (which needs to match the project providing the funds). You can have more than one line of project providing funds too. SBG fee is automatically calculated when you save the record. Remember that the SBG fee (2.5%) is assessed on all appropriated funds put into an SCA. If you use funds from a Reimbursable or Trust, whether it's a full project or a 425-only, then there is no SBG fee. But there are other things to complicate matters in those situations, so be sure your LAO is working with you on this stuff.

Dear Smurfy:

My D project just finished OSQR and has been replaced with a new D project. My PA is telling me to renumber my subs. When did I join the Navy?

Dive, Dive, Dive

Dear Dive,

What she is referring to is your subordinate projects: your SCAs, Trusts, etc. These all need to be associated to an active project. For a project with a 416 record, you will need to make a work record and change the project number. Remember that fields in your project number mean something. The first field is your location. The second field

refers to the STP coding. The third field is a sequential number for the combination of first and second fields. The fourth field is also a sequential number for the combination of first and second, and third fields. And the last field is the alpha character that defines the type of project. For instance: 6208 (Lubbock) - 32000 (STP 3.2. something or other) - 002 (the second project at Lubbock with 32000 number—00-D for the in-house D project (01S, etc. for the subordinates). Usually when a D project is replaced, it's only the third field that changes...moves up to the next number most likely. So any subordinate with the old number in the third field needs to have that changed to the new number from the third field in the D project. Should the fourth field change too? Begin over at 01? Well, that's up to the location. Some feel that it's simpler to deal with changing only one part of the project number. Others may have a whole fleet of subordinates, and they may find it more convenient to just start over with 01, especially if they are nearing the 99 mark. ARIS doesn't care.

OK, so you change the project number and you note in Remarks that you are renumbering from XXX (the old project number). The work is only partly done. There is a block on the 550 or the 425 that shows the associated in-house project. That also needs to be updated. And while you are at it, don't forget the 425-only records...all you have to change is that linkage block.

Really pretty simple. So, how about a salute?

7 Steps in the goal planning process

by: Karen Wilcox

1. Goal Definition (SMARTY)
 - specific (questions to ask are what, who, where)
 - measure (number)
 - attainable (achievable within your belief system)
 - realistically high
 - target date (a month, day, year)
 - yours (your goal)
 2. Rewards/Benefits—what will you gain (tangible or intangible); you want that goal.
 3. Consequences/Losses—cost if not obtained and what is the consequence of that.
 4. Obstacles—six or seven related to you (list all obstacles before you go to solutions); what is standing in the way of you achieving your goal.
 5. Possible Solutions—does not relate to goal, but relates to obstacles; what needs to be done to overcome the obstacles (more than one; and short-range).
 6. Action Steps—related directly to possible solutions; how you are going to do.
 7. Dates—relates to action steps; when you are going to do
- Another part of goal definition is W—write it down.

Calendar Reminders

November

- National Native American Month
- Federal HOLIDAY—Veterans Day
- Federal HOLIDAY—Thanksgiving Day
- Remind employees to schedule their use or lose by the end of PP23
- Give SY's a copy of their ARIS "Detail by Author" report and ask for input on their accuracy
- DEAR (Annual Diversity Enhancement In Agricultural Research) Report due in Area Office



December

- Federal HOLIDAY—Christmas Day
- December 1st: Last day to donate excess annual leave to recipients
- Late December: Send memo to SY's to submit documentation of their accomplishments to RL for performance appraisals
- December 31: Last day for ARIS-115's to be included in Detail by Author Report documentation



January

- Federal Holiday—New Year's Day
- Federal Holiday—Martin Luther King, Jr's Birthday
- Early January: Pull Detail by author reports from ARIS for ARS-435 appraisals
- Submit documentation of Cat. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 6 accomplishments, appraisals and award forms to Area Director (if at Center, submit through Center Director).
- Go through files, disposing of materials that may be discarded, and do a general "housecleaning" of computer files and general files.



February

- Groundhog Day
- Chinese New Year
- Valentines Day
- Federal HOLIDAY—President's Day
- Fat Tuesday—Ash Wednesday
- Black History Month
- Be sure all Cat 1, 2, 3, 4, and 6 employees have performance standards and IDPs in place for the coming year. Make sure all other employees have had mid-term performance reviews completed.



Happy Holidays!

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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 currently under construction.

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.

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