



# Southern Plains Area

## Advisory Council for Office Professionals

### Take Advantage of a Wonderful Opportunity!

The mission of the Southern Plains Area (SPA) Advisory Council for Office Professionals (ACOP) is to serve the SPA Office Professionals, Location Research and Administration Management Teams, and Area Director in an advisory capacity.

The goal is to strengthen and improve the professional image of all SPA office professionals through orientation, training/shadowing, networking, and scholarship availability.

The objectives of the SPA ACOP include:

- Improve communication, awareness, and skills among office professionals and strengthen programs and opportunities for their career development.
- Produce and disseminate a newsletter

with input from locations.

- Provide advice and recommendation on Agency and SPA policies and programs related to the employment, development, and advancement of office professionals.
- Improve recognitions of the office profession and promote professionalism within the occupation.
- Assist in the development and presentation of required and appropriate training for office professionals.
- Develop and maintain a network available to SPA office professionals.

Each year as some members rotate off the SPA ACOP, new members come on board to continue the mission of the Council. We have three members

rotating off the Council this summer. Membership to the Council is for a three-year period. We encourage anyone interested in joining the ACOP to contact a current Council member (listed on last page of this newsletter). This is a great opportunity for office professionals to interact with their peers and expand their horizons.

Takes very little time-one one-day off-site meeting a year and two or three teleconferences a year. Very little investment required for the opportunity to grow professionally and personally.

Now is the  
time to join!

### SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals (ACOP) Roles & Responsibilities

- **Chair** - Serves as leader and primary contact for the Council. Keeps Area Director informed as to Council business. Determines need for conference calls and meetings of Council members. Keeps Council member up-to-date on Council matters through telephone, correspondence, or email.
- **Co-Chair** - Back-up to the Chair and assumes duties of Chair after one year.
- **Recorder** - Arranges for teleconferences at request of Chair. Contacts the teleconference center and informs Council members of procedures to follow at time of conference

call. Records minutes of teleconferences and meetings, distributing copies to all members via US mail or email. Maintains file of recorded minutes, Council charter, accurate roster and email list of Council members. Originals of the files will be maintained in the Area Office with the Recorder keeping copies.

- **Training Coordinator** - Remains abreast of upcoming training sessions within the Area and Agency, notifying office professionals throughout the Area of available opportunities.
- **Information Coordinator** - Solicits and compiles information of interest

to be distributed in a newsletter for SPA office professionals. The newsletter will be sent to all Council members for their review prior to submission to the Area Office. The Area Office reviews the newsletter prior to distributing.

- **Member-at-Large** - Immediate past chairs support Council mission, and offers assistance as needed.
- **Technical Advisor** - Appointed by the Area Director to service on the National Advisory Council of Office Professionals, this individual continues to work with the SPA ACOP in promoting Council mission.

## 2005 Employee of the Year

by: Anna McClung

**Davee Crowell** with the Beaumont ARS Rice Research Unit, was awarded with Employee of the Year award for 2005. She was presented with a plaque and spot award. Davee was selected following input from an ARS employee committee at the station. The award was presented to her at the first of January. Davee has proven to be a tremendous resource for the Rice Research Unit and consistently displays a very high degree of professionalism. The entire unit is very appreciative of her fine work ethic and willingness to help all. She is the “glue” that hold us together.

## Office Professional Spotlight

by: Barbara Hodges

Our “Spotlight” for this issue is a person who I to feel is a huge asset to this agency. She is always willing to lend a helping hand and never expects anything in return. My first time to meet her was in Austin, TX at the SPA Leadership conference in 1997. I had only worked for ARS for about four months and although we worked at two different locations (Lubbock and El Reno) we had something in common—the same BOSS!!

Dr. Jerry Quisenberry was the Laboratory Director in Lubbock and the Acting Laboratory Director in El Reno. We had visited many times on the phone before meeting face-to-face in Austin and no matter how dumb the question was or how many times it was asked—she was always willing to help. I was always relieved to hear her friendly voice on the other end of line when I was in a panic—and to this day I consider Eilene Gibbens not only an asset to this Agency but also a good friend.

The following is from a co-worker at her location that sums up how Eilene is thought of in El Reno, OK at the Grazinglands Research Laboratory:

Eilene Gibbens is a prime example of someone that deserves to be highlighted and I really appreciate the opportunity to do so.

After working with Eilene these past seven or so years both in her capacity as Location Secretary and now as LAO, I felt compelled to write

regarding her skills and abilities and hope this is taken in the manner it is given, heartfelt. It should be also noted that Eilene is starting her fourth (4th) decade as a federal employee starting in 1975.

- **Management:** Her carding system is definitely one to be emulated. She uses this in every phase of her life; work, home and school. Nothing escapes her system and everything is handled in a timely manner. She not only coordinates work but handles teenagers to grandchildren.

- **Foresight:** She is the first to recognize our Location’s ability to be of service to other Locations, Areas and Headquarters, i.e., coordination of Word and Acrobat training. Not only did this benefit ARS by saving research dollars, as the tuition charged by our Technical Center is minimal compared to other training options, but it bolstered the economy of El Reno by utilizing the eating establishments and lodging. Canadian County Technology Center benefited by tuition and their instructor has given training at Beltsville. GRL and Ft. Reno received visibility by tours she arranged for training participants. MCI COR training was also held twice at GRL, El Reno, and a Contract Formation Class was schedule in December 2005 which reduced travel cost for SPA participants and saved research dollars by

eliminating cost of conference room and keeping training pertinent to USDA, ARS employees only.

- **Administrative:** She constantly and consistently puts forth thought provoking questions which helps determine appropriate outcome but yet is the first to argue her case if she deems it applicable.
- **Employee Relations:** Above all, she is a friend to each employee and consistently asks about family and life events with real and sincere concern. She is held in high regard by all.

Well said Carol!!

*Eilene, thanks  
for all your  
hard work  
and kind heart  
towards others.  
Your attitude  
and example is  
one that doesn't  
go unnoticed  
and we  
wanted you  
to know!*

## Dear Smurfy

by: Ruth Treat

### Dear Smurfy

One of my scientists wants to do a fund transfer to put \$5000 into a SCA, but he wants the SBG fee to be included. In there a shortcut to figure out how much goes in the agreement and how much is SBG?

#### Counting Fingers and Toes

##### Dear Counting:

First let me say that putting funds into a SCA is not a fund transfer (that's why you can't access the Fund Transfer tab on the 416; it's like a procurement action (you have an AD-700, don't you?). Second, just a reminder that the SBG fee is calculated only on funding to SCAs that comes from your appropriate funds. If you fund from an R or T project (or 425), there won't be an SBG fee. The current rate is 2.5% of the amount funded. When you do the AD-700, you should have two line items: the amount being given to the cooperator, and the SBG fee (if there is one). As for a shortcut, yes, we have come up with one. Are you ready?

Line 1 = the total amount to be expended, including the SBG fee.

Line 2 =  $1 \times 0.025$

Line 3 = Line 1—Line 2

Line 4 = Line 3  $\times 0.025$  (this will be

the amount of the SBG fee)

Line 5 = 1—Line 4 (this will be the amount given to the cooperator)

Remember that ARIS uses whole dollars.

##### Dear Smurfy

One of my in-house projects just received OSQR certification, and I've done the new 416/417 record. But my PA is bugging me, saying I still have things to do. What more does she want?

#### Throwing Up My Hands

##### Dear Throwing:

Remember that every subordinate project, including a research 425-only record, must be associated with an in-house project. So when you replace an in-house project, all the subordinates must be updated to show the new info. For full projects, this means renumbering the 416, plus updating the block on the 425 or 550. For 425-only records, you must update the in-house reference block on the 425. So, get with it!

##### Dear Smurfy:

How do I know if we need an interpretive summary or not on an ARS-115?

#### Lost in Translation

##### Dear Lost:

ARIS is programmed so that if you mark "First Formal Report Other than an Abstract" as Yes, you'll be required to do an interpretive summary. Basically what this question asks is whether this is the first time that you are reporting these results of your own research in something other than an abstract. If what you have is an abstract, then the answer is no (because this isn't other than an abstract'). If you are doing something that doesn't report our original research, such as a book review where you critique someone else's work, then the answer is no also. For more detail on this, you can look at the matrix in the ARIS Manual, Chapter 5. And remember that it doesn't cause a "fatal error" to have an interpretive summary even if it's not required...just be sure it's a real interpretive summary, not a copy of the abstract.



## Hotel Room Key Cards

By: Karen Wilcox

Recently there was a small article in another newsletter

### A Tip for the IRS

**Keep your hotel room key cards and destroy them yourself to make sure your information is not left on the card key. All of your information, including credit card number is stored on your room key when they swipe it at registration.**

The information is erroneous-it is just

another internet hoax that probably should not have been included in the newsletter. Since it was sent to everyone it is good example to use to show you how to check out a hoax. Here are a couple of sites that deal with hoaxes <http://www.hoax-slayer.com/site-search.html> and <http://www.truthorfiction.com/search.htm>. If you go to either of these sites and type "hotel room key card" into the search box you will come up with information showing that this is indeed a hoax. If you see something that you suspect

may be a hoax you can also go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and type in some key words from the suspect message. The search will result in links to the sites where you can learn more information about the subject.

This is just some general information to help you be an informed computer user. If you receive an email that you think may be a hoax or scam you can look it up yourself.



Happy Office

Professionals Day!



Thank You for  
all your hard work  
from SPA ACOP

## 101 Ways to Cope with Stress

Get up 15 minutes earlier \* Prepare for the morning the night before \* Avoid tight fitting clothes \* Avoid relying on chemical aids \* Set appointments ahead \* Don't rely on your memory...write it down \* Practice preventive maintenance \* Make duplicate keys \* Say "no" more often \* Set priorities in your life \* Avoid negative people \* Use time wisely \* Simplify meal times \* Always make copies of important papers \* Anticipate your needs \* Repair anything that doesn't work properly \* Ask for help with the jobs you dislike \* Break large tasks into bite size portions \* Look at problems as challenges \* Look at challenges differently \* Unclutter your life \* **Smile** \* Be prepared for rain \* Tickle a baby \* Pet a friendly dog/cat \* Don't know all the answers \* Look for the silver lining \* Say something nice to someone \* Teach a kid to fly a kite \* Walk in the rain \* Schedule play time into every day \* Take a bubble bath \* Be aware of the decisions you make \* Believe in you \* Stop saying negative things to yourself

\* Visualize yourself winning \* Develop your sense of humor \* Stop thinking tomorrow will be a better today \* Have goals for yourself \* Dance a jig \* Say hello to a stranger \* Ask a friend for a hug \* Look up at the stars \* Practice breathing slowly \* Learn to whistle a tune \* Read a poem \* Listen to a symphony \* Watch a ballet \* Read a story curled up in bed \* Do a brand new thing \* Stop a bad habit \* Buy yourself a flower \* Take stock of your achievements \* Find support from others \* Ask someone to be your "vent-partner" \* Do it today \* Work at being cheerful and optimistic \* Put safety first \* Do everything in moderation \* Pay attention to your appearance \* Strive for excellence NOT perfection \* Stretch your limits a little each day \* Look at a work of art \* Hum a jingle \* Maintain your weight \* Plant a tree \* Feed the birds \* Practice grace under pressure \* Stand up and stretch \* Always have a plan "B" \* Learn a new doodle \* Memorize a joke \* Be responsible for your feelings \*

\* Learn to meet your own needs \* Become a better listener \* Know your limitations and let others know them too \* Tell someone to have a good day in pig latin \* Throw a paper airplane \* Exercise everyday \* Learn the words to a new song \* Get to work early \* Clean out one closet \* Play patty cake with a toddler \* Go on a picnic \* Take a different route to work \* Leave work early (with permission) \* Put air freshener in your car \* Watch a movie and eat popcorn \* Write a note to a far away friend \* Go to a ball game and scream \* Cook a meal and eat it by candlelight \* Recognize the importance of unconditional love \* Remember that stress is an attitude \* Keep a journal \* Practice a monster smile \* Remember you always have options \* Have support network of people, places, and things \* Quite trying to "fix" other people \* Get enough sleep \* Talk less and listen more \* Freely praise other people \* P.S. Relax, take each day at a time...you have the rest of your life to live.

## COUNCIL

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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. .

## 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 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.