

Advisory Council for Office Professionals

Annual Meeting Held at the Area Office

by Davee Crowell



The Southern Plains Area Advisory Council for Office Professionals met at the Area Office in College Station, TX August 15-16, 2006 for our annual meeting.

The council welcomed three new members: Susan Daughtry from El Reno, OK; Beth Holt from Bushland, TX; and Beverly Keller from Stuttgart, AR. Two outgoing members are Olivia Pedraza and Noelia Martinez from Weslaco, TX.

Our longtime mentor, Wanda Paradowski, announced she will be retiring from ARS on January 20, 2007 - which is also her birthday. We will miss Wanda in so many ways but we also wish her a relaxing and enjoyable retirement. Anne Steele will be filling Wanda's position as the permanent member representing the Area Office. We look forward to working with Anne.

The new Council for 2006-2007 is as follows:

Chair - Davee Crowell, Beaumont, TX
 Co-Chair - Justine Flowers, Little Rock, AR
 Recorder - Beverly Keller, Stuttgart, AR
 Training Coordinator - Beth Holt, Bushland, TX
 Information Coordinator - Susan Daughtry, El Reno, OK
 NACOP Rep./Technical Advisor - Barbara Hodges, Lubbock, TX
 Webmaster - Karen Wilcox, College Station, TX
 Permanent Member - Anne Steele, College Station, TX

Each year the Council reports accomplishments and goals from the previous year to the Area Director. Following is the report which was sent to Dr. Larry Chandler, then Acting Area Director: "The SPA Advisory Council for Office Professionals (ACOP) met in College Station, TX August 15-16, 2006, for a planning session for the upcoming year. I will be serving as the Chairperson for

the Council for the next year and wanted to share some of the goals we hope to accomplish:

- ★ Send the SPA ACOP display board to all locations in the Southern Plains Area so that all OPs, as well as scientists and technicians, in the Area will get a better understanding of what the Council does,
- ★ Update the SPA ACOP handbook,
- ★ Bring the SPA ACOP website online by January 2007 which will link-up with the National Advisory Council's website,
- ★ Maintain quarterly conference calls,
- ★ Implement a Scrapbook for the SPA ACOP which will be maintained by the Training Coordinator,
- ★ In conjunction with the New Employee Package sent to each new OP, the Chair will call each new OP personally and welcome them, and
- ★ Begin planning a SPA Conference for all Office Professionals modeled after the National Conference for Office Professionals which was held in St. Louis, MO this past May.

Each year we set goals which will benefit not only Office Professionals but ARS as a whole. Some of the goals we accomplished last year were:

- ★ Continued sending the newsletter to RLs, CDs, etc., with a new feature that highlighted an Office Professional and his/her impact and Ask Smurfy by Ruth Treat to answer questions concerning all things ARIS,
- ★ SPA ACOP New Employee Packets were sent to several new Office Professionals,
- ★ Quarterly teleconferences were held,
- ★ *Action Grammar, Fast, No-hassle Answers on Everyday Usage and Punctuation* by Joanne Feierman were ordered and sent to each OP in the Southern Plains Area in recognition of Office Professional's week. This is a handy and useful desk-size reference book,
- ★ SPA ACOP awards and rosewood memento box were presented to each outgoing

Council member, and

- ★ Revised the SPA ACOP Charter and obtained signatures from each member and the Acting Area Director.

In keeping with the mission of the SPA ACOP, which is to serve the SPA OPs, location research and administration management teams, and the Area Director in an advisory capacity, the Council will continue to pursue goals that will better inform all Office Professionals so they can better serve and understand the mission of ARS. The members of the Council would once again like to say "thank you for your continued support of our efforts."

As you can see, we have a full agenda for the upcoming year. If anyone has any ideas, suggestions - or even criticisms - please feel free to contact any member of the Council. Also, if anyone is interested in serving on the Council please contact any of the Council members. We meet once a year (2 days of travel), have a teleconference each quarter which lasts for an hour, and every 3 years the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals has a meeting. The next meeting, slated for 2009, is already in the planning process.

Thought:

"There are two kinds of people, those who do the work and those who take the credit. Try to be in the first group; there is less competition there." Indira Ghandi



SPA ACOP Council (2006-2007)

Front Row, L to R: B. Holt, D. Crowell, J. Flowers, B. Hodges
 Back Row, L to R: S. Daughtry, K. Wilcox, A. Steele, B. Keller

New Council Members



BEVERLY KELLER is an Office Automation Clerk at Dale Bumpers National Rice Research Center in Stuttgart, AR. She receives calls and visitors for the DB NRRC, sets up tours and outreach, prepares T&A's, types manuscripts and other correspondence for Director/Facilities Manager/Scientists and serves as backup to the Program Support Assistant when needed. She is married to Bill and they have two sons Kirk & Kris. Kirk married Krista April 1 of this year, so she now has a very sweet daughter-in-law. She enjoys flea markets, cookbooks and trying new recipes, and long car rides through Arkansas.

ANNE STEELE works in the Southern Plains Area Office as Secretary to the Associate Area Director, Dr.

James Coppedge. Prior to going to the Area Office in March 1999, she worked at the College Station location as unit Secretary for Food and Feed Safety Research. Anne has a total of 39 years of federal service of which 26 is with the USDA-ARS.

SUSAN DAUGHTRY works at the Grazinglands Research Laboratory in El Reno, OK as the Unit Secretary for the Great Plains Agroclimate and Natural Resources Research Unit under Dr. Jean Steiner. Susan has been with ARS since 2001. Some of her duties include completing T&A's, travel, any ARIS work, agreements, and setting up meetings and conferences.



BETH HOLT is a Program Support Assistant at the Conservation and Production Research Laboratory in

Bushland, TX. She provides management and program support for one of the two research units at the laboratory; she is also the office assistant for the Lab Director. Although Beth is relatively new to the Bushland lab, she is not a newcomer to the Agency or to the Federal Government. She served in the U.S. Army from 1974 to 1979 and then started her Federal employment working for the Dept. of Defense at several Army installations in the U.S. and Germany. In 1997 she began working for ARS at the Appalachian Fruit Research Station in Kearneysville, WV, but in May 2005, Beth and her husband, Lee, quit their jobs, sold their house, and bought a 5th-wheel RV. They ventured to Alaska for the summer of 2005 and later to the Hill Country of Texas. Rising gas prices forced her back to work, and in January 2006 she was fortunate enough to find the same position open in Bushland that she had in West Virginia. She was glad to walk into a job that she already knew and enjoyed.

SPA Spotlight

by Barbara Hodges

When it comes to being exceptional, Research Leader, Mr. Sam Pair says that Program Assistant, Sharon Sheffield fits the description. Sharon has worked in Lane, OK for 9 years and does a little bit of everything from travel, T&A's, ARIS, as well as keeping the Research Leaders on track. Mr. Pair says that she performs all these duties at a consistently high level, with a high degree of accuracy, cheerfulness, and professionalism despite sometimes difficult circumstances.

Mr. Pair didn't feel it necessary to solicit individual

comments from fellow employees. He said he could sum up the thoughts of the entire staff in one statement, "We couldn't do without her under any circumstances!"

Sharon, in the eyes of your co-workers it's obvious your contributions at the South Central Agricultural Research Laboratory in Lane, OK are greatly appreciated. Thanks not only from the folks in Lane

but the entire Southern Plains Area for all your hard work. You're making a difference and we're glad ARS is

"We couldn't do without her under any circumstances!!!!"

fortunate enough to have you on our team—Keep up the good work!!!

Card Filing System

by Susan Daughtry

Having trouble meeting those deadlines? Are you constantly forgetting small important information? Then you should try the card system. The card system was shown to me by someone most of you know, Eilene Gibbens, and has been very effective in my life. It has helped keep me organized, helps me meet deadlines, and is easy to use! The card system consists of using 3x5 index cards, a small plastic recipe box, 3x5 numbered tabbed cards (1-31), and 3x5 monthly tabbed cards. Basically you take your blank 3x5 index cards and

write your information on them. For example, I have things I do at the beginning of the week like check/update SharePoint, check on pending agreements, etc. I also have end-of-the-week things like anything to send to Wanda for the Weekly Reports, do I have all timesheets—things like that. I have things that belong to certain months like when performance plans are due or year end things that need to be completed around September. I also have cards that I will use over and over again like just a generic card for any

ARIS work that I need to check on or AIMS. You can put anything on your cards! I even put birthdays for family and friends in there. Once you've completed a card put it in the appropriate month on the appropriate day in your recipe box. In my box it will hold up to two months at a time. I just take the tabbed numbered card and move to the back as each day passes. If you have any questions please fill free to Susan at 405-262-5291!!!!



Ask Smurfy

by Ruth Treat

Dear Smurfy:

My TAMU cooperator asked me to be on a grant proposal with him, and when I started filling out the 425 form, there are some new questions on it. What is with this "ARS Primary Agreement Holder" block? Since I'm not the lead shouldn't this be No? Secondary in SPA

Dear Secondary:

Short answer...the only time this block is No is if another ARS investigator is the lead on the proposal. The question is actually asking, "Are you the ARS primary?" This could probably be a little more clear, because it kind of looks like it's asking, "Is ARS the primary?" There isn't much room on these forms, and from what I'm hearing, this one is going to get a whole lot more crowded in the near future. But that's another issue.

This new block, along with the block for "Primary Agreement Proposed Total Funds," were added for a couple of reasons. First consider that the 425 itself is intended to give an investigator permission to be involved in a request for outside funds. Approval is noted for the RL and/or CD/LD, as well as Area, and maybe NPS. So in those cases where we had two (or more) ARS investigators at different locations cooperating on the proposal, we had to have multiple 425 re-

cords just to get appropriate approvals for each participant, not to mention getting them credit for things like performance appraisals. And we still do...that hasn't changed. But having multiple records gave a false picture for those who run reports on this sort of thing (and they do run reports at HQ level!). So these new fields serve to link the related records. Everyone still gets individual approval and individual credit, but for the agreement side, things are greatly simplified.

There is only one agreement, and the Area maintaining that agreement is responsible for distributing the funds to all the other ARS participants. Each participant manages his/her own funds. It's much less confusing. Plus those report runners have a clearer picture of the outside funding activities within ARS.

Dear Smurfy:

Well, it was a long time in the making, but we've finally gotten a book chapter published. Problem is that when I go to add the citation to the 115 record, I can't find the record. It was there the last time I looked. Is ARIS maybe losing records? Slow and Steady

Dear Slow:

No, ARIS didn't lose it. It's just been placed in ar-

chives. The 115 records stay in Active for 5 years, and then they fade into the sunset. You can find them under History off the menu in Research Documentation. It isn't often that we can't finish up a record within the 5 years, but it does happen. The programmers have on their list of enhancements to add a feature to History to allow reactivation of a record. I'm pretty sure this feature won't come down to the location level, but we'll see. Currently the only way to get to the record is a special request to have the programmers reactivate. There is a small window of opportunity for accessing and updating the record. Then it goes back into History. But don't panic...it's still accessible for pulling in to the annual reports next year.

By the way, did you notice that they have added a

"Never to be published" block to the 115? This can be checked to note a record that is never going to be completed, for one reason or another. Just be sure that you really do intend to totally abandon the manuscript before you check it. Remember that if a manuscript is rejected by a journal, and we want to try a different journal, we revise the existing 115 record rather than starting a new one. So "Never to be published" is really a last resort.

10 Simple Organizing Tips

Here are just a few, simple ideas that can help you get better organized.

1. DETERMINE YOUR GOALS.

Before you start anything, determine its goal. If you don't know where you're going, how will you ever get there? Set mini-goals and reward yourself for successes.

2. DECLUTTER YOUR DESK.

An uncluttered desktop erases unnecessary distractions and helps keep your mind on tasks that need immediate attention. Keep only the items on your desk that relate to your current projects.

3. DON'T RELY ON YOUR MEMORY.

You run the risk of letting tasks fall through the cracks. The best way to never forget an appointment, a deadline or a detail again, is to write everything down.

4. CONSOLIDATE SIMILAR ACTIVITIES.

Instead of starting and stopping at different levels of activity, you'll save time by making all of your outgo-

ing telephone calls together, taking care of all your errands at once, etc.

5. CLEAN OUT YOUR FILES.

Before you go through the expense of purchasing more file cabinets, folders, etc., take the time to purge all unnecessary paperwork and materials.

6. USE ONE CALENDAR.

The biggest mistake people make when using planning calendars is to keep more than one. Keep personal, professional and family items on one calendar. It will help to eliminate scheduling conflicts. Remember, 'the man who wears two watches, never knows the correct time.'

7. REDUCE TELEPHONE TAG.

Plan telephone calls (whether to doctors, plumbers, clients, etc.) whenever possible. Have all necessary materials in front of you. Write key questions down in advance.

8. SET UP FILES FOR PROJECTS.

Don't waste time searching for papers when you need them. Keep all paperwork that pertains to a certain project together in one large folder.

9. SET TIME LIMITS.

Say, 'I've got only 5 minutes to talk.' Outline your calls, Say, 'I'd like to discuss these 2 possible solutions to problem A . . .'

10. MAKE TIME FOR YOURSELF.

Make at least one screened appointment with yourself each day. Screened time is quiet, uninterrupted time allowing you to concentrate on a project or catch up on your reading.



Council

Crowell, Davee, Chair
USDA, ARS, SPA, Rice Research Unit
1509 Aggie Drive, Beaumont, TX 77713
(409)752-5221; Fax: (409)752-5720
Email: dcrowell@ag.tamu.edu

Daughtry, Susan, Information Coordinator
USDA-ARS Grazinglands Research Laboratory
7207 W. Cheyenne Street
El Reno, OK 73036
(405)262-5291; Fax: (405)262-0133
Email: susan.daughtry@ars.usda.gov

Flowers, Justine, Co-Chair
USDA, ARS, Delta Nutrition Intervention Research Initiative
900 S. Shackleford Rd.
Suite 509
Little Rock, AR 72211
(501)954-8882; Fax: (501)954-9596
Email: jflowers@spa.ars.usda.gov

Hodges, Barbara, Technical Advisor
USDA-ARS, Cropping Systems Research Laboratory
3810 4th Street
Lubbock, TX 79415
(806)749-5560; Fax: (806)723-5272
Email: bhodges@lbr.ars.usda.gov

Holt, Beth, Training Coordinator
USDA-ARS Conservation & Production Research Laboratory
Expirement Station Road
Bushland, TX 79012
(806)356-5724; Fax: (806)356-5750
Email: bholt@cprl.ars.usda.gov

Keller, Beverly, Recorder
USDA-ARS, DBNRRC
2890 Hwy 130 East
Stuttgart, AR 72160
(870)672-9300; Fax: (870)673-7581
Email: bkeller@spa.ars.usda.gov

Steele, Anne, Permanent Member
USDA, ARS, SPA, Area Office
1001 Holleman Drive, East
College Station, TX 77840
(979)260-9346; Fax: (979)260-9415
Email: asteel@spa.ars.usda.gov

Wilcox, Karen, Webmaster
USDA-ARS, APMRU
2771 F&B Road
College Station, TX 77845
(979)260-9354; Fax: (979)260-9386
Email: kwilcox@apmru.usda.gov

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 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 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.” The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, and marital or familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication to program information (Braille, large print, audio tape, etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at 202/730-5581 (voice) 202/720-7808(TDD). To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call 202/720-7327 (voice) or 202/702-1127 (TDD).

USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

Please contact Susan Daughtry at susan.daughtry@ars.usda.gov if you would like to contribute an article that supports the SPA ACOP Mission.