



NEWS FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

By Sherri Buxton, MWA Office, Peoria, IL, and Melissa Stiefel, Lansing, MI

One of the criteria set forth by the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals is to send to them an Annual Report based on the accomplishments and vision for our local Council. This report is consolidated into an Agency report and is shared with the Senior Administration. So, each year we evaluate what we have done and determine where we will go with future initiatives for the secretaries in the Midwest Area. It's always gratifying to look at ones accomplishments and feel the sense of pride that comes from the work you have put forth. But, we think it's more important to look toward the future and to think about how the PASTG can work to serve you better.

We need to hear your ideas and your thoughts of what initiatives you would like to see for the future. Please take the time and send us a message if you have an idea you would like to share. Also, let us know if you would be interested in helping on upcoming projects. If we all work together just think how far we will go!

MWA RETIREMENTS

Barbara J. Dailey's Retirement

Barbara J. Dailey (BJ) began working for ARS as a GS-4 Clerk Typist for the Lexington, KY location in 1986. When the LAO indicated she was going to retire 6 months later, the position was advertised; BJ competed and was selected to fill the position. She was in the position for 7 years when the location was notified that they were being closed. BJ was reassigned to Griffin, GA & reported there in November, 1994. In January, 1995, BJ was selected for the LAO position in Lincoln, NE and served in that until September, 1998 when she was selected for the LAO position in Madison, WI. In June 2000, BJ accepted the Budget & Fiscal Officer's position in the Area Office.

BJ has had a wonderful career with many outstanding achievements. She has been instrumental in designing many outstanding training sessions for the employees in the MWA. She has been a leader in testing new programs for the Agency prior to implementation. And of course, her most recent achievement is her work with the CATS Development Team and CATS Implementation Team. BJ with the members of the CATS Development Team received the most prestigious award given to an AFM employee, the Gold Award for Excellence at a ceremony in Washington, DC in February.

BJ will truly be missed by the Area and the Agency. We wish her well as she enters retirement and moves back to her home in Kentucky. *BJ – YOU WILL BE MISSED!*

Marilyn Paul's Retirement

Marilyn Paul's last day with ARS will be April 12, 2005. Marilyn Paul began federal service in 1968 with the Social Security Office. She worked for three years to obtain career status. In 1971 she left government employment to stay home and raise a son. In 1981, she took a position at the Regional Office in Pioneer Park as secretary for the Safety Officer and also worked for the Regional Administrators and the Personnel Officer. In 1984, Marilyn was hired as secretary for Air Force Recruiting Office.

She worked there until 1988 and then transferred to NCAUR as secretary for Dr. John Rothfus, Research Leader. In 1990, the MU was abolished, and Marilyn moved to the Area Office, where she worked in Procurement, as a secretary and as backup to the Program Analyst. In 1995, she took over from the Program Analyst the program work for ten management units. In September 2000, Marilyn was promoted to the Program Analyst position, and the rest is history...*or soon to be!*

Thank you, Marilyn, for your patience with all of us secretaries over the last five years! We appreciate your hard work and constructive comments and reminders! We'd like to wish you the best in your new position that begins April 13th: **RETIREE!**

WOMEN'S HISTORY & AGRICULTURE HIGHLIGHTS

Stephanie Brennan, West Lafayette, IN

In 1978, the Education Task Force of the Sonoma County Commission on the Status of Women in California began a *Women's History Week* celebration. The week was chosen to coincide with

International Women's Day, which was first celebrated March 8, 1911, in Europe. Three years later, the United States Congress passed a resolution establishing National Women's History Week, which was expanded to a month in 1978 at the request of the National Women's History Project. The history of women in U.S. agriculture reveals a fundamental contradiction: women's work has always been integral to farming, yet women were excluded from controlling farms.

Enslaved African American women who labored on plantations producing crops sold on the world market had different experiences from white women who worked on family farms. Planters required women to labor as field hands, regardless of whether they were pregnant, nursing, young, or old. Many women could keep pace with men in the tobacco, rice, and cotton fields. Emancipation led to significant changes in African American women's work, even though the Southern economy was still based on plantation agriculture. Refusing contracts that required them to do wage labor in gangs, African Americans insisted on farming in family groups as tenants and sharecroppers.

Native American women alone enjoyed a social status commensurate with their centrality to the economy. Before the European invasion, farming yielded the bulk of most peoples' subsistence. Women cultivated corn, beans, and squash, crops known as the "three sisters." Women usually worked together and controlled both access to land and the distribution of produce.

Colorado's Florissant Valley lies 35 miles west of Colorado Springs on the

flanks of Pikes Peak. To the north and east, the Rocky Mountains dominate the skyline. To the west lies high meadow land with large expanses of undulating native grasses so beautiful that early fur trappers to the area referred to it as a park. In the center of this lush valley stands the Hornbek homestead complex, the home of a strong, determined woman who came to the area with her four children in the 1870s. Claiming land under the Homestead Act, Adeline Hornbek defied traditional gender roles to become the owner of a prosperous ranch.

Ann M. Veneman was sworn in as the 27th Secretary of the U.S. Department of Agriculture on January 20, 2001. Her lifelong commitment to food and farm issues, along with her bipartisan approach to solving problems and confronting new challenges, are reasons she was chosen by President George W. Bush to serve in his Cabinet and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

RPES EXHIBIT UPDATES

Ginger Walker, St. Paul, MN

Many of the exhibits for RPES cases can now be found in pdf format on line. Here's a way to add the Exhibit information to already-existing pdf files.

1. In Adobe Acrobat, Select **Document**, then **Add Headers & Footers**.
2. Type in the Exhibit information in the box labeled '**Insert Custom Text**' and click on the **Insert** button below this box.
3. Click on one of the '**Align**' buttons (left, middle, or right).
4. In the '**Page Options**' section use the drop-down box to select '**Apply to Page Range**' and use the up and

down arrows beneath it to choose From: 1 To: 1 (so it prints only on the first page of the document).

5. Use the **Margins** section to manipulate how close to the edge of the page you would like the text inserted.
6. Click OK.

CALENDAR

March

- Spring Clean-up on 425s ONLY.
- Watch for letter from Area Office to initiate the ARMPS process.
- Solicit scientists for equipment, travel, and personnel needs for the ARMPS. Provide information to RL for narrative section of the ARMPS.
- Performance Cycle for CAT 5, 7, 8, and 9 ends March 31.

April

- Type performance elements on Performance Appraisal (electronic AD-435) for CAT 5, 7, 8, and 9 personnel. Distribute to supervisors with instructions from Deb Agee for completion.
- Prepare new performance standards and Individual Development Plan (IDP form ARS-48). These must be in place by June 6 to be considered a full performance appraisal period.

May

- Next FY Guideline Dollars file opens for permanent fund transfer actions.
- Return completed Appraisal forms (AD-435) for CAT 5, 7, 8, and 9 employees, along with Award forms (AD-287) per instructions to the Area Office.

- National Science Foundation (NSF) grant proposals announced.

HELPFUL HINTS

Airline Seat Guru

Take the mystery out of airplane seat assignments with this handy site. You can find out which seats are the best for many airlines. Especially helpful for those scientists booked on long overseas flights: www.seatguru.com.

New Bulletins

Four new bulletins have been issued, so far, in 2005. The names, numbers, and the synopses are provided below. The website contains the complete PDF files. <http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ppweb/bulletins.htm>

- **Facilities Construction Authorities, 05-250**
This bulletin provides instructions on obtaining approval from Headquarters on the use of construction authorities for new small buildings or alterations to existing facilities.
- **Changes to Privately-Owned Vehicle Mileage Rates, 05-301**
This bulletin changes mileage rates for advantageous use of a Privately-Owned Vehicle effective for travel on and after February 4, 2005.
- **Compensatory Time Off for Travel, 05-402.3**
This bulletin serves to announce recent legislation which established a new form of compensatory time off for time spent by an employee in a travel status away from the employee's official duty station. The regulations to this law became

effective January 28, 2005. This bulletin also serves to update Policy and Procedure 402.3, Premium Pay. Section 5 – Compensatory Time Off for Travel has been added.

- **Section 8 - Relocation Bonuses and Section 7- Relocation Expenses for Current Federal Employees, 05-412.5**

This bulletin serves to announce an amendment to Policy and Procedure 412.5, Section 8-Relocation Bonuses, particularly the addition of the covered group category called prevailing rate (wage grade) employees. This bulletin also serves to announce the expiration of Bulletin 03-402, the contents of which have been permanently added to Policy and Procedure 412.5, Section 7.