



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

Volume 4, Issue 9

September 2014

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

- LEADERSHIP
- RECRUITMENT & RETENTION
- TALENT MANAGEMENT
- EMPLOYEE DEVELOPMENT
- CUSTOMER FOCUS & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

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USDA Employees Give Like Never Before to the Feds Feed Families Campaign

By Kate Zook and John Glover

USDA's 2014 Feds Feed Families donations resulted in 6.2 million pounds of food. That is the largest annual contribution from any Department or Agency since the FFF campaign began in 2009, and it is well above the 4.3 million pounds donated by USDA in 2013!

Here at USDA, we think, talk and plan "food" all day—it's what we do. We research the economics of food production, manage natural resources to sustain agriculture, and provide assistance to producers around the country to help them maintain their farms and ranches, among many other food-related activities. But food reaches well beyond USDA. What's more unifying than connecting with friends and family over a good meal? Food conjures memories of holidays, reunions, birthdays, and simple weeknight dinners. We relate to food—it speaks to our culture, to who we are, and to where we came from.

Sadly, food doesn't invoke happy memories for everyone. There are nearly 500,000 people in the Washington, D.C., region alone who struggle with food insecurity. That's more than the entire population of Atlanta, Georgia. It's easy for many of us to go days and weeks without thinking of what it might be like to go hungry or struggle to put enough healthy food on the table. This is true even at USDA—where our careers revolve around food.

It's because of this that the Feds Feed Families campaign is so important each year. It reminds us to give back; to share what we can with those who need it most. Coworkers in the Office of the Chief Economist took the Feds Feed Families campaign to heart this year. They decided to go big. So they bought, transported, and donated 3,954 pounds of food—just shy of 2 tons. And it was a great experience.

They delivered food directly to the Capital Area Food Bank, and took a tour. There were freezers the size of entire warehouses, huge bins, massive sorting conveyor belts, and fork lifts buzzing donations all over. The Capital Area Food Bank distributes 45 million pounds of food, equivalent to 37.5 million meals. But the sad reality is that 45 million pounds isn't enough.

So now we as USDA employees are taking the challenge—we're doing what we can to address hunger and food insecurity in the D.C. area. Feds Feed Families went a long way to help—but there is so much more to be done. You probably know already where your next meal is coming from. How about helping someone else find theirs?



Mamta Chaudhari, an intern with the Climate Change Program, joined her co-workers at the USDA Office of the Chief Economist to donate nearly two tons of food to the Capital Area Food Bank this year.

USDA To Observe National Work & Family Month

By Debra Arnold Save the date - October 16th from 11:00am – 2:00pm.

October is recognized as National Work and Family Month, an event nationally recognized since 2003 by Members of Congress, the Federal Government, private businesses, and academic institutions that support family-friendly workplace policies. In observance of the month, USDA will be hosting a National Work and Family Month Open House and Expo on October 16, 2014 from 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. This year's event falls on the heels of the Presidential Memorandum (PM) dated June 23, 2014 entitled, "Enhancing Workplace Flexibilities and Work-Life Programs." In keeping with the spirit of the President's Initiatives, our theme will be **"Bringing Workplace Flexibilities and Worklife Balance Into the 21st Century."**



USDA is proud to support flexibility in the workplace and work-life programs by hosting this event. By supporting work-life benefits such as flexible work schedules, Telework, health and wellness programs, dependent care and community involvement, among other workplace programs, USDA will continue to attract, motivate and retain a talented, diverse and inclusive workforce. At the National Work and Family Month Open House and Expo, you will have the opportunity to participate in a number of planned events, as outlined below:

Visit the Whitten Building Patio to meet private sector and USDA worklife leaders and learn how they manage a dispersed workforce, engage employees in worklife programs and gain buyin from top leadership. We will also have USDA Union leaders, Employee Services and Recreation Association, OPEDA and I. L. Creations on tap with some great resources, healthy snacks, and fun activities for you.

Attend any of the FREE presentations and/or activities below by sending an email to wellness@dm.usda.gov no later than **COB on Friday, October 10, 2014**, that identifies which session or sessions you wish to attend, your name, agency and contact information. Registration is required! All events will be hosted in the South Building Cafeteria:

- 11:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. – Office Yoga (standing) led by Anita Kapoor, Rural Development, USDA
- 11:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. – Dr. Renette Dallas. Dr. Dallas is a naturopathic doctor (N.D.), minister, author, lecturer, certified fitness trainer, raw food chef, and most notable "presenter extraordinaire". For over five years, she hosted a radio and TV fitness program, has been featured in numerous magazines and newspapers, and a guest on FOX5 News many times. Dr. Dallas's presentation, **"Are You Healthy?"** will include a cooking demonstration.
- 12:00 p.m. to 12:30 p.m. – Office Yoga (chair) lead by Anita Kapoor, Rural Development, USDA
- 12:00 p.m. to 12:45 p.m. - Andrea Wicks Bowles from **"Bright Horizons Family Solutions"**– Andrea has over 20 years experience consulting on topics such as workforce effectiveness, work-life integration, employee well-being and developing an employer business case. Andrea has a very exciting demonstration on how workplace flexibilities and worklife programs at USDA can work for you to help balance your work-life. This session is recommended for both employees and supervisors alike.
- 1:00 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. – Office Yoga (standing) lead by Anita Kapoor, Rural Development, USDA
- 1:00 p.m. to 1:45 p.m. - Rebecka Mevorah from the 'USDA Employee Assistance Program (EAP)'. Rebecka continues to provide USDA employees with superior presentations containing a wealth of information and resources on how to relieve stress, balance work-life and much more. Rebecka's presentation, **"Balancing Work and Personal Life"** is a must have.

Receive a 'Health Assessment' from American Screening Association Inc. between 8:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. You must call to schedule an appointment at (800) 686-3035. For more information, or questions about any of these events, please contact the Work/Life and Wellness Team at wellness@dm.usda.gov, or visit the Work/Life and Wellness community homepage.

Happy Work and Family Month, USDA!

A Flash of Inspiration: Celebrating Women’s Equality Day

By Jacqueline Padron

Nearly a hundred people, including 17 mentors from 20 USDA Agencies and Staff Offices recently attended the Women’s Equality Day and Flash Mentoring Event on the Whitten Patio in Washington, DC.

Dr. Zina B. Sutch, Director of the Diversity, Recruitment, and Work/Life Division (DRWD) in the Office of Human Resources Management (OHRM) joined Dr. Karsonya Wise Whitehead, author and Assistant Professor at the Department of Communication at Loyola University in Maryland, to give inspirational remarks about the fearless women who organized and advocated for the right of women to vote.

The event honored these courageous heroes, celebrated how far we have come, and acknowledged the work still left to be done.

Following the remarks, participants engaged in a flash mentoring exercise. Flash Mentoring is a one-time meeting that enables an individual to learn and seek guidance from a more seasoned employee who can pass on relevant knowledge and experience to enhance and advance the participants’ career.

The event was sponsored by OHRM-DRWD’s Federal Women’s Program and the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights’ Training and Cultural Transformation Division.



Above: USDA leaders and administrators served as mentors to the participants at Women’s Equality Day. Below: Images of Flash Mentoring participants meeting with their mentors.



Always Home Grown or Homemade in South Dakota

By Christine Sorensen

USDA Rural Development staff in South Dakota have been conducting outreach to local farmers by taking part in “The Gathering Place,” a booth and sitting area at the Country Farmers Market held in Pierre, SD. USDA staff was on hand to welcome guests, provide demonstrations and children’s activities, and promote the upcoming annual local food conference to be held in November.

The Country Farmer’s Market offers a large variety of fresh produce, baked goods, free range eggs, Icelandic yarn, coffees, honey, and canned goods. “We are just a few hard working people that love bringing country to town. Our Farmer’s Market customers love what we do with our hands. Picking eggs, milking goats, working in our kitchens or just playing in the dirt, we bring our customers the best, freshest products and produce,” says Terry Lehmkuhl of SpringerRidge Barnyard Products. Terry and her husband, Ernie, are the organizers of the Country Farmers Market.

Farmers Markets make an impact in the state. A recent study by the South Dakota Department of Agriculture showed that sixty farmers market vendors sold over \$1.3 million worth of products in the state in 2013. Using the midseason average sales, this equates to \$73,210 in spending at all farmers markets each week.



Ernie and Terry Lehmkuhl, the organizers of the Country Farmers Market in Pierre, South Dakota.

It is people like Ernie and Terry, two hard working “country folks” who are making an economic impact holding up the motto “Always Home Grown and Homemade in South Dakota.”

USDA Forest Service Marks 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act

By Lupe Rodrigues and Denise Ottaviano

The Forest Service’s Washington Office, Civil Rights Advisory Support Branch hosted a Multicultural Day and 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights Act celebration earlier this summer. Over 400 employees from the Forest Service (FS) and other Federal agencies attended the Cultural Transformation event in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Over 100 employees assisted with the creation of 22 diversity exhibits showcasing food, fashion, history, and dance from locations across the globe (an Asian Pacific Rice dance is demonstrated below.)



The event emphasized the importance of sharing cultural values, encouraging diversity in the workforce, and creating an inclusive work environment. The day provided a great opportunity for Special Emphasis Program Managers to educate FS employees about their program areas.

Multicultural Day was chaired by Abigail Peel, FS Equal Employment Opportunity Specialist, Kimberly Palacios, FS Federal Women Program Manager, and Lupe L. Rodrigues, FS Hispanic Employment Program Manager.

Participants commented that the event was a good learning experience, a wonderful way to bring together diverse groups, and very entertaining.

A Message from Departmental Management

2014 Federal Benefits Open Season Begins Monday, November 10th

This year's Federal Benefits Open Season will run from **Monday, November 10, 2014 through Monday, December 8, 2014**. During the annual Open Season, employees can take the actions listed below for the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program (FSAFEDS), Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program (FEDVIP), and the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program (FEHB).

- Enroll in a flexible spending account – a health care and/or dependent care account, under the FSAFEDS Programs. Unlike with other programs, **employees MUST re-enroll** in FSAFEDS each year to participate. Enrollments DO NOT carry over year to year.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a dental plan under the FEDVIP Program.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a vision plan under the FEDVIP Program.
- Enroll in, change, or cancel an existing enrollment in a health plan under the FEHB Program.
- Waive participation in or Elect Premium Conversion (Pre-taxation) of FEHB Premiums.

Visit OPM's website at www.opm.gov/insure to learn more about these Programs. When the 2014 premiums rates for FEHB and FEDVIP become available, they will be posted at: <http://www.opm.gov/insure/health/rates/index.asp> OPM has also created an [Open Season Checklist](#) for employees to consider prior to the start of Open Season.

NOTE: For employees located in the Washington, DC Metro area, the USDA Benefits Fair is scheduled for **Wednesday, November 19, 2014 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm on the Whitten Building Patio.**

UPCOMING USDA SPECIAL OBSERVANCE

National Disability Employment Awareness Month Tuesday, October 14, 2014

The observance begins at 10:00 (EDT) at the Jefferson Auditorium, Washington, DC.

Deputy Secretary Harden Discusses Public Service

By Lilia McFarland

Once a month, Deputy Secretary Krysta Harden sits down to connect with the next generation of up and coming public servants in USDA to discuss important issues, including the nature of public service, retention, and growing our leadership bench as a Department. "Working in public service is an honor – and I take my responsibility as a leader to support our next generation of leaders very seriously," said Deputy Harden. "These lunches are an important opportunity for me to hear from you about the issues and for us to learn from one another."

Discussions are held in convenient places across the USDA complex, including the South and Yates buildings, and they all have a teleconference option so that staff based in the field have the opportunity to be included as well.

These meetings are open to any who are interested, so if you would like to be included or have any questions, please contact Karlease Kelly at

Karlease.Kelly@dm.usda.gov.

Photo by Bob Nichols



USDA Farm Service Agency Providing Employee Development

By **Becky Blehm**

Dozens of Farm Service Agency (FSA) employees from across the country recently completed National County Office Reviewer Program (CORP) training in Kansas City. The FSA training provided CORP coordinators an opportunity to improve their knowledge of program implementation and build customer service.



First Row: Iris Evans (ORAS), Michelle Aleman (TX), Susan Ibsen (CO), Susan Long (KS), Jennifer Blandford (KY), Sue Harmon (AR), Loretta Vigil (NM), Diandra Brunstetter (NJ), Adele Fulcher (NC), Connie O'Dell (VA)

Second Row: Debbie Carter (OR), Betsy Connor (NY), Kim Leonard (MI), April Mann (IN), Mary Smuin (UT), Cindy Duncan (NE); Lori Ohlemann (MN), Marquetta Spears (MS), Jonna Miller (ORAS)

Third Row: Beverlee Block (CA), Marlene Westermann (KS), Cliff Warren (AL), Betsey Corless (OH), Sherri Patton (PA), Jane Roberts

(IA), Becky Blehm (OK), Jeannia Satcher (GA), Rita Rogers (GA) **Fourth Row:** Sadie Larreau (CO), Tom Dekrey (ND), Charlotte Sickels (ID), Barbara Bombei (IA), Tracie Bruning (TX), Brad Hansen (ME), Donna Pileggi (FL), Elizabeth Johnson (TN), Mary Williams (KS), June Hasker (TX), Nancy Scarborough (TX), Annetta Henderson (IL), Pam Ades (WI), Vicki Henderson (IL) **Back Row:** Cindy Coad (MT), Philip Sharp (ORAS), Marge Fehrmann (WI), Mark Shewmaker (KY), Kyle Rogers (IL), Larry Reeves (WA)

USDA Employees Learn About Historic Freedom Riders

By **Deborah Allen**

On August 14, 2014, more than 300 USDA employees attended the "In Conversation With... The Freedom Riders" program in the Thomas Jefferson Auditorium. Teleworkers and field employees across the United States also watched online. The Freedom Riders were a group of racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse civil rights advocates who responded to segregation with a demonstration of solidarity and nonviolence in the face of overt hostility. You can view it here: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/freedomriders/>

The "*In Conversation With...*" series is an informal, intimate teaching/learning series through which USDA employees have an opportunity to increase their understanding of civil rights laws and policies, while at the same time participate in meaningful dialogue about critical issues of our times.

Through the series, the voices and experiences of individuals who have made history, and who can share first-hand accounts about the history-in-the-making they witnessed or in which they were participants, are brought to USDA. The series also brings the voices of those who examine the forces of history, and those who write our history. The intent is to provide a unique forum to convey special aspects of the issues impacting the "pursuit of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness" shared in a non-threatening, interactive environment.

At the end of the session, employees' understanding of civil rights has been broadened, their sense of personal responsibility for change has intensified, and their understanding of the true meaning of diversity, inclusion and cultural transformation has been increased.

You can contact MyUSDA by emailing MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov, and be sure to visit the [USDA Cultural Transformation Website](#).

If you'd like to share your feedback about Cultural Transformation, telework, diversity, or any other aspect of work/life at USDA, send an email to: MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov or visit USDA's [WorkLife and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



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If you have ideas for future articles, contact us at MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The deadline for October submissions is Thursday, October 9, 2014.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing some aspect of the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline (with accompanying photos strongly preferred), a first-person account (describing a personal work-related experience relating to CT progress), or a "brief" (just a few sentences describing a successful Cultural Transformation event, group, initiative, or activity...or some other relevant worklife issue with an accompanying photo. Send photos as separate attachments and make sure they are high quality. **The ideal submission is a great picture with about 75-150 words to go along with it. Maximum length of articles is 250 words.**

Email submissions or further inquiries to MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov.