



EVERY DAY IN EVERY WAY

USDA's Cultural Transformation Action Items

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

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MyUSDA

A Progress Report for Employees on USDA's Cultural Transformation

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September 2016

2016 Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards

By Jonathan Dumas, Office of Human Resources Management

On Tuesday, September 13, 2016, Secretary Vilsack presented 69 Honor Awards to individuals and teams who accomplished exceptional achievements on behalf of USDA's customers and stakeholders. The Department paid homage to our founder, President Abraham Lincoln, while recognizing our present-day innovations and the accomplishments of employees who work each and every day in service to American agriculture.

Awards were given for standing up Farm Bill provisions, the reauthorization of trade promotion authority, and for numerous program initiatives, including developing rural prosperity through education and restoring the health of America's watersheds. Several management initiatives were recognized, including the development and implementation of Presidential Directives and Executive Orders for food and agriculture preparedness and defense. The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) Response Team was recognized for quickly containing and eliminating the HPAI virus, saving the U.S. poultry industry \$48 billion.

In what was a solemn moment, we paid tribute to the Forest Service's Justin Beebe, a firefighter with the elite Lolo National Forest Hotshot Crew who lost his life fighting the Strawberry Fire in Great Basin National Park in Nevada.

In addition to Honor Awards, the Secretary recognized individuals who have significantly contributed volunteer service to national and community needs, and those committed to outstanding achievement with a direct impact on customers.



Secretary Tom Vilsack (standing left) and Assistant Secretary for Administration Dr. Gregory L. Parham (standing right) with Abraham Lincoln Honor Award winners (L-R) Chief Tom Tidwell, Dr. Moses Kairo, Beatra S. Wilson, and Dr. Juliette Bell.



The Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards ceremony included a moving tribute to U.S. Forest Service employee Justin Beebe, who lost his life fighting the Strawberry Fire on Great Basin National Park in Nevada.

Improvements Continue at USDA

By Dr. Karlease Kelly, Provost, Virtual University

Preliminary results are now available for the 2016 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) and they show that USDA continues to improve. USDA's Employee Engagement index score for 2016 is 66, up two points from last year. This compares with the government-wide Employee Engagement index of 65 for 2016, which is up by one point. Our Global Satisfaction results are 64, up three points from 2015. This compares with the government-wide results of 61, up one point from last year.

These results are based on the feedback you provided when the survey was administered earlier this year. The rising scores demonstrate that leaders and employees are working together to drive change and improvements that make our workplace better. Our goal is to make USDA a best place to work for you.

Thank you for your input. Once the full report is released, we will study the findings and move forward with efforts that make a positive difference for all of us.

Feds Feed Families Closes a Successful Campaign

By Linda Cronin, Farm Service Agency

Launched in 2009 as part of President Obama's *United We Serve* campaign, Feds Feed Families was designed to help food banks and pantries stay stocked during summer months when they traditionally see a decrease in donations and an increase in need. From 2009-2015, through the amazing generosity of federal employees, the food drive has collected nearly **57 million pounds** of food for those in need. We are finalizing the numbers for 2016 and that number will grow again, providing meals for those who may not otherwise eat, reducing food waste and building stronger communities.

The team work, collaboration, and efforts of so many Federal employees across the government led to another successful Feds Feed Families Campaign. We collected non-perishable food items, gleaned, held events and came together as a Federal family to make a difference in the communities we live in. Thank you to all who contributed and helped to make this campaign a tremendous success.

USDA Shares Employee Engagement "Best Practices"

By Jacob Faibisch, Office of Human Resources Management

The Office of Personnel Management invited three USDA employee engagement coordinators to sit on a panel to discuss their agencies' programs as "Best Practices." This information was shared with other Federal departments at the Employee Engagement Action Planning and Change Management Forum on September 21, 2016, in Washington, DC. The Forum was attended by more than 100 employee engagement coordinators and Senior Accountable Officials from across the Federal government.

The USDA panelists included Thevee Gray (Farm Service Agency), Febe Ortiz (Natural Resources Conservation Service), and Alia Shabazz (Economic Research Service.)

"We've made real progress in employee engagement thanks to the great work going on in each agency," said James Brent, USDA's employee engagement program manager. Over the last three years, the USDA has made a steady increase in all five of the FEVS indices. For more information, go to <https://www.unlocktalent.gov/>.



USDA panelists from left to right: Febe Ortiz (NRCS), Alia Shabazz (ERS), and Thevee Gray (FSA).

HR Quick Facts:



What is an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

And why is it important?

Eligibility:

- Every eligible employee should have an IDP.
- IDPs are required for Presidential Management Fellows, Senior Executive Service Candidate Development Program participants, all non-bargaining unit employees, and any employee who requests an IDP.

IDPs are important because they can be used to:

- Identify workforce skill gaps
- Train and develop the organization's workforce
- Promote communication between employees and supervisors
- Determine resources needed for training and developing the workforce

Source: 5 CFR 412.202 and 412.302, Department Regulation 4040-001, <http://www.idp.usda.gov> and <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/vu/idp.htm>

For more information contact your Training Officer or the USDA Virtual University at:
VirtualUniversity@dm.usda.gov

OHRM 7/1216

NRCS Hosts National Special Emphasis Program Training

By Sandi Kreke, Natural Resources Conservation Service

On August 3 & 4, 2016, nearly two dozen Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) employees from across the country met in St. Louis, MO, to participate in a training for Special Emphasis Program Managers. Little did they know, they would not only develop their management skills but also create career networking friends and colleagues.

The two-day course was fortunate to have the following instructors from National Headquarters, regional employees and local employees: Selina Lee, Director, Civil Rights Division, Tammie Edmunds, Director, Human Resources Workforce Management Division, Drenda Williams, Acting Branch Chief, Diversity and Recruitment Branch, Workforce Management Division, Sandi Kreke, Acting National Federal Women's Program Manager, Diversity and Recruitment Branch, Workforce Management Division, Chris Taliga, Plant Materials Technical Advisor, National Park Service and WIN-National Organization of Professional Women in NRCS President, Sarah Szachnieski, Missouri Federal Women's Program Manager, and Nancy Walker, Missouri LGBT Special Emphasis Program Manager. They collaborated to conduct the informative and thought provoking training.

Positive comments received from the participants included:

- "I learned so, so much! Thank you so much!"
- "Good job by all instructors. Was just what I feel was needed to work to fulfill my role as SEPM. Thank you all!"

Along with these comments the instructors asked for ideas to improve the training. These ideas were turned into a FAQ which was then reviewed with the group during a teleconference. The teleconference resulted in more suggestions and clarifications. The participants stated during the discussion

that they appreciated the follow up teleconference. It was very helpful and demonstrated that the instructors cared that the participants felt comfortable in their role of SEPMS.



The following employees successfully completed this training: John Bell, Amy Crews, Casey James, Sutton Gibbs, Tiffany Graves, Rhonda Holliday, Jennifer Jarvis, William Lavergne, Bernadette Luncsford, Dick Marshall, Loren Muldowney, Jason Peel, Anne Pollock, Erin Richardson, Mindy Scott, Se'ese'ei Toa, Joyce Wade, Nancy Walker, Laura Watson, Keith Williams, Derrick Wright, and Lisa Zamzow.

Do you have an article to submit to *MyUSDA*?

You can email MyUSDA@dm.usda.gov with submissions. They may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity or event demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items.

- ◆ Leadership
- ◆ Recruitment & Retention
- ◆ Talent Management
- ◆ Employee Development
- ◆ Customer Focus & Community Outreach

Forest Service Marks Women's Equality Day

By Montez Ashley, U.S. Forest Service

Seven U.S. Forest Service Units collaborated to observe Women's Equality Day by honoring inspiring women who are making a difference. The Honorable Dawn Edge, an Administrative Judge with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, delivered the keynote address. Judge Edge shared that communication is key to resolving conflict in the workplace. "If people communicated more effectively with each other, my office would not be utilized as much."

Robin Kilgore, Assistant Director, Office of Civil Rights, provided an overview of the Forest Service's Women's Initiative. Twenty-five women from across the seven units were honored for their effort in making a difference in the agency in five different categories.

Employees submitted nominations of women who are motivating others and making a difference in the workplace and their communities.

Diane Gardin, Federal Women's Program Manager for the Northeastern Service Center, served as Program Emcee and Committee Chair. Other committee members included Civil Rights Director Sheree Johnson, Patricia Matterson of the Southern Research Station, Winnie Owens of the Northeastern Area, Kimberly Palacios of the Albuquerque Service Center, Dani Ramirez-Montoya from Region 2, and Sherry Neal of Region 4.

This years winners:

Barbara "Babs" McDonald	Cheryl Jefferson
Zanethia Barnett	Valeria Herrera
Gaenor Thompson	Lisa Swenka
Teresa Rodriguez	Winnie Owens
Nancy Martin	Montez Ashley
Diane Gardin	Jennifer Juzwik Larmour
Deahn DonnerWright	Sheree Johnson
Marilyn Lucianetti	Barbara L. Illman
Amy Bishell	Susan Davis
Martha Williamson	Karri Cary
Melissa Dempsey	Twila Morris
Marla Trollan	Deb Oakeson
Susan Tracy	

Upcoming Observances at USDA

Veterans Day Program
Thursday, October 27, 2016

American Indian/Alaskan Native Heritage Month
Thursday, November 17, 2016

10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Jefferson Auditorium in Washington, DC

View recordings from many of USDA's Special Observances at

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/observances.htm>.

Employees receive one hour of diversity training for each USDA Special Observance attended.

Unique Mural Exemplifies Sustainable Recreation

By Julie Padilla and Denise Ottaviano, U.S. Forest Service

Recently U.S. Forest Service Chief Tom Tidwell visited the agency's Southwestern Regional Office in Albuquerque, NM, to review the status of a number of different programs. On this visit, a unique outdoors scene was created for meeting participants that would exemplify the concept of sustainable recreation.

The Very Special Arts (VSA) North Fourth Art Center, which has students with developmental disabilities, was asked to paint a mural that represented what sustainable recreation meant to them. The art center immediately embraced and ran with the idea, creating an inspirational 6' x 16' movable mural that helped bring the outside in.

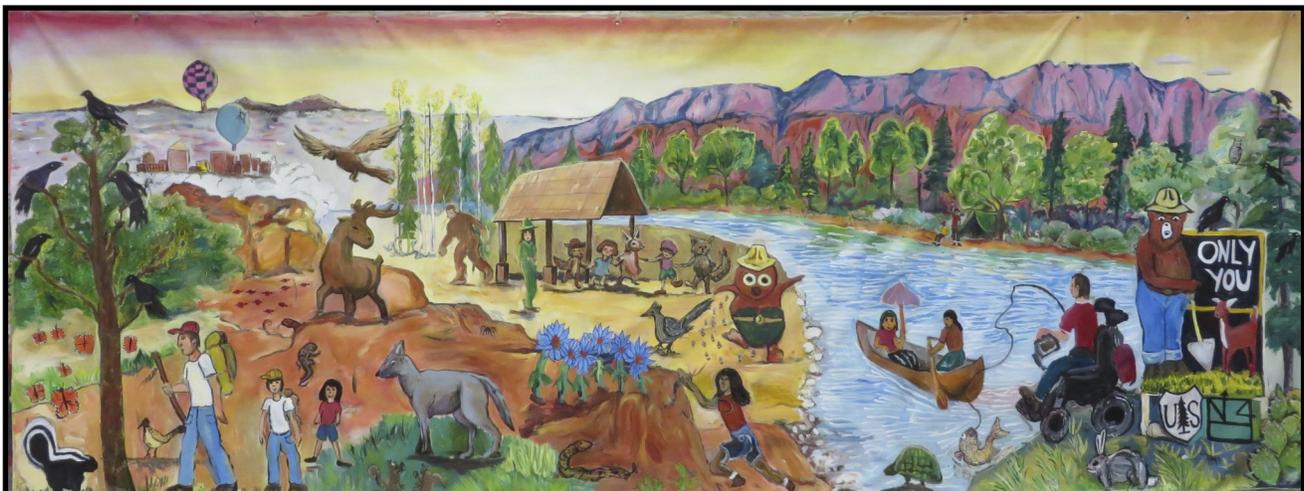
The resulting work of art illustrates the message of sustainable recreation beautifully, and clearly articulates the students' love and passion for the land. Sustainable recreation is a new way of thinking and acting about how recreation improves lives, communities and the natural world.

The mural paints the picture of public lands as the joyful heart of the community with people enriching their lives by being outdoors. A river represents the flow of benefits from public lands into the community, and the words "only you" remind us that citizens have a responsibility to be stewards of our natural heritage. The mural, simply put, was a gift of love.

Artist Rudy Via, from the Very Special Arts North Fourth Art Center, poses in front of the unique mural created by students at VSA to send a message about the importance of sustainable recreation.

A photo of the entire 6' x 16' movable mural is below.

Photos courtesy of VSA Arts of New Mexico



USDA's LGBT Rural Summit Comes to Iowa

By Jean Sandtrom, Natural Resources Conservation Service

An enthusiastic crowd of over 100 people gathered at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa on Thursday, August 18 for USDA's 15th Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender (LGBT) Rural Summit. The Rural Summit Series is a project of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, in partnership with the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the True Colors Fund. Local co-sponsors of the Iowa Summit included the Drake University Law School and One Iowa, an organization advocating for LGBT equal rights. The purpose of the LGBT Rural Summit Series is to:

- Promote awareness of the many programs and services that USDA offers;
- Highlight USDA's Cultural Transformation efforts – to embrace diversity at all levels, and ensure USDA programs and services are available to *all* Americans;
- Focus attention on issues of particular importance to LGBT farmers, families, and individuals in rural communities; and,
- Engage the LGBT community in addressing these issues.



Secretary Tom Vilsack

The program included several sessions, each led by a panel of local experts, with plenty of audience participation. Topics included LGBT identity and visibility in rural communities, economic security, health care access, LGBT farmers, LGBT youth and seniors, and legal issues for LGBT families. Iowa was honored to have Secretary Tom Vilsack as the keynote speaker at the event. As a former governor of Iowa, he is remembered as a strong supporter of LGBT equality. In his address, he spoke frankly of USDA's past failures in the arena of civil rights, the massive effort to address the backlog of discrimination claims, and of the priority he has set for the Department to reflect the America we work for. In supporting diversity within the agency and serving our diverse customer base, he emphasized that we do so not just to help those underrepresented groups, but to harness the power that diversity brings to us through fresh ideas and new perspectives. Iowa Rural Development, the Farm Service Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service joined forces to staff an outreach table at the event.

OPEDA Announces Scholarship Recipients

By Dana Manning, OPEDA President

The Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) has awarded academic achievement scholarships to two promising students whose parents work for USDA. The scholarships are granted in memory of John W. Peterson, the 24th president of OPEDA, and Steven "Tom" Stefani, a Forest Service employee who served and died on an assignment with the Foreign Agriculture Service in Afghanistan. OPEDA is proud to recognize two promising students, Emily Larson and Kayla Stone, who graduated high school in May 2016. Let's wish them our best in their future endeavors!

Emily Larson of Mt. Pleasant, IA, (top photo) is the daughter of Rural Development's Vickie Larson. Emily is attending the University of South Dakota majoring in medical biology with a minor in chemistry. After graduation, she plans to go to medical school.

Kayla Stone of Topeka, KS, (bottom photo) is the daughter of Randy and Lori Stone. Randy works for USDA Rural Development as a Civil Engineer. Kayla is attending Kansas State University where she plans to earn her bachelor's degree in Athletic Training, and then pursue her dream of becoming a Pediatric Physician's Assistant.

For more information please contact us at: OPEDA@dm.usda.gov and www.opeda.org



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 [Work/Life and Wellness](#) community website if you have access to [USDA Connections](#).



Catch Up On Recent Issues of MyUSDA!

To see previous issues of MyUSDA, please visit:

<http://www.dm.usda.gov/newsroom.htm>



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

Submit Your Article to MyUSDA

The monthly deadline for submissions is the end of the first week of each month.

Guidance on Submissions to MyUSDA

Submissions to MyUSDA should indicate progress that you, your agency, or your mission area have achieved toward implementing the Secretary's Cultural Transformation (CT) Initiative. The ideal submission includes photos or graphics along with a brief description of the event. The ideal word count for articles is 150-200. All submissions are subject to editing and Departmental review.

Submissions may be in the form of a traditional article with a byline, a first-person account, or any work-related activity, event, or observance demonstrating the Secretary's Cultural Transformation Action Items: Leadership; Recruitment & Retention; Talent Management; Employee Development; and, Customer Focus & Community Outreach.

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