

USDA NEWS

VOLUME 59 NO4 - JUNE 2000

We Honor 122 Award-Winning USDA Achievers

by Charlene Baker, FSIS Human Resources Staff, Minneapolis, Minn.

USDA honored a number of its employees, for their outstanding achievements, at its "54th Annual Honor Awards Ceremony," which took place on June 5 at the Ronald Reagan International Trade Center in Washington, DC.

Sandra Anglade, USDA's Employee Recognition Program Manager with the Office of Human Resources Management and coordinator of the Ceremony, said that USDA honor awards were awarded to 122 recipients, including 56 individuals, 4 teams, and 62 groups.

161 nominations, which included 64 individuals, 5 teams, and 92 groups, had been submitted earlier to the USDA Honor Awards Evaluation Committee. The four-member Committee reviewed those nominations and had then made its recommendations to Secretary **Dan Glickman**.

"The Committee forwarded to Secretary Glickman 75 percent of the nominations it had received," Anglade said.

Glickman delivered the keynote address and then he and Deputy Secretary **Richard Rominger** presented the major USDA awards to the employees.

The highest USDA Honor Awards are the Golden and Silver Plow Awards. One group received the Golden Plow Award this year, while three individuals and two groups received Silver Plow Awards. Those recipients have that particular annotation by their respective names in the list that follows.

The 56 Individuals receiving USDA honor awards included:

For Expanding Economic Trade Opportunities for Agricultural Producers and Other Rural Residents: **Clark Danford** (Food Safety and Inspection Service), Washington, DC; and **Gordon Rausser** (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service),

continued on pg. 3...



"Hey, this is as good as pumping iron!" quips OCFO's **Ken Kessler** (right), as he carefully eases a computer monitor into the protective bubble foam of a shipping box. Meanwhile, RD's **Cedric Bragg** (left), NASS's **Garett Moravec** (2nd from left), and RD's **Beverly Washington-Hazel** offer him moral support—instead of a back brace. The four were part of a recent initiative to refurbish and then ship surplus USDA computers to Tribal Colleges and Universities around the country. Note the story below.—**PHOTO BY BOB NICHOLS**

How We Helped Tribal Schools Get Our Surplus Computers

No More Waiting 'Till 2 A.M. To Study

by Ron Hall, Office of Communications

College students around the country have by now completed that annual springtime ritual known as 'cramming for finals.' But students at such institutions as Little Priest Tribal College in Winnebago, Neb., Sitting Bull College in Fort Yates, N.D., and White Earth Tribal and Community College in Mahanomen, Minn., were able to be more 'high-tech' in their end-of-year studies because of the efforts of a team of USDA employees.

That team refurbished surplus USDA computers and then arranged to have them shipped to Tribal Colleges and Universities, or TCUs, around the country.

It was part of a USDA project titled "PCs for TCUs." **Ken Kessler**, a management analyst in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer, served as its project leader.

The project originated in December 1999 when OCFO was to donate several surplus OCFO computers to some public schools on American Indian reservations. "Then we

found out about the White House Initiative on Tribal Colleges and Universities," he said. "One of its purposes is to respond to a critical shortage of reliable, Y2K-compliant computers at TCUs across the country."

"So USDA developed a project to take our surplus USDA computers, refurbish them, make contact with officials at Tribal Colleges and Universities, and offer to donate our refurbished computers to interested schools."

USDA has a history of donating surplus computers to educational institutions in need. In fact, in his "Secretary's Column" in the September 1996 *USDA News*, Secretary **Dan Glickman** pointed out the Department's participation in yet another effort at "recycling its extra computers" by donating 150 in the Kentucky Highlands, the Mississippi Mid-Delta, and the Rio Grande Valley in Texas. The October 1997 *USDA News* carried a story about how employees stationed in Europe donated surplus computers to the agriculture facility at the University of Sarajevo in Bosnia. And USDA is currently participating in a "Computers for Learning" program which streamlines the transfer of excess and surplus federal computer equipment to schools and other non-profit organizations.

"But the difference in this latest USDA initiative," Kessler noted, "is in the destination
continued on pg. 2..."

Secretary Dan Glickman



Five years ago, when I became Secretary of Agriculture, I discovered that USDA was still struggling—as much of our society still is—to make racial equality an institutionalized and unshakeable principle, in every action, decision, and program.

I immediately made it a top priority to make USDA a place where employees, customers, and constituents are all treated with the fairness and dignity they deserve. It has been my goal to make USDA a civil rights leader in the federal government.

One of our most important steps in that direction was the settlement we reached last year in a class-action suit brought by a group of African-American farmers alleging discrimination by USDA. The settlement calls for debt forgiveness and payments to individual plaintiffs who can prove discrimination, even if it

occurred as long ago as 1981. As of June 8, payments totaling over \$240 million have been made to 4,813 farmers.

But our civil rights agenda includes more than making amends for past injustice. In 1996, I appointed a committee of USDA employees to examine the state of civil rights throughout the Department and report back to me with suggested actions. After three months of exhaustive fact-finding, they delivered 92 recommendations covering everything from ways to save minority-owned farms to USDA hiring practices to disciplinary action for civil rights violators.

As we have acted on those recommendations, change has come. USDA has increased the number of new loans to African-American farmers by more than two-thirds. We have strengthened our relationships with Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other minority-serving institutions. Racial minorities are now better represented both in the USDA workforce and on our Farm Service Agency's County Committees. And our food safety arm has

stepped up its outreach efforts, ensuring that its educational materials are disseminated in minority communities.

Internally, almost all USDA employees have now completed some civil rights training, learning about the particular sensitivities involved in working with historically underserved communities. Many supervisors and managers have received additional training, to help them manage the diversity on their staffs. And our agency heads are now evaluated as much on their civil rights performance as any other aspect of their job.

We have introduced accountability to those who do not follow civil rights guidelines. Over the last two years, we have issued 94 disciplinary actions, ranging from letters of reprimand to 14 dismissals.

Overhauling an institutional culture is not an overnight job. It will take a sustained commitment and relentless vigilance over an extended period of time. We have yet to reach the mountaintop, but we have begun the climb. ❖

How We Helped...continued from pg. 1

of our surplus computers: all to TCUs."

"In addition," he added, "of the various federal departments involved in providing surplus computers to TCUs, to my knowledge USDA is the only department which is making a point of cleaning and repairing its computers before donating them to the schools."

To get USDA's project started, in March he put together a team which included Rural Development computer specialists **Cedric Bragg** and **Beverly Washington-Hazel** as technical team leaders. The National Agricultural Statistics Service provided five computer specialists.

Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics **Miley Gonzalez** sent a memorandum to all USDA agencies, inviting them to participate in the 'PCs for TCUs' project. Kessler then followed up by contacting all agency-level chief information officers.

Washington-Hazel described the approach that the team used in refurbishing each computer. "Generally we blew out the dust, checked the keyboard and the mouse, cleaned the units up, made certain they were Y2K-compliant, ensured that no data were stored in the computers, and tested to ensure each PC was fully functional," she explained. "And then," Bragg emphasized, "we ultimately

found a home for each of them."

Actually, 'finding a home' had its complications. "We needed to find an equitable way to distribute our refurbished computers—and we needed a private sector group to help us accomplish that," Kessler advised. So the American Indian Higher Education Consortium served that purpose.

Kessler soon received constructive feedback from an official with that group, who wrote "in the past, computers have been donated by various government entities and, once received by the [Tribal] colleges, were found to [be] of poor quality and useless. We want to ensure that our experience with USDA in this regard is a positive one that builds on our relationship with the Department and does not produce unwanted problems."

According to **Garet Moravec**, a NASS telecommunications engineer and chair of USDA's American Indian Council, Kessler reached out to his organization for assistance. "We did some brainstorming in the American Indian Council," Moravec recounted. "We all wanted to make sure that USDA was setting standards and was giving something of quality to the Tribal schools—and it did."

The second complication involved shipping the computers to the TCUs. "The government is not allowed, by law, to pay

shipping costs for a project like this," Kessler advised. "And private sector shippers would charge \$100 in shipping costs per computer—which the TCUs simply couldn't afford."

But, working with **Earl Brittingham**, chief of the Landover Service Center with the Office of Operations in Landover, Md., and his staff, Kessler found out that it was legal to use a government bill of lading to ship the computers—and that would cost the schools only about \$25 per computer.

"Then we worked out a system with the American Indian Higher Education Consortium in which it would pay for the shipments up front but would ultimately be reimbursed by the schools," Kessler related. "So neither USDA nor the taxpayers were paying for the shipment of USDA's surplus computers."

The "PCs for TCUs" project formally ended on June 2. "Through this project we provided over 450 such computers to 24 TCUs in nine states," he affirmed.

And have the team members received any feedback from the recipient schools?

"At one college there used to be only two personal computers in each dorm," Kessler recounted. "But now there are 10 per dorm—so the students no longer have to stay up until 2 a.m., merely to get access to a computer so they can complete their course work." ❖

Award-Winning...continued from pg. 1

Berkeley, Calif.: *For Ensuring Food for the Hungry, and a Safe, Affordable, Nutritious, and Accessible Food Supply*: **Robert Cousins** (CSREES), Gainesville, Fla.; **Michael Kasperbauer** (Agricultural Research Service), Florence, S.C.; **Henry Shands** (ARS), Washington, DC; **James Smith** (National Agricultural Statistics Service), Washington, DC; and

Patricia Stolfa (FSIS), Washington, DC; *For Promoting Sensible Management of Natural Resources*: **Richard Brenner** (ARS), Gainesville, Fla.; **Carrol Calkins** (ARS), Wapato, Wash.; **Ronald Follett** (ARS), Fort Collins, Colo.; **Forrest Izuno** (CSREES), Belle Glade, Fla.; **Clay McCoy** (CSREES), Lake Alfred, Fla.; **Henry Old Horn** (Natural Resources Conservation Service), Crow Agency, Mont.; **Robert**

Schmidt (CSREES), Gainesville, Fla.; **Edward Seidensticker** (NRCS), Baytown, Texas; **Neal Spencer** (ARS), Sidney, Mont.; and **Margo Wallace** (NRCS), Storrs, Conn., *For Outstanding Customer Service*: **Louis Boyd** (NRCS), Clarksville, Tenn.; **Joni Sue Cook** (Forest Service), Elkins, W.Va.; **Edward Cooney** (Food and Nutrition Service), Alexandria, Va.;
continued on pg. 4...

INDIVIDUAL HONOR AWARDS RECIPIENTS

54th



C. DANFORD



G. RAUSSER



R. COUSINS



M. KASPERBAUER



H. SHANDS



J. SMITH



P. STOLFA



R. BRENNER



C. CALKINS



R. FOLLETT



F. IZUNO



C. MCCOY



H. OLD HORN



R. SCHMIDT



E. SEIDENSTICKER



N. SPENCER



M. WALLACE



L. BOYD



J.S. COOK



E. COONEY



R. CURNOW



B. CURTIS-HEIKEN



M. DAMATO



B. EBEL



D. GERHARDT



D. GREATHOUSE



J. HILL



C. HUDSON



R. JOHNSON



J. MILAKNIS



J. NAKATA



S. NASH



A. WEISKIRCHER



L. ALSOBROOK



M. COLLET



T. CROWE



D. DOMINICK



M. O'BRIEN



J. PHILLIPS



S. SCATES



S. NEAL



S. PAUKNER



Y. SHARMA



D. SMITH



K. SMITH



R. WHINNERY



R. GARDNER



E. GRANELL ALONSO



J. GRESSEL



M. MARXMAN



J. MENCHACA



R. MONTGOMERY



J. OERTLY



B. O'NEIL



E. PETERSON



W. SIMPSON

Richard Curnow (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), Fort Collins, Colo.; **Brenda Curtis-Heiken** (Office of Communications), Washington, DC; **Michelle Damato** (FS), Milwaukee, Wis.; **Bonnie Ebel** (ARS), Gainesville, Fla.; **DeAnna Gerhardt** (Rural Housing Service), Garden City, Kan.; **Donna Greathouse** (NRCS), Marion, Ill.; **June Hill** (Office of Inspector General), Washington, DC; **Charles Hudson** (NASS), Denver, Colo.; **Ronald Johnson** (FNS), Alexandria, Va.; **Janina Milaknis** (Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration), Montreal, Canada; **Jo-Anna Nakata** (Farm Service Agency), Honolulu, Hawaii; **Stella Nash** (FNS), Denver, Colo.; and **Anne Weiskircher** (FS), Columbia, Ky; *For Equal Opportunity:* **LeAndrea Alsobrook** (FSA), Washington, DC; **Mary Collet** (FS), Madison, Wis.; **Thedis Crowe** [Silver Plow] (NRCS), Bozeman, Mont.; **Darrel Dominick** (NRCS), Bangor, Maine; **Maureen O'Brien** (Office of the General Counsel), Washington, DC; **John Phillips** (CSREES), Eagle Butte, S.D.; and **Stephen Scates** (FSA), Springfield, Ill.; *For Emergency Response and Heroism:* **Sam Neal** [Silver Plow] (FS), Winona, Mo.; **Scott Paukner** (FSIS), Austin, Minn.; **Yudhbir Sharma** [Silver Plow] (FSIS), Sacramento, Calif.; **Darron Smith** (Agricultural Marketing Service), Nashville, N.C.; **Kimberly Smith** (AMS), Denver, Colo.; and **Robert Whinnery** (FSA), Hopedale, Ohio; *For Public Service:* **Richard Gardner** (National Rural Development Partnership), Boise, Idaho; **Edwin Granell Alonso** (FSA), Lares, Puerto Rico; **Jonathan Gressel** (Foreign Agricultural Service), Washington, DC; **Merrill Marxman** (FSA), Bourbonnais, Ill.; **Juan Menchaca** (APHIS), Pharr, Texas; **Robert Montgomery** (FSA), Scottsville, Ky.; **Janet Oertly** (NRCS), Harrisburg, Pa.; **Bonny O'Neil** (FNS), Alexandria, Va.; **Earl Peterson** (National Association of State Departments of Agriculture), Tallahassee, Fla.; and **William Simpson** (FS), Madison, Wis.

The 4 Teams receiving USDA honor awards included:

For Equal Opportunity: **Richard Burke** and **Thomas McGarr** (RHS), Amherst/West Wareham, Mass.; *For Emergency Response and Heroism:* **Paul Noteboom** and **Bonnie Jones** (FS), Spearfish, S.D.; **Jon Ort** and **Dalton McAfee** (CSREES), Raleigh/Greensboro, N.C.; and **Drew Goodridge** (OIG), **Daniel McGrath** (Office of Congressional Relations), and **Philip Goode** (U.S. Capitol

Police) (no photo available), Washington, DC. **The 62 Groups receiving USDA honor awards included:**

For Expanding Economic Trade Opportunities for Agricultural Producers and Other Rural Residents: the Agricultural Export Services Division (FAS), Washington, DC, **Daniel Berman**, Group Leader; the Farm Typology Group (Economic Research Service), Washington, DC, **Robert Hoppe**, Group Leader; the Federal Milk Marketing Order Reform (AMS), Washington, DC, **Richard McKee**, Group Leader; the Master Marketer Program Team (CSREES), College Station, Texas, **Roland Smith**, Group Leader; the Tilletia Controversa Kuhn Pest Risk Assessment Task Force (ARS), Wyndmoor, Pa., **Wilda Martinez**, Group Leader; the Tri-National Dispute Resolution Delegates (AMS), Washington, DC, **Kenneth Clayton**, Group Leader; and the Wheat Export Resolution Team (APHIS), Riverdale, Md., **Alan Green**, Group Leader; *For Ensuring Food for the Hungry, and a Safe, Affordable, Nutritious, and Accessible Food Supply:* the Community Nutrition Education Program—Pontotoc Unit (CSREES), Ada, Okla., **Lani Huckleby**, Group Leader; the Food Stamp Program Access Improvement Team (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Patricia Seward** and **Arthur Foley**, Group Leaders; the Hong Kong H5NI Avian Influenza Research Group [Silver Plow] (ARS), Athens, Ga., **David Swayne**, Group Leader; the Listeria Outbreak Working Group (CSREES), Ithaca, N.Y., **Martin Wiedmann**, Group Leader; the New North Florida Cooperative Pilot Project (AMS), Washington, DC, **Daniel Schofer**, Group Leader; the Nutrition Promotion (Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion), Washington, DC, **Carole Davis**, Group Leader; the Retail Food Safety and Enforcement Group (FSIS),

Washington, DC, **Scott Safian**, Group Leader; and the Small and Very Small Plant Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point Implementation Group (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Mary Cutshall** and **Dorothy Stringfellow**, Group Leaders; *For Promoting Sensible Management of Natural Resources:* the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (FSA), Washington, DC, **Parks Shackelford**, Group Leader; the East St. Louis Interior Flood Control/Ecosystem Restoration (NRCS), Edwardsville, Ill., **Leslie Michael**, Group Leader; the Longleaf Pine Ecosystem Restoration Team (FS), Auburn, Ala., **Charles McMahon**, Group Leader; the Neuse Education Team (CSREES), Raleigh, N.C., **Mitchell Woodward**, Group Leader; the Russian River Watershed Group (NRCS), Ukiah, Calif., **Thomas Schott**, Group Leader; the Sustainable Agricultural Research Program (ARS), Beltsville, Md., **James Anderson**, Group Leader; and the Wilson Flowage Partnership (FS), Medford, Wis., **Susanne Adams**, Group Leader; *For Outstanding Customer Service:* the Centralized Servicing Center Field Assistance Desk (RHS), St. Louis, Mo., **Beryl Gillard**, Group Leader; the Closing the Los Angeles Area Marketplace Pathway (APHIS), Inglewood, Calif., **Diana Hoffman**, Group Leader; the Congressional Support Services (RHS), St. Louis, Mo., **Beryl Gillard**, Group Leader; the Continuity of Operations Plan (Office of the Secretary), Washington, DC, **Herbert Dickerson** and **Elaine Plotkin**, Group Leaders; the Direct Premium Remittance System Contact Representative Team (Office of the Chief Financial Officer), New Orleans, La., **Carvin Ladner**, Group Leader; the Empowerment Programs Division (Office of Community Development), Washington, DC, **Richard Wetherill**, Group Leader; the Fiscal Services

TEAM HONOR AWARDS RECIPIENTS



R. BURKE



T. MCGARR



P. NOTEBOOM



B. JONES



J. ORT



D. MCAFEE



D. GOODRIDGE



D. MCGRATH

USDA recognized six of its employees as “unsung heroes” during its recent observance of Public Service Recognition Week.

According to **Otis Thompson**, executive director of the Organization of Professional Employees, U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) and retired USDA public affairs specialist, the purpose of the “unsung hero” designation is to identify those employees who have been “unusually dedicated and efficient and had a positive attitude.”

He noted that nominees as “unsung heroes” are based on actual “hands-on” activities rather than on supervisory or managerial efforts. “However,” he added, “all USDA employees were eligible to be nominated.”

The idea for an “unsung heroes” contest was developed in late 1987 by a group of six representatives of professional organizations in the Department. In addition to OPEDA, current sponsoring groups include the Association of Technical & Supervisory Professionals, USDA’s Employee Services & Recreation Association, the National Association of Federal Veterinarians, and the USDA Chapter of the Senior Executive Association.

This is the 13th year of the contest, which was conducted USDA-wide. Thompson said that following a Departmentwide solicitation, 25 employees were nominated, either by fellow USDA employees or by customers of USDA programs and services. The final selection was made in April by a team of USDA officials.

USDA’s “unsung heroes” for 2000 include:

❶ **Dennis Carroll**, a writer-editor in the Office of Communications in Washington, DC, who, through his writing and editing skills and steadiness under deadline pressure, has provided quality control for a myriad of USDA publications each year, thereby helping to ensure that those USDA publications are

USDA Spotlights Its “Unsung Heroes”

by Ron Hall, Office of Communications



appealing, highly credible, and user-friendly materials that readers can explore to enhance their lives.

❷ **Sandra Frazier**, a contract specialist with the Agricultural Research Service in Beltsville, Md., who negotiated a delivery order under an energy-savings contract on behalf of ARS’s National Animal Disease Center in Ames, Iowa for the installation of energy-efficient upgrades to that facility, thereby affording ARS significant savings in energy usage and costs over the next 18 years. Also recognized were ARS center engineer **Dennis Jones** in Ames and ARS staff engineer **Rommey Ignacio** in Beltsville for their work on the U.S. Department of Energy’s Energy Savings Performance Contract.

❸ **Karen Hauck**, a program assistant with the Foreign Agricultural Service in Washington, DC, who has worked as a volunteer sign language interpreter—coordinated by the Interpreting Services Office in the Office of Operations—at meetings and public events at the Department for the past two years, leads study groups of sign language interpreters as they prepare for national examinations administered by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf, and has served as an officer in the Associ-

ation for Persons with Disabilities in Agriculture (APDA).

❹ **Linda Hays**, a tobacco inspector with the Agricultural Marketing Service in Raleigh, N.C., who graded tobacco, probed tobacco leaves with a moisture checker, and stamped inspection certificates on over 50 percent of the total amount of tobacco on the Tazewell, Tenn., tobacco market during this past burley tobacco season, thereby greatly advancing the completion of the tobacco inspection cycle.

❺ **Don Koch**, a program specialist with the Food and Nutrition Service in Chicago, who was the primary designer, developer, documenter, and/or troubleshooter for two computer systems for FNS’s Food Distribution Programs. One system allows USDA employees to more cost-effectively acquire, distribute, and manage food commodities that USDA donates to its domestic feeding programs. The second system now allows state distributing agencies to interface with the first system to order food commodities directly, thereby reducing paperwork. This second computer system is currently being used in almost every state in the union.

❻ **Judy Weese**, a program management assistant with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Creston, Iowa where, working for the seven-county Southern Iowa Resource Conservation and Development Area in Creston, she applied her accounting and management skills for eight years in support of Iowa’s now-completed Three Mile Lake project. It now serves as the primary water supply for the seven-county regional rural water system—and now also offers potable water to both urban and rural residents in the entire seven county area. ❖

Award-Winning...continued from pg. 4

Branch, Budget Division (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Barbara McNiff**, Group Leader; the Florida Exotic Fruit Fly Detection and Eradication Programs (APHIS), Gainesville, Fla., **Michael Shannon**, Group Leader; the Halifax County Office (FSA), Halifax, N.C., **Francis McLaughlin**, Group Leader; the Iowa Rural Development Childcare Initiatives Group (RHS), Des Moines, Iowa, **Ellen King Huntoon**, Group Leader; the Plan of Work Review Team (CSREES), Washington, DC, **Ralph Otto**, Group Leader; the President’s Foreign Food Aid Initiative Group (FAS), Wash-

ington, DC, **Grant Pettrie**, Group Leader; the Rural Home Loan Partnership Group (RHS), Washington, DC, **Eileen Fitzgerald**, Group Leader; the Russia Food Assistance Group (FAS), Washington, DC, **Asif Chaudhry**, Group Leader; the USDA Workplace Violence Prevention Steering Committee (OSEC/OIG), Washington, DC, **Deborah Matz** and **Joyce Fleischman**, Group Leaders; the Voluntary Dispute Intervention Program (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Ronald Hicks**, Group Leader; and the Y2K Millennium Rollover Team (Office of the Chief Information Officer), Washington, DC, **Ann Reed** and **Ira Hobbs**, Group Leaders; *For Equal Oppor-*

tunity: the Branching Out to the Youth of America Team (FS), Asheville, N.C., **Rodney Kindlund**, Group Leader; the Centralized Servicing Center Welfare to Work Partners (RHS), St. Louis, Mo., **William Scaggs**, Group Leader; the Fruit and Vegetable Programs (AMS), Washington, DC., **Ronald Cioffi**, Group Leader; and the Western Regional Research Center Staff (ARS), Albany, Calif., **James Seiber**, Group Leader; *For Emergency Response and Heroism*: the Black Hills National Forest Snugget Crew [Golden Plow] (FS), Rapid City, S.D., **Phillip Grumstrup**, Group Leader; the Bioterrorism Incident Response Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Fred**



Michael Fernandez was named as associate administrator of the Agricultural Marketing Service. He succeeded **Tom O'Brien**, who held that position from December 1997 until February 1999, and who is now deputy director of the Washington, DC office of California Governor **Gray Davis**.

Before joining USDA, from May 1995 until his recent appointment Fernandez served as a special assistant to the assistant administrator for pesticides, prevention, and toxic substances at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, where he concentrated on such issues as pesticide and food safety legislation, agricultural biotechnology, regulatory reform, and children's environmental health policy.

Fernandez worked as a professional staff member for the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry from 1992-95, where he focused on issues related to agricultural biotechnology, agricultural research, and pesticide policy. From 1983-85 he worked in Cambridge, Mass., as a research technician for Biogen, Inc., a biopharmaceutical drug firm.

A native of St. Louis, Mo., Fernandez holds a B.A. degree in biology from Princeton University in Princeton, N.J., and a Ph.D. degree in biochemistry and molecular biology from the University of Chicago. ❖

Editor's Roundup

USDA people in the news



Harv Forsgren was selected as the regional forester for the Forest Service's Pacific Northwest Region, based in Portland, Ore. He succeeded **Bob Williams**, who served in

that position from July 1996 until he retired in June 1999, following 42 years of service with USDA.

From June 1998 until his selection, Forsgren served as the director of FS's Wildlife, Fish, and Rare Plants Staff at the agency's headquarters office in Washington, DC. He was assistant director of that Staff from 1995-98. From 1991-95 he served as FS's National Fisheries Program Leader.

Forsgren was the Regional Fisheries Program Leader at the agency's Intermountain Region, based in Ogden, Utah, from 1988-91. From 1986-88 he worked as a fisheries biologist on the Mt. Hood National Forest in Gresham, Ore., after having worked as a fisheries biologist, based first in Hailey, Idaho and then in Twin Falls, Idaho, on the Sawtooth National Forest from 1980-86. He began his full-time career with the Forest Service as a botanist

and fisheries biologist on the Chugach National Forest in Anchorage, Alaska in 1978.

A native of Idaho, Forsgren holds a B.S. degree in fisheries management from Utah State University and an M.S. degree in natural resources management from Humboldt State University in Arcata, Calif. ❖



Adrianna Hewings was selected as the director of the Midwest Area, based in Peoria, Ill., for the Agricultural Research Service. She succeeded **Ric Dunkle**, who served in that position

from September 1992 until April 1999, when he became the deputy administrator for plant protection and quarantine in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

From August 1997 until her selection, Hewings served as associate director of ARS's Midwest Area. She was assistant director of the Midwest Area from 1994-97.

From 1987-94 Hewings worked as the lead scientist in the cereal virology group for ARS's Crop Protection Research Unit in Urbana, Ill. She began her career with ARS in 1983 as a research plant pathologist with the agency's Foreign Disease Weed Science Research Unit in Frederick, Md., where she concentrated on the impact of exotic virus diseases in soybeans on American agriculture.

A native of Haverhill, Mass., Hewings holds a B.A. degree in education from the University of Massachusetts, a B.S. equivalent degree in biology from the University of Toronto, and both an M.S. degree in biology and a Ph.D. degree in plant pathology from the University of Illinois. ❖

Award-Winning...continued from pg. 5

Williams, Group Leader; the Emergency Management System (APHIS), Washington, DC, **Bobby Acord**, Group Leader; the Hurricane Recovery Team (FAS), Washington, DC, **Howard Anderson**, Group Leader; the North Carolina Hurricane Floyd Emergency Response Management Team (NRCS), Raleigh, N.C., **Mary Kollstedt**, Group Leader; the Rural Response Action Team Project (CSREES), St. Paul, Minn., **Robert Byrnes**, Group Leader; and the USDA Manhattan Service Center Group (RHS), Manhattan, Kan., **Beverly Howard**, Group Leader; *For Public Service*: the Clinch-Powell Resource Conservation and Development Council (NRCS), Rutledge, Tenn., **David Lietzke**, Group Leader; the Cotton Programs (AMS),

Washington, DC, **Mary Atienza**, Group Leader; the Dog Fighting Investigation Group (APHIS), Elgin, Texas, **Jacqueline Freeman**, Group Leader; the Fredericksburg Area Office (FSA), Fredericksburg, Va., **John Carter**, Group Leader; the George Washington Carver Recognition Team (Departmental Administration), Washington, DC, **Priscilla Carey**, Group Leader; the Introduction to Water Quality Training Development Team (NRCS), Indianapolis, Ind., **Robert Hummel**, Group Leader; the Lincoln Multicultural Middle School Adopt-A-School Program [Silver Plow], (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Francisco Apodaca** and **Gerry Flores**, Group Leaders; the Operation Gemini Task Force Group (OIG), New York, N.Y., **Gary O'Brien**, Group Leader; the Partnership for Change—Texas Colonias Initiative Team (FNS), Dallas, Texas, **Judy Barron**,

Group Leader; the Resource Planning Guidebook Technical Team (NRCS), Champaign, Ill., **William Lewis**, Group Leader; the Secretary's Hispanic Advisory Council Adopt-A-School Program Workgroup (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Francisco Apodaca**, Group Leader; and the Technical Team (NRCS), Naperville, Ill., **Kent Sims**, Group Leader.

In addition to the 122 USDA honor award presentations, USDA's awards highlight included its 15 Presidential Rank Award recipients for 1999 (the December 1999 issue of the *USDA News* carried a story on those 15 employees), the USDA recipients of major awards sponsored by external organizations, and the 320 Departmental employees across the country who have 40 or more years of federal service. ❖



Spring is turning into summer across the land, and that means lots of pre-school-age kids are spending lots of time outdoors, busy romping through local playgrounds around the country.

Roberto Morganti has been getting a kick out of watching the pint-sized dynamos in his neighborhood burn up their energy in a playground near his home. But that's because he has a special interest in the playground: he designed and built it.

Morganti, a landscape architect working on the Forest Service's Klamath Ranger District on the Winema National Forest in south-central Oregon, is the parent of a Head Start child. So when he heard that Head Start staffers in his home town of Klamath Falls, Ore., wanted to develop a playground at their local Head Start center, he volunteered to help.

"Then, as I began thinking about the project, I concluded that it would be nice if the kids had more than just your typical playground," he recounted. "So I came up with a proposal to make the playground into an 'outdoor classroom' with a 'child-scale forest' as one of its centerpieces."

"I wanted the kids to be able to literally feel and experience trees and other forms of nature at their height-level and scale," he explained.

The plot of land in question was about the size of a three-car garage—"although, as I'd be working on designs, it often felt about as big

as a postage stamp," he quipped. The plot included a concrete pad, a circular sidewalk, and a storage shed as pre-existing features.

So on his own time he designed and built a playground that relied on the circular sidewalk as a path for tricycles, with low benches off to the side. Then he designed and built a landscape which included 30 dwarf Alberta spruce, numerous blue star junipers, and dwarf mugho pines. "Even when those trees mature, they're generally less than five feet tall," he noted. "So the kids can still relate to them—and don't feel dwarfed themselves."

He added about 60 dwarf euonymus shrubs on the fence-line surrounding the playground—with the intent of making the fence nearly invisible.

In the center, where there used to be a big trash pile, Morganti interjected a kid-sized smooth rock for climbing, surrounded by wood bark chips for cushion and protection during the inevitable falls.

He also designed a stepping-stone garden. "Kids spend a lot of time running hard from point A to point B," he explained. "But with a stepping-stone structure, we get the kids to *slow down* as they move from point A to point B. In the process, maybe they'll notice more of their immediate surroundings—such as crawling ants, which are really cool to kids."

"The net effect," he concluded, "is to offer these young visitors the chance to experience both a period of enclosure and a period of openness—and I think we accomplished that."



"It's a nice smooth rock, just right for climbing by a four-year-old—and the wood bark chips surrounding it provide a nice soft cushion for falls," explains FS's **Roberto Morganti**, as he points out one of the features of the kid-sized "outdoor classroom" with a "kid-scale forest," all of which he designed and built. Note the story on this page.—**Photo by Frank Erickson**

According to **Frank Erickson**, FS's public affairs officer on the Winema National Forest, one additional byproduct of Morganti's efforts on behalf of the 'outdoor classroom' with its 'child-scale forest' is that he volunteered to be his office's disability employment program manager.

"This experience helped add to my sensitivity and awareness of looking at things from the perspective of others," Morganti related. "In this case, it was from the eyes, height, and perspective of active but curious pre-school-agers—and all the challenging dynamics which result from that perspective." ♦

The **USDA News** is published by the Office of Communications, the U.S. Department of Agriculture. This employee news publication, which is prepared by, for, and about this Department's employees, is distributed to USDA's 97,600 federal employees—full-time, part-time, and temporary—by order of the Secretary of Agriculture. Mailing address is Rm. 430-A Whitten Bldg.: OC, USDA; 1400 Independence Ave., SW; Washington, D.C. 20250-1350.

To update your mailing address or change the quantity of **USDA News** copies received in your USDA office, please contact your agency's mailing/distribution specialist.

Ron Hall Editor
Heather Cooney Art Director
Cedric Drake Printing and Distribution Coordinator
Charles Hobbs Home Page Coordinator
Gayle Turner Home Page Assistant

The **USDA News** is also available on USDA's Home Page within the Internet. Use the World Wide Web to access that Home Page version. Simply type the Home Page address—or Universal Resource Locator (URL)—of the **USDA News**, which is

<http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/newslett/cover.htm>

In addition, USDA employees may access the Department's Intranet for information that is internal to USDA and for its employees only. Employees will need to use a USDA computer, plus a USDA server that permits Intranet access. The Intranet's URL is

<http://www.hqnet.usda.gov/intranet/intranet.htm>

USDA prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, and marital or family status (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

The **USDA News** is printed on paper containing a minimum of 50 percent waste paper. The **USDA News** is recyclable.

Letters

EDITOR'S NOTE: This "Letters" section is an opportunity for USDA employees to communicate with Secretary **Dan Glickman**, through questions or comments, on matters that would be appropriate and of general interest to USDA employees across the country. He invites employees to use this particular forum in the **USDA News** to communicate with him, by using the following mailing address: "Letters," Sec. **Dan Glickman**, USDA, STOP #0190, 1400 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20250.



"We're hearing from the Tribal institutions that they really appreciate the refurbishing work you've been doing," notes **Garet Moravec** (right), a telecommunications engineer with the National Agricultural Statistics Service and chair of USDA's American Indian Council, as he passes feedback onto NASS computer specialist **Paul Williams**. They were involved in a USDA project titled "PCs for TCUs," which refurbished and then shipped over 450 surplus USDA computers to Tribal Colleges and Universities around the country. Note the story on page 1.—**Photo by Bob Nichols**



HELP US FIND

Julie Davolos

Missing: 3-14-00

D.O.B. 2-2-84

Hair: Brown

Height: 5' 4"

From: Maitland, FL

Sex: Female

Eyes: Brown

Weight: 150 lbs.

If you have information, please call

1-800-843-5678

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

◆ Months of June and July

USDA 2000 Savings Bond Campaign

USDA headquarters and field offices

(301) 734-7824 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, DC 20250



OFFICIAL BUSINESS
PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300