

# USDA *news*

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

## USDA Strengthens Another Form Of Its Emergency Planning

From Grab And Go Kits To COOP

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

**“Be Prepared”** is more than just the motto of the Boy Scouts. In fact, in the “post-9/11”

America of today, it takes on a unique relevance within government offices, including at USDA.

And **Jim Redington** wants USDA's employees to be tuned in to all that that concept entails, these days, at the Department.

Redington is USDA's director of emergency programs, located within the Office of Operations. It's his job to ensure that the Department has emergency programs in place to enhance the safety of USDA personnel and property, both at headquarters and field locations.

To support that goal, OO has created a website—[www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared](http://www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared). “We're trying,” he explained, “to include on that website any material that educates USDA employees on measures they can take to ensure their safety in an emergency—whether the emergency is nature-driven or caused by humans.”

One of the sections on the main page of that website lists various emergency preparedness-related memos sent to USDA employees. The most recent memo, dated Feb. 13, 2004, is titled “Employee Emergency Response Information Memo to All Employees.”

That memo describes the purpose and contents of the “USDA Employee Emergency Response Guide,” dated January 2004. According to the memo, the guide “outlines all USDA Headquarters emergency information including emergency contact numbers, the USDA Incident Command Structure, communication tools we use to keep employees informed during emergencies, what to do during various types of incidents, shelter-in-place guidance, and recommendations for preparing a personal Grab and Go Kit with emergency supplies.”

While acknowledging that the guide contains some specific information that only applies to USDA employees in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, it points out that, “the general guidelines are applicable throughout the U.S. for most USDA facilities. USDA field offices are welcome to tailor the contents to fit their unique local situations and emergency plans.”

The memo then says, “We encourage you to become familiar with the contents of the guide and to keep a copy readily available in your [USDA] work area.”

The 28-page “USDA Employee Emergency Response Guide” is accessible from the main page of that website. As noted above, one of its sections describes a concept known as “shelter-in-place.”

**Mike O'Connor**, OO's “Be Prepared” webmaster, explained that this is a “protective action” in which employees don't run out of their USDA office—during an

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“This definitely looks state-of-the-art, and we've been happy to help jump-start it, Harvey,” affirms USDA's Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council coordinator **Roy Settle** (left)—as teacher **Harvey Burniston** (right) agrees. Settle is referring to their present location, a fish and aquaculture center run by students—such as **Mark Holland** (2nd from left)—at a vocational high school in Johnson City, Tenn. **Lewis Kearney** (2nd from right), FS Rural Community Assistance Program coordinator for the Cherokee National Forest, collaborated with Settle to provide seed money from USDA for the unique undertaking. Note **Mary Carr's** story on page 4.—PHOTO BY JEANNE EASTHAM

## We Can Now Pursue Education Programs Online

This Is NOT Your Father's Training Program

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

**F**irst there was “training.” Now there is a Departmentwide “learning management system,” which takes training to the next level by being more all-encompassing and by providing more options and services for its users.

This is the concept behind USDA's new “Agriculture Learning Service” or “AgLearn,” which was formally launched by the Department on March 29, for use by USDA employees.

**Cindy Bezz**, USDA's “eLearning” project manager located within the Office of the

Chief Information Officer, and a cross-agency team implemented USDA's AgLearn Service. She explained that “eLearning” is one of the various initiatives which come under the general category of “eGovernment” or “eGov.” “In turn,” she said, “eGovernment is defined as the exchange of products, information, and services through an electronic medium such as the Internet or e-mail.”

The April-June 2003 issue of the **USDA News** carried a story on eGovernment at USDA.

USDA's eGovernment efforts are focused on three general audiences: USDA's customers, USDA's partners in public and private sector organizations, and USDA's employees. Bezz emphasized that eLearning is a key feature of those eGovernment efforts focused on USDA employees, among others.

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# Ann M. Veneman

## Secretary of Agriculture

In the President's 2002 State of the Union Address, he asked all Americans to dedicate at least two years or 4,000 hours over the course of their lifetime in service to others.

April 18-24 marked National Volunteer Week and it was noted that about 60 million Americans volunteer every year through charitable organizations, but that means millions more of us need to do more. To help, President **George W. Bush** created the USA Freedom Corps and the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation to help Americans answer this "call to service" by providing meaningful opportunities to serve, both at home and abroad.

There are many opportunities for all of us, no matter our age, to volunteer and help those in need. USDA has a longstanding record of providing volunteer opportunities and supporting volunteer initiatives by our employees. I commend the employees at the Agricultural Marketing Service for organizing a volunteer fair in April for USDA employees in Washington, D.C. to learn about opportunities in the area.

One outstanding example is the Natural Resources Conservation Service's Earth Team. Volunteering has been integral to America's soil and water conservation movement since the 1930s. But in 1981, building on that volunteer concept, Congress gave NRCS the authority to use volunteers to implement the agency's mission.

At that time, the Earth Team had 327 volunteers who donated 29,000 hours. By 2003, the Earth Team totaled 43,834 volunteers giving over 1 million hours of their time, talent, and energy to help NRCS establish conservation practices on the land. NRCS estimates the value of their time at \$16.6 million or 483 staff years. For more ideas on where and how to volunteer visit [www.usafreedomcorps.gov](http://www.usafreedomcorps.gov).

Volunteering is an investment in the future. That's why my Leaders of Tomorrow Initiative, which began in 2002, focuses on exposing future leaders to the opportunities in the food and agriculture sector through real-world experiences.

The youngest Leaders of Tomorrow are asked to display in pictures and words answers to questions about agriculture. Their work is displayed in the portico of the Jamie Whitten Building in Washington D.C., and on the web at [www.usda.gov/leadersoftomorrow](http://www.usda.gov/leadersoftomorrow).

I also invite high school and college students to accompany me on speaking engagements and meetings with farmers and the press. This helps them build their own leadership skills while learning about the issues of the day.

This initiative is just the beginning of what I hope will be a growing program to encourage mentorship, career development, and community service.

Each of us has talents, abilities, and resources that can help someone in need. By sharing our compassion through acts of kindness, we can make America a better place—one heart at a time. ■

### Emergency Planning...continued from pg. 1

emergency or crisis situation—but rather remain in the "sheltered environment" of their building.

"It's a concept," he said, "that's designed to protect employees from external hazards—such as accidental or intentional chemical releases, severe weather, or civil unrest—and thereby minimize their chance of injury, while also providing time to allow preparations for a safe evacuation from the building, as appropriate."

The guide also describes the purpose of what is called a "Grab and Go" kit, also called a "personal survival" kit. "Whatever you want to call it," O'Connor said, "it's a personal emergency kit which employees should have at the ready in their offices, in case they have to shelter-in-place for an extended period of time—usually not to exceed eight hours."

Accordingly, as delineated in the guide, a useful—and creative—Grab and Go kit might include obvious items such as toiletries, changes of clothes, an employee's medications as appropriate, water, and non-perishable foil-wrapped food such as snack bars, plus such items as lightweight paper masks to provide added protection from dust that may be generated in an explosion, light/glow sticks—especially in the absence of a flashlight—to carry in case one has to walk in the dark, and a metal whistle that can be blown to attract attention if the employee is trapped and unable to move.

"Those are examples of some items that employees might never have thought about for use in an emergency—so this is the time to think about it," O'Connor advised.

Another section in the guide deals with suspicious packages and letters received in a USDA office. "We hasten to underscore that nobody except trained bomb disposal personnel should attempt to examine or move a suspicious package or suspected bomb," Redington emphasized. "Nonetheless, the guide lists some possible characteristics of suspicious packages or letters."

They include excessive postage, handwritten or poorly typed addresses, no return address, a city or state in the postmark that doesn't match the return address, incorrect titles, a title without a name, misspellings of common words, markings such as "Personal" or "Confidential" in a package sent to a USDA office instead of to a home, a lopsided or an uneven envelope, excessive weight, and oily stains or odors.

Yet another section in the guide provides guidance on what a USDA employee should do if he/she receives a bomb threat via telephone. "Keep your wits about you," Redington affirmed, "and try to get answers from the caller to such questions as 'When is the bomb going to explode, or when is the chemical set to release?' 'Where is it now?' 'What does it look like?' 'Did you place it there yourself?' and 'Why?'"

The guide then provides factors to look for in the bomb threat caller's voice, such as whether he/she is calm, laughing, has a lisp, has a voice which is raspy, nasal, soft, loud, or stuttering, and whether there are background noises that might offer clues to the bomb threat caller's whereabouts, such as street noises, music, factory sounds, animal sounds, or the sounds of machinery.

Another USDA website, [www.usda.gov/oo/](http://www.usda.gov/oo/)

[beprepared/fieldtelephones.htm](http://www.usda.gov/oo/beprepared/fieldtelephones.htm), provides emergency field telephone numbers to three different "Megacenters" around the country for use by USDA employees, depending on their field office location.

Redington is also responsible for oversight of USDA's Operations Center, located in the Department's South Building in Washington, DC. It was recently revamped, and now provides the capability to alert USDA field locations about natural or human-caused disasters in their vicinity, as appropriate. In turn, it also serves as a site for field offices to contact for guidance related to those disasters. "It's staffed 24/7," he emphasized, "and the toll-free number to reach it is 1-877-677-2369, or TTY 1-800-877-8339."

The Operations Center also provides support to the Department's Continuity of Operations (COOP) staff. That staff oversees the activation of USDA's COOP Plan. This is a form of contingency planning designed to ensure that USDA's essential functions are not disrupted and are continued—even from an emergency alternate location—in the event of localized acts of nature, accidents, and technological and/or attack-related emergencies. The December 1999 issue of the **USDA News** carried a story about USDA's COOP Plan.

Now, about that Boy Scout "Be Prepared" motto noted earlier: Redington said USDA's "Be Prepared" website includes this sentence: "The phrase 'Be Prepared' is used with the kind permission of the Boy Scouts of America."

"Hey, I used to be a Boy Scout—and I want to make sure we give original credit where original credit is due," he quipped. ■

# Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

*In addition to celebrating National Agriculture Day in March and Earth Day in April, Secretary Ann M. Veneman also celebrated the 30th anniversary of the Women, Infants, and Children Program, met with Iraqis dedicated to improving their agriculture sector, and, along with Chief Information Officer Scott Charbo, officially launched the new Web-based "Customer Statement" for agricultural producers.*

**Iraqi Delegation:** During the one-year anniversary week of the beginning of the end of Saddam Hussein's regime, a six-member Democracy Delegation from Iraq met with Secretary Veneman to discuss the state of that nation's agriculture and to thank America for liberating Iraq.

"Iraq is really the birthplace of much of modern agriculture," Veneman said, in introducing the delegation to the press. "It is the home of the Tigris and the Euphrates Rivers, and what we learned [from the delegation] is what happened in so many of these regions—how Saddam Hussein cut off water supplies, destroyed irrigation systems, brought in animals that ate the productive crops," she said.

In remarks delivered through a translator, leader of the delegation Sayyed Qizwini acknowledged the former regime put seeds in canals to block water from reaching the farmers. Hussein took the first portion of production for "special animals" and if this was not turned over, the farmer was put in jail.

"He gave us flour mixed with sand, and children were quite hungry. Children would walk to school barefooted. That was Saddam Hussein," he said. During this period technology completely bypassed the farmers of Iraq. Qizwini said, until the invasion "we had no idea what a computer

was like, I had no idea that people could sell [crops] at the world market price." Qizwini also related that Saddam Hussein "before my own eyes killed my father and brother. This is Saddam Hussein and this is how we lived with him. So let's be objective. And let's be brave and let us say to the USA, God bless you America, and God bless your president and your people who made such a sacrifice for the sake of humanity."

Veneman also pointed out that Saddam Hussein not only killed over one million people, "he killed over one million plants and trees, and that is the agriculture that needs to be rebuilt. The momentum that's building a free and democratic Iraq is being reflected in the Middle East and beyond, and it's a force of positive change that stands to benefit Iraqis and people all around the world."

**WIC 30th Anniversary:** From a pilot project launched in Pineville, Ky., in 1974, WIC has become a multi-billion dollar program with a proven record for delivering real results. "It always amazes people when I tell them that we run the WIC program and that nearly 47 percent of children born into American families today are born into WIC households," Secretary Veneman said on the occasion of the program's 30th anniversary. The Food and Nutrition Service and 88 agencies at the state, tribal, and territorial levels administer it, with services through 46,000 authorized retailers and 10,000 clinic sites. "WIC has become a program that serves as a model for others in integrating nutrition assistance and nutrition education in a powerful and effective way," she said.

**April 15:** More Americans were able to keep more of their money this year because of the Jobs and Growth Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2003. In a speech to pro-



Secretary Ann M. Veneman (2nd from left) visits with the Iraqi Democracy Delegation at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC, in March. The delegation was led by Sayyed Qizwini (2nd from right), president of the University for Humanitarian Scientific and Religious Studies in Iraq.—PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH

ducers in Rome, Ga., Secretary Veneman said, "As a result of last year's tax cut, a married couple with one child on a rural residence farm with income of \$60,000 would save nearly \$1,200 in taxes in 2004, or 24 percent over prior law. And a married couple with two children on an intermediate-sized farm with \$45,000 in income and a farm machinery purchase of \$50,000 would save about \$4,500 or 100 percent over prior law.

"Thanks to President Bush's tax relief agenda, today more than 105 million people have lower income taxes; more than 23 million small businesses have tax savings to invest in equipment, facilities, and workers; more than 33 million married couples are benefiting from marriage penalty relief; and more than 26 million farmers are benefiting from the doubling of the Child Tax Credit," she said.

## **Rural Public TV Awarded \$14 Million:**

While visiting a local IRS office in Rome, Ga., the Secretary also announced that 18 rural public television stations in 16 states will receive \$14 million to assist in the conversion from analog to digital broadcasting, a requirement of the Federal Communications Commission. Congress recommended that a portion of the distance

learning/telemedicine funds in the current fiscal year support this transition effort. Through the USDA distance learning/telemedicine program, the Bush Administration has invested over \$90 million, since 2001, to enhance access to rural education and health care technology.

**Earth Day:** In recognition of the 35th Annual Earth Day, Secretary Veneman announced \$221.5 million in investments to 44 states for rural water and wastewater loans and grants to assist rural communities' environmental and safe water drinking needs. As many as 122,500 households and businesses are expected to benefit. She also reported that the stewardship efforts of farmers and ranchers have produced a net increase of 131,400 acres of wetlands during 1997-2002, according to the most recent National Resources Inventory (NRI). The NRI said the most increases occurred in the Corn Belt and Delta States where producers have created, maintained, or enhanced wetlands through the Wetlands Reserve Program, the Conservation Reserve Program, and the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program.

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG

# Employees *make these things happen*

## Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services

### Using Creativity To Promote National Nutrition Month

It was “Divine Divas” versus “Extraordinary Gentlemen” in the big Feud; both the winners and the losers received some healthy fruits and veggies; and they all—presumably—are living happily ever after.

But of course we’re talking about the results of the “Nutrition Feud Game Show.” That was one of the more creative activities which USDA employees participated in, as they commemorated National Nutrition Month across the country in March.

According to **Roberto Salazar**, administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service, National Nutrition Month was a good time to spotlight the new employee wellness initiative which the Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services mission area launched one month earlier in February. It’s called “FNCS Employees Eat Smart. Play Hard,” and it’s an effort to promote healthy eating and

active lifestyles consistent with the President’s “HealthierUS Initiative.” The June 2002 issue of the **USDA News** carried a story about “HealthierUS” at the Department.

“The theme for National Nutrition Month—‘Eat Smart. Stay Healthy’—was similar to our mission area’s theme,” said **Alberta Frost**, director of FNS’s Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation. “It helped us to be creative as we provided support, information, and encouragement to motivate our employees to engage in healthy behaviors.”

For instance, at FNCS’s headquarters office in Alexandria, Va., employees participated in a “Nutrition Expo” to commemorate the month. **Ebony Horry**, an FNS staff nutritionist, was the coordinator for the Nutrition Expo. She said that one of the more popular events was the “Nutrition Feud Game Show.”

“We patterned it after the ‘Family Feud’ TV show,” explained **Judy Wilson**, director of FNS’s Nutrition Services Staff. “We had two teams of three persons each, which battled it out as they tried to guess the most popular answers to a series of questions about nutrition and physical activity.” Those teams consisted of three female managers—dubbed the “Divine Divas”—pitted against three male managers—dubbed the “Extraordinary Gentlemen.”

As a sample question, the teams coped with “If you were on a diet, what dessert would you order when eating out?” The “Gentlemen” team was the first to reach 300 points, and won a basket of fruits and veg-

etables. The prize for the “Divas” team was a small bag of fruits and vegetables plus a small salad.

Wilson also pointed out that a “Milk Taste Challenge” was included among the various other Nutrition Expo events which focused on food tasting, physical activity demonstrations, and nutrition exhibits. “Employees were encouraged to see if they could tell the difference between two-percent, one-percent, and fat-free milk,” she explained. “We found that most employees who normally drink higher-fat milk couldn’t ‘taste’ the difference between the three choices. By contrast, those employees who normally drink fat-free milk were more likely to ‘taste’ the difference.”

FNCS invited the Agricultural Marketing Service to host a number of exhibits at the Expo. AMS home economist **Betsy Crosby** said that AMS’s exhibits included several open packages of “Meals Ready to Eat”—the same as those currently used by U.S. military personnel stationed in Iraq and Afghanistan—plus an “egg candling” demonstration.

“We showed how our AMS egg graders look through egg shells without breaking them, as they try to find blood spots, cracks in shells, and other defects,” she explained. “Our graders then make sure those eggs are pulled from the packaging line in the egg processing plant.”

Employees in FNS’s Southwest Region, headquartered in Dallas, used March to kick off its partnership with the Pro Rodeo Cowboys Association in Nacogdoches, Texas to promote good nutrition and an active lifestyle

for children. **Rebecca Lucero**, an executive assistant in that regional office, said nearly 1,000 elementary school students from throughout Nacogdoches County came to Kids’ Day at the Rodeo on March 25.

“They saw cowboy demonstrations and received lessons on nutrition—as they learned about the importance of healthy eating and active living,” she affirmed.

Employees in FNS’s Mountain Plains Region, headquartered in Denver, used National Nutrition Month to talk about good nutrition to audiences at a senior citizens center and a preschool. Regional Nutrition Director **Stella Nash** talked about “What Should I Eat to Remain Healthy?” to a seniors group in Denver. “You could see the light bulbs come on over their heads,” she recounted later, “as they grasped the idea of ‘serving sizes’ versus ‘portion sizes’.”

**Gina O’Brian**, a Special Nutrition Programs nutritionist at the Regional Office, taught two Greeley, Colo., preschool classes about nutrition. In her lesson, children were given a Food Guide Pyramid placemat and various food items in order to show how those foods fit in the Pyramid to make a balanced diet.

“For the top of the Pyramid, the children were each given a chocolate kiss, and the lesson was on ‘moderation,’” O’Brian said. But one young boy handed back his chocolate. “I’ve already had some chocolate today,” he told her. “So you can have mine.”

Lesson learned!  
—**MARCUS BROWNRIGG**



As the sign above indicates, these are the “Divine Divas”—FNS Contract Management Branch Chief **Patsy Palmer**, FNS WIC Program Director **Pat Daniels**, and FNS Nutrition Services Staff Director **Judy Wilson** (L to R)—who are smiling graciously in defeat at the hands of the “Extraordinary Gentlemen” at the “Nutrition Feud Game Show.”—**PHOTO BY JEAN ALTMAN**

## Natural Resources and Environment

### We’re Helping A Unique Fish And Aquaculture Center—At A High School

“We just planted the seed and got the ball rolling,” explained **Lewis Kearney**, the Forest Service’s Rural Community Assistance Program coordinator for the Cherokee National Forest in northeastern Tennessee. He was referring to a state-of-the-art fish and aquaculture enterprise

run by students at a vocational high school in Johnson County, Tenn.

Kearney had earlier collaborated with **Roy Settle**, coordinator of USDA’s Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council based in Johnson City, Tenn., to use a \$7,000 Forest Service Economic Recovery grant to study the feasibility of building a fish-raising facility—

as an expansion of a small hydroponics greenhouse begun at the high school in the 1980s.

“Then it took on a life of its own,” Kearney observed. “It has since bloomed into a million-dollar, high-tech, energy-efficient aquaculture business.”

“This is one of a kind in the country,” he then  
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# Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



**P**aul Gutierrez is the deputy assistant secretary for civil rights.

From January 2003 until his appointment to this position Gutierrez served as the assistant deputy administrator for farm programs in the Farm Service Agency. He was the FSA state executive director for New Mexico, based in Albuquerque, from 2001-03. From 1997-2001 and, earlier, from 1993-95 he was based in Albuquerque as director of governmental affairs for the New Mexico Farm and Livestock Bureau. During that time he also worked from 1996-2001 as a consultant for the Albuquerque-based Farm Credit Services of New Mexico.

Gutierrez served as the assistant vice president of credit for the Albuquerque-based Production Credit Association in New Mexico from 1995-97.

This is a newly created position. ■



**R**on DeHaven is the administrator of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service.

From April 2002 until his selection for this position DeHaven served as APHIS's deputy administrator for veterinary services—the nation's chief veterinary official. He was acting associate administrator for the agency from October 2001 to April 2002. From 1996-2001 he was the deputy administrator for animal care in APHIS.

DeHaven served as the western regional director for animal care in APHIS, based in Sacramento, Calif., from 1989-96. He worked as the assistant veterinarian-in-charge for the agency, based in Jackson, Miss., from 1985-89. He began his career with APHIS as a field veterinary medical officer, based in Lexington, Ky., in 1979.

**Bobby Acord**, the previous administrator of APHIS, retired from this position following nearly 38 years of service with USDA. ■



**K**aren Hulebak is the assistant administrator of the Office of Public Health and Science in the Food Safety and Inspection Service.

From March 1999 until her selection for this position Hulebak served as the senior advisor for scientific affairs in FSIS. She was senior sci-

ence policy advisor and director of the Policy Research Staff in the Commissioner's Office at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration from 1994-99, where her focus included the development and management of the President's Food Safety Initiative.

From 1992-94 Hulebak worked as the senior staff officer for liaison to the White House Federal Coordinating Committee on Science and Technology for the assistant secretary for health at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. She was a senior manager at ENVIRON Corp., a private-sector consulting firm based in Arlington, Va., from 1990-92. From 1985-90 she directed the National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council's program of risk and exposure assessment studies and served as the deputy director of the Board on Environmental Studies and Toxicology.

**Kaye Wachsmuth**, the previous assistant administrator of the Office of Public Health and Science in FSIS, retired from that position following over 32 years of federal service. ■



**G**ail Kimbell is the regional forester of the Forest Service's Northern Region, headquar-

tered in Missoula, Mont.

From May 2002 until her selection for this position Kimbell served as the associate deputy chief for the national forest system in the Forest Service. While headquartered in Pueblo, Colo., from 1999-2002, she was the forest supervisor of the Pike and San Isabel National Forests and the Comanche National Grassland, all in Colorado, as well as the Cimarron National Grassland in Kansas. She served as the forest supervisor of the Bighorn National Forest, based in Sheridan, Wyo., from 1997-99, after having been the forest supervisor of the Tongass National Forest, based in Petersburg, Alaska, from 1991-97.

Kimbell worked as a district ranger in LaGrande, Ore., from 1988-91, after having been a district ranger in Kettle Falls, Wash., from 1985-88. She began her career with FS as a pre-sale forester in Kodiak, Alaska, in 1977, and subsequently worked in Oregon for the agency as a logging engineer and then a district planner. She began her career in the federal government in 1974 as a forester with the Bureau of Land Management in Medford, Ore.

**Brad Powell**, the previous regional forester of FS's Northern Region, is presently based at the *continued on pg. 6...*

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emphasized. "We see it as a model of sustainable energy and educational opportunity."

Kearney noted that the enterprise—jump-started by Forest Service seed money—today consists of four greenhouses, including a geothermally heated and cooled aquacenter. "Here, fish and plants literally feed each other, while students are learning about aquaculture and how to run a farming business," he advised.

He described the facility as a 9,000-square-foot multi-crop center—where the students are raising up to 200,000 fish in raceways that have water garden plants floating on the water, and hydroponic tomatoes, peppers, and cucumbers growing alongside.

"Seedlings grow in racks on rolling tables over the fish tanks, while hanging baskets of ferns overhead are fed by fishwater," he recounted. "Hydroponic lettuce grows directly

over the fish. The lettuce takes up fertilizer from the fishwater, and the fish benefit from oxygen that the plants release back into the water."

Kearney added that the geothermal heating and cooling system—donated by the Tennessee Valley Authority—keeps things humming, while saving energy and dollars.

Settle explained that some 200 pounds of vegetables grown in the center—each week—supply local schools and restaurants. Sales of fish and plants provide dependable income to support the program itself and its teaching assistants.

"USDA is right there at the table, too," he emphasized. "When we cater annual meetings and other events in the area, we work with the school to purchase its produce. That makes good sense—and it supports the program."

Settle noted that the hands-on workers behind this enterprise are the students of FFA—formerly called the Future Farmers of Ameri-

ca—at the high school. "They're the ones," he said, "who raise the fish, clean the tanks, help operate the business, provide tours to visitors, and learn about alternative agriculture, energy efficiency, business operations, public relations, and options for a brighter future."

"In the meantime, USDA's Appalachian Resource Conservation and Development Council provides supplies, training, and workshops."

Settle added the project has helped students gain self-esteem and confidence. "Plus, before," he said, "barely 60 students took ag classes—and now half the school is enrolled, including an equal number of males and females."

"This is a community that was once dependent on Forest Service forest products for income," Kearney observed. "Now it has a more diversified palette of economic options for its youth—and USDA helped to make that a reality."

—MARY CARR

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agency's Mesa Ranger District in Mesa, Ariz., as FS's liaison to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council. Its membership includes FS, the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Western Governors Association, the National Association of Counties, and American Indian Tribal representatives, and its purpose is to coordinate the implementation of the government-wide National Fire Plan. ■



**Ollie Holden** is the regional administrator of the Food and Nutrition Service's Midwest Region, headquartered in Chicago.

From May 2002 until his selection to this position Holden served as deputy regional administrator for FNS's Midwest Region. During that time he was also its acting regional

administrator from September 2002 until his selection. He was director of the Midwest Region's Food Stamp Program from 2000-2002.

Holden served as regional director of the U.S. Treasury Department's Financial Management Service in Chicago from 1990-2000. He worked as director of financial management for FNS's Midwest Region from 1987-90.

**Ted Bell**, the previous regional administrator of FNS's Midwest Region, is now FNS's deputy associate administrator for regional operations at its headquarters office in Alexandria, Va. ■



It may not have the 'rebellious hip' status of the **Fonz's** leather jacket or the personal comfort of **Archie Bunker's** chair. But,

just like those two items, **Vic Powell's** hang glider is also in a Smithsonian museum—and now it graces an even newer 'home' than before.

Powell, USDA's webmaster in the Office of Communications in Washington, DC, is into hang gliding, big-time. In fact, he built his own hang glider, the "Valkyrie," in his basement back in 1975. "I 'hermited' myself in my basement for two weeks to get it done," he recalled.

That hang glider weighed about 48 lbs., had a wing span of nearly 31 feet, and was termed a "flying plank" because it has no tail. "Once I finished it I took it to the sand dunes at Nags Head, North Carolina, strapped myself into its seat, and gave it some good tests by flying it over the dunes," he recounted. "Then for the next year I flew it over the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia."

But newer, more modern hang gliders were being developed that

were even lighter and had 'flexible wings' which could fold up more easily for transporting. "The Valkyrie is a fixed wing hang glider, so its wing only folded in the center—and that made its transportability more difficult," he acknowledged. "It required a trailer for transporting, instead of the flexwing models which can be folded, put in a cloth bag, and placed on top of one's car for transport."

Accordingly, in 1978 Powell donated the Valkyrie to the National Air and Space Museum. "I'd occasionally visit it," he said. But in the early 1980s the Museum's Sport Aviation display was removed and the Valkyrie was put into the Museum's storage facility in Suitland, Md. "Then I lost track of it," he said.

Fast-forward to December 2003 and the opening of the Udvar-Hazy Center, a new, spacious 'satellite' Air and Space Museum on the grounds *continued on pg. 7...*

## PROFILE PLUS *More About: J.B. Penn*



**J.B. Penn** is a son of the South. A native of Lynn, Ark., where his mother and 100-year-old grandmother continue to live independently, the cadence of his speech gives him away. So does his name. When he was born, the fashion for naming children was to give them two first names like **Joe Bob**, or just plain initials like **J.R.** and **J.B.**, a custom that must have caused heartburn among those who give standardized tests.

So how did J.B., initials only, end up as our under secretary for farm and foreign agricultural services? Fittingly, it was economics of a personal nature.

"I originally wanted to be a lawyer, but could only get a scholarship in agriculture. And my Dad, who was a farmer and a livestock trader, said that would probably be a good thing to do and I did. And after I got into agriculture I looked around at all the various fields—and economics was the only one that had any great appeal to me," Penn said.

One of his first jobs was at USDA in the 1970s when he was deputy administrator for economics with the Economics and Statistics Service, essentially managing what is now the Economic Research Service. He was part of a team that produced a then-seminal work called "*The Structure of Agriculture*," which among other things showed that even back then, farm programs were skewed to benefit large farms.

After 20 years in the private sector, J.B. was tapped by Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** to become part of her subcabinet. And here, in his first year, he again played a key role in producing a decisive work that describes agriculture today: "*Food and Agricultural Policy—Taking Stock for the New Century*."

"We've had this focus on farms and policy that assumes every farm is the same. And one of the things we tried to do with '*Food and Agricultural Policy*' was to look at just how diverse agriculture really is and point out that this policy—that we talk about in Farm Bills—is really oriented to only about 25 percent of agriculture. And we've got another 75 percent that is not addressed by this policy. And then that whole 100

percent sits in rural America. And we were trying to make the point that all of this needs to be addressed," he said.

In addition to the book, which remains a blueprint for agricultural policy, Penn said, "We have accomplished so much in three years' time, it's amazing. We got the Farm Bill and got that implemented quickly; we got a supplemental assistance package piled on right after that, we've completed seven new trade agreements since I've been here, and we got the Doha Round on trade launched and back on track again."

Penn credits these accomplishments to Secretary Veneman's policy team and dedicated career professionals. "Secretary Veneman has done a good job of making sure that we operate as a team. She has insisted that we all be present once a week for subcabinet staff. That's been a really good experience.

"And the second group is the career people. I have an extremely high regard for them. Most around here work hard, try to do a good job, are very conscientious—we certainly saw that after the BSE incident when people worked through the Christmas holidays, they worked weekends, they traveled at a moment's notice. People are pretty dedicated," he said.

**Last Book Read:** "*Theodore Rex*," by **Edmund Morris**

**Last Movie Seen:** "The last movie I saw, I can tell you, was on an airplane with the sound off." "*Under The Tuscan Sun*"

**Hobbies:** Reading

**Favorite Weekend Breakfast:** "That's probably brunch somewhere where there is a wide variety of food, you know: smoked fish, shrimp, mimosas..."

**Priorities in the Months Ahead:** "We want to reopen markets that have been closed because of BSE and AI [avian influenza]. That's a top priority. We want to continue the smooth operation of the farm programs and we want to focus on getting stronger sanitary and phytosanitary regulations [international animal and plant health standards] in all the trade agreements because people are now not adhering to sound science. It's very, very disruptive and we have to do something about it."

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

of Dulles International Airport near Chantilly, Va. The new facility was designed to house the Air and Space Museum's growing collection of ever-bigger aircraft and space vehicles—so it had to be big, itself.

And it is. In fact, it is reported that the entire National Air and Space Museum building, located on The Mall in Washington, DC, could fit with ease into one single room of the new structure.

When it is completed, the 760,000-square-foot new structure will house about 200 aircraft and 135 spacecraft in a ten-story glassy hanger on the grounds of Dulles International Airport.

"A few weeks after the new facility opened I went out there for a visit," Powell related. "And as I was strolling through the Sport Aviation Section at the Center I looked up and saw something very familiar. I knew right away it was the Valkyrie, because its orange Dacron cloth wing was a dead giveaway."

Hanging from the ceiling 15 feet above the ground, it is tucked between a pre-World War II-era trainer aircraft on its left and an air condi-

tioning unit on its right.

"So I concluded," he said, "that my 28-year-old vintage hang glider had been resurrected."

But Powell didn't see any identifying plaque for the Valkyrie. So he e-mailed officials at the Museum, providing them with additional history about that particular hang glider in their possession.

"They got back to me," he said, "and explained that there *was* an identifying plaque—but it might not be easily located. They did appreciate the additional information I provided them—because they rarely get a chance to talk with builders of the aircraft they have on display."

And is Powell's name on that elusive plaque?

"Well, I must confess I don't know, because I haven't gotten out there to revisit the Valkyrie since I communicated with the Museum officials," he said.

"But whether or not my name is on the plaque, I know that my TLC is all over the hang glider itself—and that's what counts." ■

—RON HALL



"These pubs—plus the m-pegs, the DVDs, satellite downloading, and the other state-of-the-art access to information here—will definitely help get USDA's message out to the public," affirms OC visual project manager **Arabella Juarez** (left). She and OC printing specialist **Mark Emery** are checking out the Departmental publications on display at USDA's recently renovated Visitor Information Center in Washington, DC. Note additional information on the back cover of this issue.—PHOTO BY KEN HAMMOND

#### Online...continued from pg. 1

She explained that eLearning is a method in which employees can search for training opportunities, register for training courses, and track their progress in completing curricula online—while, at the same time, trainers and managers can track the progress of those efforts online.

"AgLearn is more about managing training and career development rather than just taking 'online training,'" Bezz pointed out.

She said that AgLearn is specifically designed to provide one-stop services for delivering, scheduling, and managing "learning events" nationwide for USDA employees at headquarters and field offices. "Our AgLearn services," she explained, "give employees the ability to search for, and then sign up for, online and classroom training events—and then also maintain their own training records."

Ultimately, she said, AgLearn will allow a USDA employee to make a request for, get the approval of, and then pay for a course all without paper.

**Chris Niedermayer**, associate chief information officer for eGovernment within OCIO, explained that, at present, approximately 7,400 headquarters and field office employees from ten

USDA program agencies and two staff offices are included in the initial phase of AgLearn. In December 2003 individual agencies made the determination about which of its employees would participate in Phase One. Then in March 2004 the training officers for those participating agencies notified their employees that AgLearn is now available to them, and the employees were subsequently provided with AgLearn student IDs and passwords.

"The USDA training officers involved in Phase One have taken on a lot of responsibility in rolling out AgLearn to their employees and communicating and marketing that service within their agencies," Bezz underscored. "They have received training about implementing AgLearn and are the first point of contact about AgLearn for their employees."

USDA employees who are in Phase One will have access to 30 free online courses that are available on a governmentwide basis through the Office of Personnel Management's Government Online Learning Center, also known as "GoLearn." These free courses include general administrative topics, such as communication skills, that are of interest to all federal employees. Also, USDA

agencies can purchase "Business and Information Technology" courses for their employees to access on AgLearn.

The Department's own Office of Homeland Security has developed training courses at different levels for USDA's incident command system, which are now available on AgLearn as well as on GoLearn. According to **Greg Power**, the emergency response training coordinator for the Department's Office of Homeland Security, by this autumn additional related courses will have been developed and made available on AgLearn.

An online course on cyber security awareness is also to be tested soon and made available for USDA employees through AgLearn.

"More USDA employees are to be added to AgLearn in increments throughout this spring and summer," Bezz pointed out. "And in the future we'll have courses which help USDA employees in their career planning."

"AgLearn," affirmed Niedermayer, "is expected to be made available—to all USDA employees around the country and around the world who have Internet access—by October 1 of this year." ■

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DC visual information specialist **Earthaline Harried** listens on a phoneset to the narration accompanying the images, on a screen, depicting one of USDA's many programs and services. The setting: USDA's recently renovated Visitor Information Center, located in the Whitten Building at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. Harried maneuvered her three-wheel scooter through the handicap-accessible entrance which was installed as part of that renovation. According to **Pam Scalco**, director of executive services in the Office of Operations, the renovated Visitor Information Center is designed to be a technical information staging area—so USDA program agencies can schedule it for various outreach activities to the general public. Additional uses include relying on its high-tech, state-of-the-art access to information, such as satellite downloading, webcasting, DVDs, m-pegs, and videos. To all USDA employees and the general public: When in Washington, DC, stop by the Center for a visit, anytime from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. weekdays.—**PHOTO BY KEN HAMMOND**



**HELP US FIND  
Irvin Vasquez**

Missing: 3-15-2003 From: Framingham, MA  
D.O.B. 10-28-1987 Sex: Male  
Hair: Brown Eyes: Brown  
Height: 5 ft. 8 in. Weight: 160 lbs.

*If you have information, please call*  
**1-800-843-5678**

NATIONAL CENTER FOR MISSING AND EXPLOITED CHILDREN

## USDA-Sponsored Calendar Highlights

■ **May 3-9**

*Public Service Recognition Week*

USDA headquarters and field offices  
(202) 690-4750 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

■ **Month of May**

*Asian Pacific American Heritage Month*

USDA headquarters and field offices  
(202) 720-7314 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY)

■ **June 23-26**

*2004 Ag in the Classroom*

*National Conference*

Albuquerque, N.M.  
(202) 720-7925 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

■ **June 25**

*USDA Honor Awards Ceremony*

Washington, DC  
(202) 690-0266 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

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