



# GIPSA News

A newsletter for the employees of the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration

January 2006

## 2005 Administrator's Awards

*Jim Link, Washington, DC*

I am delighted to announce the recipients of the Administrator's Awards for 2005. This year's award recipients were recognized for their commitment to producing the highest quality work, their dedication as public servants, and their noteworthy contributions as leaders and team members. Each made significant contributions to bettering the agency and to furthering the mission of GIPSA. The 2005 Administrator's Awards recipients are:

### DISTINGUISHED INDIVIDUAL

**Vernett Knight** — for his role in facilitating and assisting efforts to re-establish grain trade with Iraq.

### SUPERIOR INDIVIDUALS

**Sandra Metheny** – for showing extraordinary dedication and effort in performance of her duties testing scales under contract with the Norfolk Southern Railroad.

**Byron School** – for contributions to excellent service delivery in the grain program.

**Carol Carter** – for her outstanding efforts, professionalism, leadership, efficiencies, and overall contributions in supporting, accomplishing, and advancing the mission of the Agency.

**Joanne Nielsen** – for making significant contributions above and beyond her normal job responsibilities.

### DISTINGUISHED GROUP

**Active Directory and Outlook E-Mail – Gerald Bromley, David Will, Morris Johnson, William Kelly, Irene Omade, and Dennis Thalacker**— for developing a workable design and identifying a cost effective contractor, thereby saving the agency up to \$800,000.

### EEO/CIVIL RIGHTS

**Ellie Speelman and Mai Ho** – for enthusiastically expanding GIPSA's and USDA's awareness of the culture and contributions of the nation's 13.5 million Asian Pacific Americans as collateral-duty Special Emphasis Program Managers.

### SAFETY AND HEALTH

**Mavis Rogers** – for consistently performing safety and health duties well above the expected level for her position and constantly seeking to improve the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of the Agency's health, security, and environmental programs.

### NON-GIPSA SUPPORT

**Sue Desourza** – chief inspector and office manager, California-Agri Inspection Company, Sacramento, California, for her instrumental role in transitioning to California-Agri as an official service provider in the State of California in June 2005.

My thanks to all who participated in this year's program, and congratulations to these distinguished recipients for their exemplary performance!

# Names in the News

## PERSONNEL

**Diane Blunt** becomes the new secretary for the Compliance Division on January 8, 2006. She replaces Jeri Fisher, who retired on December 31, 2005.

**Kia Green**, Compliance Division, will leave GIPSA on January 8 to accept a new position with the United States Coast Guard.

**Becca Riese** is the newest member of the Market Analysis and Standards Branch, Field Management Division. Becca worked as a summer intern with the Policy and Procedures Branch during 2005. Since then, she received her Bachelor of Science in Agribusiness from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

**JoAnn Waterfield**, deputy administrator, P&SP, resigned her position effective December 24, to pursue other career opportunities.

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## RETIREMENTS

**Donnell Keith**, agricultural commodity grader, Portland, retired January 3, 2006, after nearly 31 years of government service, 28 years with FGIS. Donnell's career has had many colorful twists and turns. After 2 years as an Army Medic, **Donnell** finished his Bachelor of Arts degree at San Francisco State in 1966. He entered the Masters program and was accepted on a foreign study program for a year of study in Israel. After surviving a number of harrowing incidents in that troubled land, he returned to San Francisco State and completed the Master of Arts degree in 1970. After teaching English a few years, he took a job with the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands as an educator preparing the Micronesians for self-government. With that socially transforming work accomplished for the Micronesian people in 1977, **Donnell** joined FGIS in the Houston, TX, field office. After 3 years, with his Grain Grading Proficiency Exam behind him, he transferred to the Portland, OR, field office, just 50 miles from his hometown of Salem. The 25 years of service in the Portland Field Office provided many challenges and opportunities, which he eagerly accepted with typical dedication to duty. He feels that many of the highlights of his tenure as a USDA employee has come from the services he was able to perform on temporary assignments to other agencies and departments. Donnell assisted the Compliance Review Teams on a number of occasions and has seen much of the country as a result.

He also has seen temporary assignments with APHIS on the Foot and Mouth Disease, Citrus Canker, Karnal Bunt, and Newcastles Disease, emergency response programs, and has gained many service awards and memories as a result. When asked why he would give up a good job like this while the big money is still rolling in, he responded: "Because life has a way of cooking up decision points whether you like the menu or not. In some cases burning a bridge is the right thing to do, if you are on the favorable side of the stream of time. The trade-off between money and time has moved in favor of time. Spending time now in favor of money doesn't seem to be as wise as it once seemed, therefore I've concluded it is time for me to move on in faith to new discoveries, new directions, and new agendas. I've thanked God everyday for the privileges and blessings of working for the USDA and for the exceptionally talented and decent people I've worked for and with. I wish them, and the Agency, continued success." GIPSA has not lost a good employee, it has gained another great retiree!

**William Malie**, shift supervisor, retired from the New Orleans Field Office on December 2, with 36 years of government service. **Bill** and his wife **Rachel** moved to Gulfport, Mississippi.

**Philip Sapienza**, agricultural commodity technician, New Orleans, retired on November 30, with 22 years of service.

*Continued, see Names  
on page 3.*

## LEAVE DONATIONS

**Inez Mosley** has been accepted into the Leave Transfer Program. **Inez** underwent surgery and is undergoing therapy. Due to the extended recovery time, all of her leave has been exhausted. If you would like to donate leave to **Inez**, please complete Form AD-1043 (attached) and send to the Leave and Compensation Team, 100 N. 6th Street Butler Square, 5th Floor, Minneapolis, MN 55403 (612) 336-3305.

## AWARDS

**Pat Donohue-Galvin**, Executive Resources Staff, Washington, DC, received a certificate of merit for her leadership in improving the financial management of GIPSA and the Agency's relationship with APHIS.

**Gary Erskine**, League City; **Jim Brown**, New Orleans; and **Robb Hermanson**, Superior/Duluth received time off awards for their special initiative and for making high-quality contributions to the mission of GIPSA in the ongoing export cargo sampling project (ECSP). **Mary Hougan**, Washington State, received a certificate of appreciation for her work on ECSP. All four of these individuals have worked on ECSP for many years.

**Sabri Gerguis** received a certificate of merit for his outstanding work and contributions to the Agency's international outreach activities.

**John Giler**, Field Management Division, Washington, DC, received a certificate of merit for his contribu-

tions to the reauthorization hearings, the PART assessment of the grain program, and development of new user fees for the supervision of official agencies.

**Deirdre Holder**, Policy and Litigation Division, Washington, DC, received a certificate of merit during her detail to serve as assistant to the acting administrator.

**Julia Nelis**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC, received a certificate of merit for outstanding administrative support of the deputy administrator, FGIS, while he assumed additional responsibility as acting administrator.

**Tieu Pham**, League City, received a time-off award for support given during Hurricane Rita.

**John Pitchford**, Office of International Affairs, Washington, DC, received a certificate of merit for his range of work on international trade issues, including those related to StarLink, Bt10 corn, the Biosafety Protocol, Mexico and Asia quality complaints, and the reopening of the U.S. export wheat market in Iraq.

**Orval Schleiermacher**, League City, received a cash award for his suggestion regarding disposal of glass cuvettes.

**John Shropshire**, **Kerry Petit**, **Josh Watson**, and **Glenda Lasseigne**, New Orleans, received certificates of merit for the immediate recovery of the export grain market along the Mississippi River and across the New Orleans Field Office Circuit after Hurricane Katrina.

**Ellie Speelman**, Washington, DC, received a Certificate of Merit award for her outstanding work and contributions to the Agency's international

outreach activities.

**Dana Stewart**, Office of the Deputy Administrator, Washington, DC, received a certificate of merit for her leadership of the grain program's PART process, the reauthorization of the U.S. Grain Standards Act, and development of the Agency's strategic plan.

**James Woodman**, League City, received a spot award for his support during Hurricane Rita.

## John Shropshire Retires

New Orleans Field Office manager **John Shropshire** retired on January 3, 2006, with 31 years of service.

**John** started his career with the Agricultural Marketing Service Grain Division in New Orleans, Louisiana, as an agricultural commodity grader, GS-05, in 1974. He transferred to the Lucher field office and was promoted to GS-11 shift supervisor in 1977. He worked primarily in the Port Allen suboffice until he transferred to the Destrehan field office as assistant field office manager on November 19, 1978. **John** became the field office manager in 1987.

**John** is a graduate of Southern University in 1973 with a BS in Vocational Agricultural Education.

**John** and his wife **Perlae** have two sons, **John** and **Derick**. His hobbies include music, fishing, hunting and refurbishing antique cars. He and his family plan to move back to his hometown of Clinton, Louisiana.

# Mack Manis Has Retired!

**Mack Manis**, GIPSA Safety Manager, retired at the end of 2005. **Mack** had been with the Agency for 34 years.

**Mack** began his career with Agricultural Marketing Service's Grain Division in Beaumont, Texas, as an agricultural commodity aid in 1971. Two years later, he was reassigned to the Mobile, Alabama, field office where he became an agricultural commodity grader. In 1975, he joined the Washington, DC, headquarters staff as a grain export policy specialist. He accepted a position in the Standards and Procedures Branch in 1989. There he reviewed and developed standards for rice and pulses. He also developed policies and procedures for sampling and inspecting commodities and grains.

In recent years **Mack**, with **Bob Crook** of the Cedar Rapids Satellite Office, spearheaded FGIS' customer outreach program. Their exceptional leadership and dedicated commitment to the program earned them the Secretary's Honor Award in 1998 and a Hammer Award in 1999. **Mack** was involved in GIPSA'S Y2K preparations. He managed both the Agency's business continuity and contingency planning activities and GIPSA's outreach efforts to customers and partners. He also worked closely with the Civil Rights Staff and the P&S Programs on several initiatives.

In 2000, **Mack** was selected safety and health manager. After September 11, 2001, **Mack** was named the GIPSA point person dealing with homeland security, bio-security, emergency preparedness, and continuity of action plans. To better prepare GIPSA offices for the natural and man-made disasters, **Mack** worked with Departmental and Agency representatives to develop the GIPSA Emergency Preparedness and Response Guide. The Guide provides GIPSA offices with the basic information they need to prepare for disasters and respond to a wide range of emergencies, including terrorist threats. He also worked with the Department's Office of Crisis Planning and Management (OCPM) on refining the Department and the Agency Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) and in supporting/staffing the Department Crisis Action Team (CAT).

In 2002, **Mack** was named the Branch Chief of the Safety and Issuance Management Branch.

**Mack** was an excellent employee who takes pride in his work. The men and women of GIPSA and the public we served have significantly benefited from his outstanding abilities and unselfish devotion to public service.

**Mack** and his wife **Brenda** are the parents of three children – **Christopher**, **Lindsay**, and **Mackenzie**.

We wish **Mack** and his family all the best for the future.

# Compliance Division Changes

*John Sharpe, Washington, DC*

The Compliance Division (CP) is making some personnel changes due to impending retirements. These changes will enable CP to implement a succession plan to ensure future leaders are well-prepared to function with a vision for the Agency's future and a foundation based on the Agency's past.

**Tom Hearon** has been reassigned from the Regulatory Branch chief position to the Safety and Issuance Management Branch chief to fill the vacancy created by **Mack Manis'** retirement. CP will announce to fill the vacated Regulatory Branch chief position. **Tom** will be acting Regulatory Branch chief until that position is filled.

**Jan Hart** has been reassigned from the Review Branch chief to deputy division director to work on implementing a plan to conduct program wide reviews. CP will announce to fill the Review Branch chief position. **Jan** will be acting Review Branch Chief until the position is filled.

These reassignments will allow the existing branch chiefs to share their accumulated knowledge with their successors before they reach retirement eligibility. Whether our new leaders are longtime employees or come from outside the organization, it is important to them, the remaining employees, and the agency that these new leaders have the opportunity to gain the insights that only their predecessors have.

# Martin Luther King Holiday

*Valerie G. Collins, SEPM,  
Technical Center*

On January 16, 2006, this Martin Luther King Holiday Observance will mark the 77<sup>th</sup> birthday of Dr. King, and the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the national holiday in Dr. King's honor. Dr. King's birthday is observed in more than 100 countries around the world.

This year's theme "In the Spirit of Unity and Service Remember! Celebrate! Act!" reiterates the importance of remembering Dr. King's work and legacy. The theme promotes his birthday as a national holiday, his teachings, and his principals of non-violence and human rights. It serves as a reminder that the holiday is a day "on" for community service initiatives and programs that promote interracial cooperation, not just a day off from work or school.

Dr. King said life's most persistent and nagging question is "What are we doing for others?" On February 4, 1968, in the pulpit of Ebenezer Baptist Church, when talking about the end of his life he said: "I'd like somebody to mention on that day Martin Luther King, Jr. tried to give his life serving others, I want you to say on that day that I did try in my life... to love and serve humanity." Commemorate this holiday by making your personal commitment to serve humanity, promote his teachings and carry forward his legacy. The King holiday honors the life and contributions of a great American champion of racial justice and equality. On this day, we commemorate Dr. King's great dream of a vibrant multiracial nation united in justice, peace and reconciliation; a nation that looked on as Hurricane Katrina changed lives forever, become once again "one Nation" working to rebuild New Orleans, Mississippi, and Texas together. Let us keep the dream alive and working as we celebrate January 16, 2006, as a day of working together and not just a day off. Dr. King once said that we all have to decide whether we will walk in the light of creative altruism or the darkness of destructive selfishness.

# Make Your Voice Heard: Organizational Assessment Survey

*Jim Link, Washington, DC*

From late January through early February, you will have the opportunity to complete a survey asking for your participation in GIPSA's Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS). The results of the survey will be used to help make decisions about work environment improvements at GIPSA and enhance our organizational effectiveness.

The OAS will provide us with valuable information about our strengths as well as areas that need improvement. The results will capture the perceptions of employees in a variety of areas. In addition, the demographic information which you are asked to complete as part of the survey (e.g., gender, occupation, grade, and ethnicity) will allow us to determine if different groups of employees have differing views or concerns.

The survey is completely anonymous. First, no names will be requested on the survey answer sheets. Second, GIPSA has contracted with the Office of Personnel Management as an independent contractor to receive and tabulate the survey sheets. No one except the contractor will ever see the survey answer sheet. Finally, no survey results will be reported in groups where less than 10 individuals have responded. If there are fewer than 10 respondents, the group may be bundled with another group of respondents to ensure confidentiality.

As previously mentioned, the survey is voluntary, but we need a high level of agency participation to get a clear picture of our climate. Our goal is to have all employees take the survey. In order to increase participation, you will be given time during your work day to complete the survey.

I strongly urge you to complete the survey when notified. Your opinions will be taken very seriously and this is a great opportunity for you to help shape the evolution of the work-environment at GIPSA. We can only address your concerns if we know about them. Upon completion of the survey, you will have access to a report (either via e-mail or hardcopy from your office), which summarizes the results.

## **Help is within reach.**

For confidential assistance,  
call your Employee  
Assistance Program

Washington, DC personnel, call...  
301-570-3900  
or 1-800-222-0364

Field personnel, call...  
1-800-222-0364

# Working for FEMA

*Larry McDonald, Technical Center*

I was selected to report to FEMA for temporary duty in their disaster recovery program. This turned out as one of the most worthwhile and enjoyable work endeavors of my career.

To begin, I reported to FEMA's Florida Long-Term Recovery (FLTR) intake facility in Orlando on November 7. I didn't know what to expect. The intake facility is used for registration, badge issuance, orientation, training, and deployment. They also administer injections if needed. The facility is not nearly as nice as any of FGIS' training facilities. The FLTR center has had as many as 1,000 disaster assistance employees report there in 1 day.

In hindsight, I thought the intake program was well structured, but not well executed. I noticed a lot of program uncertainty, glitches, and a prevailing "crisis" atmosphere that leaders referred to as requiring us to be "FEMA Flexible."

At the end of the FLTR intake program, we had a large meeting to decide who went where in the disaster recovery process. There was plenty of work as the center was deploying people to Katrina, Rita, and Wilma duty and a new disaster – the tornadoes in Indiana. My intake group was offered options in recovery centers in Miami and areas north of Miami and in Naples, Florida. I was one of the last to request my preference and selected and received Naples duty.

Disaster assistance employees come from other federal agencies (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, Small Business Ad-

ministration, Social Security, air-traffic control, and USDA Soil Conservation Service to name a few) AND from a dedicated corps of people from all over the United States that volunteer as on-call disaster assistance employees.

I left Orlando not well prepared and quite nervous about the work ahead of me. I was assigned a partner – an on-call employee from California. Lucky for me, she had worked hurricane Rita and was a great mentor on how things work in the field.

We reported to a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) in Naples with four others. Our center was initially quite slow, but soon picked up to about 70 customers a day. To help with the response, we performed Community Relations (CR) work outside the DRC for several days. CR can entail visiting local government officials (police, fire department, mayors, etc.) to find what is needed to get/keep the city running. Most of this is accomplished in the first few days following a disaster. CR also includes going door to door in disaster affected neighborhoods to determine potential needs. This continues well beyond the days immediately following a disaster.

My assignment in the DRC was to provide Individual Assistance (IA). IAs meet with customers and register them and/or do queries for them in FEMA's database and route them to other assistance programs. I certainly don't claim any fame as an IT guru, but I think FEMA's IT process for registering customers is fantastic. It is easy to learn and had built-in fea-

tures such as preventing us from entering invalid addresses. There were also scripts available to use in interviewing customers to be sure all options are covered and that we are consistent in our interviews. Our laptops were always logged into FEMA's database and we had more than one remote site to log in through. For example, we were originally logging in through the Maryland site, but something happened that kept us from logging on to that site. In our log-in screens, we had options to use other sites and found the Puerto Rico site worked best for us and not a minute was lost.

The DRCs have FEMA workers (as described above) and employees from the Small Business Administration, State unemployment agencies, and social workers. Some of these workers also serve as interpreters for Spanish and Creole speaking customers.

I registered people with family roots in many different states and Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Haiti, Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia, Cuba, and Nigeria. My fellow IA workers were calm, caring, and committed to serving the customers in need of FEMA services – useful attributes in our work situation. The synergy of my workgroup was fantastic. It might be that a disaster brings out the best in us – but I am not sure of that. I think I/we were lucky.

*Continued, see **FEMA**  
on page 9.*

## Note of Appreciation

In November, several FGIS folks were instrumental in providing a Lentil Grading Program to an Algerian trade team. Below are the thanks that **Mike Eustrom**, Technical Services Division; and **Carmon Lindblad** and **Ed Stallman**, Grand Forks, received from a grateful Northern Crops Institute, North Dakota State University.

### To Mike Eustrom:

I would like to thank you and your colleagues for all the preparation that went into the Algerian Lentil Grading program. The materials that were made available to the team were excellent. I know the Algerians really appreciated it being in French! Ed Stallman and Carmon Lindblad from the Grand Forks office did an outstanding job. The discussions and hands-on-grading went very well. I know the Algerian team now has a better understanding of how the U.S. identifies lentil quality.

Hopefully this program will lay the groundwork for additional Algerian teams and potential sales of U.S. lentils. The Northern Crops Institute really appreciates FGIS staff. The cooperation over the years has been excellent. The willingness to participate in our programs really helps the NCI to foster market development efforts to maintain and expand markets for U.S. crops.

John A. Crabtree, Assistant Director  
Northern Crops Institute  
North Dakota State University

### And to Carmon and Ed:

Thank you for all your efforts in last week's program for the Algerians. The team really enjoyed the informal discussions and the "hands-on" grading.

As you know most lentils going into Algeria come from Canada. Hopefully this will lay the groundwork for potential sales of U.S. lentils. We really appreciate you for your willingness and expertise to help foster this market development effort. Your cooperation is so important to maintaining and expanding markets for U.S. northern-grown crops.

Patricia T. Berglund, Ph.D.  
Director

Northern Crops Institute

John Crabtree  
Assistant Director

## Training Opportunity: New Leader Program

The New Leader Program (NLP) is part of the Center for Leadership and Management of the Graduate School, USDA. The New Leader Program is for full-time permanent Federal employees at the GS-7-11 levels. The NLP is an intensive 6-month developmental program designed to develop more effective leaders through a series of developmental experiences. The program requires 3 separate weeks of residential classroom training reinforced by a 30-day developmental work experience and independent study.

### Nominating Procedures:

Participants will be selected through a competitive process. To apply, submit:

1. The completed, printed application form which is available online on the New Leader Program page of the Graduate School's Leadership Development Programs website: [nlp@grad.usda.gov](mailto:nlp@grad.usda.gov)
2. A Federal resume that gives your home address and is signed and dated. Include an objective summary, experience, accomplishments, education, and awards in the resume. (A Federal Resume must include all components specific to a Federal Resume format.)
3. A written statement explaining your achievement goals for participation in the NLP-how this program fits with your career goals.

*Continued, see NLP on page 9.*

# Designation News

Virginia Roseberry, Washington, DC

**Designation Renewals.** GIPSA is granting designations to four official agencies to provide official grain inspection and weighing services at domestic locations. The four designation renewals are being granted for full 3-year periods under the U.S. Grain Standards Act to the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries; Kankakee Grain Inspection, Inc.; Springfield Grain Inspection, Inc.; and Washington Department of Agriculture.

**Alabama.** **Ron Sparks** is the Commissioner of Agriculture, **Ronnie Murphy** is the Assistant Commissioner of Agriculture, and **Darrell Buxton** the Director of the Shipping Point Inspection Division. **Ricky Childree**, Chief Inspector, furnishes the day-to-day management. Alabama provides service Statewide from two specified service points (SSP), Decatur, and Mobile. Alabama also provides commodity services under an Agricultural Marketing Act (AMA) agreement.

**Kankakee.** President and official agency manager **Mike Fegan** and son-in-law and Licensed Inspector **Brian Lowey**, manage Kankakee out of their headquarters specified service point (SSP) in Essex, Illinois. In addition to Essex, Kankakee operates a second full-time SSP in Tiskilwa, Illinois, and seven applicant specific SSPs. Kankakee's volume has tripled last year due to container inspections.

**Springfield.** President and official agency manager **Glen Wallace** and operations manager **Carol Jirousek** manage Springfield from

their headquarters SSP in Springfield, Illinois, and two applicant specific SSPs.

**Washington.** **Valoria Loveland** is the Director of Agriculture, **Bill Brookreson** is the Deputy Director, **Bob Gore** is the Assistant Director, and **Randy Deike** is the Grain Inspection Program Manager. Washington provides service Statewide at 9 SSPs, including Colfax, Kalama (2 SSP's), Pasco, Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, Tumwater, and Vancouver, and 4 applicant-specific SSPs. Washington also provides commodity services under an AMA agreement.

**California Official Agency Designations.** The California Department of Food and Agriculture requested voluntary cancellation of their various agreements with GIPSA to provide grain and commodity services within the State of California.

GIPSA began providing the export grain inspection and weighing services, and designated two private agencies to provide the domestic services, effective in May and June, 2005. GIPSA designated Farwell Commodity and Grain Inspection Services, Inc., (Farwell Southwest) an existing official agency, to provide domestic services in the Southern part of the State. GIPSA designated California Agri Inspection Company, Ltd., (Cal Agri) a new official agency, which is a division of Overseas Merchandise Inspection Company (OMIC), to serve the Northern part of the State. Both agencies also entered into a cooperative agreement

with GIPSA to provide rice and graded commodity services in their respective areas.

On November 10, 2005, **Vic Anand**, Cal Agri President and Official Agency Manager, was presented with designation documents and a designation plaque at Cal Agri's facility in West Sacramento by **Mike Johnson**, California Duty Point Manager. Representatives of various rice and grain industry groups also attended. **Mr. Anand** took this opportunity to thank the industry and the USDA for their support in the designation process.

Farwell Southwest was designated in the southern portion of the state of California. **Mike Johnson** presented designation documents and a plaque to Farwell Southwest President and Official Agency Manager, **Danny Prince**.

*GIPSA News* is the employee newsletter of the USDA Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration. Send your news, ideas, suggestions, comments, questions, or thoughts for the next issue to:

**Dana Stewart**

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-3614  
Phone (202) 720-5091  
FAX (202) 690-2333  
dana.b.stewart@usda.gov

**by January 25, 2006!**

## **FEMA** from page 6.

The main thing I noticed is that the six of us were always watching the DRC to make sure no customer was ever left wandering or wondering. We worked 12-hour days, 7 days a week.

I was somewhat interested in FEMA's quality control process for the DRCs. Within a few days of opening, a two-person compliance team showed up at 7:08 a.m. to check on us. They were knowledgeable in FEMA programs and showed us ways of speeding up our work and answered questions we had. One gave me her cell number because she couldn't answer a problem I had. She continued to call me for 3 days until I had the situation corrected. That was great customer service. We eventually received word back that our DRC received an excellent review.

Also, FEMA has a "secret customer" program. FEMA has employees that pretend to be customers and visit DRCs to evaluate them for customer service. This provides further incentive to treat customers fairly and equitably and with dignity and respect.

My FEMA duty was an exciting and rewarding challenge and a fun way to close out my career. As a result of this experience, I am reconsidering some of my post-retirement plans. Naples is beautiful and the weather nearly perfect. But coworkers who had worked other disasters told me they had slept in tents or bunched up in hotel rooms, 2-hour commutes, and had otherwise very rugged working conditions because of scarce resources.

I recommend this duty to anyone who enjoys direct work with customers. The most important observation I'll make is to never confuse some of the press that FEMA gets with the commitment and sense of service and responsibility that the front line workers have towards those affected by disasters – the American public. I am proud of the service that my DRC provided.

## **NLP** from page 7.

4. A written statement from your first-line supervisor assessing your leadership potential and your motivation to complete all requirements and fully participate in all components of the NLP.

5. The Mobility Clause form and Continued Service Agreement, which are available from the GIPSA Training Office.

6. An approval signature from your manager.

Submit the complete application package by **February 28, 2006**, to Mary McCoy, USDA GIPSA, Training Staff, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Room 2056-S, Washington, DC 20250-3649, and verify its receipt. For additional information, contact Mary McCoy at (202) 720-1734 or check the above website.

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## **P&SP National Training Conference**

*Deborah Shipman, Washington, D.C.*

P&SP held its first National Training Conference this century, October 31 through November 4, 2005, at the Millennium Maxwell House Hotel in Nashville, Tennessee. The theme was "Catch the Vision."

Approximately 150 P&SP employees attended the conference. One of the highlights was motivational speaker, Mark Towers, Five Star Speakers and Trainers. Mr. Towers spoke on "Managing Change with Unchanging Values."

There also were many informative training sessions. Session I included discussions on P&SP's Future Mission/Strategic Plan, the Government Performance Results Act, GIPSA Application Modernization, Program Assessment Rating Tool, and the Program Policy. The vision statement: "Protecting the integrity of livestock, meat, and poultry markets for the benefit of American Agriculture" was emphasized during each session. Employees were asked to focus on

GIPSA's three main objectives (Educate, Regulate, and Investigate) when performing their duties. GIPSA's Civil Rights Staff also provided training on the informal EEO complaint process.

The National Training Conference will always be remembered as a great success. It enabled employees to obtain first hand knowledge about P&SP's future goals and objectives to educate, regulate, and investigate the livestock, meat, and poultry industries.

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