



GIPSA News

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

May 2008

From the Administrator's Desk

Jim Link, Washington, DC

As most of you know, I have a very "country" background. I was raised in an area of the country that had few and simple rules. Upon my arrival in DC, a friend of mine sent me a book entitled Cowboy Ethics, What Wall Street Can Learn from the Code of the West by James P. Owen. Mr. Owen directed his book toward people who work on Wall Street because he spent a great deal of his professional life as a stockbroker and investor and felt that the Wall Street community needed to be reminded of some fundamental values.

My friend, a cowboy from South Texas, was afraid that I would get caught up in what some of us refer to as the "fast lane" and he wanted to remind me to keep to my roots and not forget how I was raised. As I have adjusted to the working environment in DC, I have kept a list of the 10 rules from Mr. Owen's book that he feels are critical to being successful and credible. His rules are very close to the ones that I was brought up with and are the ones that I try to live by. I thought that it might be appropriate to share these with all of you. They are simple and straightforward.

1. Live each day with courage.
2. Take pride in your work.
3. Always finish what you start.
4. Do what has to be done.
5. Be tough, but fair.
6. When you make a promise, keep it.
7. Ride for the brand.
8. Talk less and say more.
9. Remember that some things aren't for sale.
10. Know where to draw the line.

As you can see these rules are not complex or difficult to understand. In my opinion, we would have fewer problems in this old world if everyone would follow these rules and stick to the basics.

Asian American/ Pacific Islander Heritage Month



May 2008

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Names in the News

PERSONNEL

Khristan Kaufman, senior auditor, has joined the Midwestern Regional Office (MRO). **Khristan** earned her Bachelor of Science Degree in Accounting from Northwest Missouri State University, and her Masters of Business Administration, with an emphasis in Management and Finance, from Rockhurst University. Prior to joining GIPSA, **Khristan** worked for the Social Security Administration's Office of the Inspector General in Kansas City for approximately 5 years.

Susan Proper, Management Support Staff, left GIPSA on April 14, 2008, to join the Farm Service Agency as an agricultural economist (regulatory).

Rodney Kent, Information Technology Staff (ITS), is the new chief of the Application Development Branch. **Rod** is a Certified Project Management Professional and holds several Microsoft certifications including Certified Solutions Developer, Application Developer, Database Administrator, Desktop Support, and Trainer. **Rod** is also a veteran with over 20 years experience in the U.S. Air Force, where he gained experience as a project manager, lead software engineer, database architect, and systems engineer. **Rod** brings to the position a wealth of IT knowledge and experience, and the essential qualities of personal and professional integrity.

AWARDS

Monica Alexander, Management Support Staff (MSS), Washington, DC, received an extra effort award for her work in GIPSA's implementation of the GovTrip Travel System.

William Arce, MRO, received a time-off award for his dedication and the administrative support he provided for the P&SP/State of Nebraska Scale Training attended by the livestock industry.

Teddi Baird, Western Regional Office (WRO), received a spot award for her extra effort and diligence in assembling an acquisition report for the Department of Justice regarding a proposed merger in the livestock industry.

George Banks, New Orleans, received a spot award for contributing to the mission of the Compliance Division and GIPSA by stepping up and providing leadership during a compliance review.

Carnell Barrett, Jr., ITS, Washington, DC, received a time-off award for his efforts to develop a solution for VPN users connecting to the GIPSA network. He also received a spot award for his help in developing training solutions for MSS.

Bob Crook, compliance officer, Cedar Rapids Satellite Office, received a spot award for contributing to the mission of the Compliance Division and GIPSA by volunteering to immediately assume leadership of a review in progress.

Margaret Cummings, ITS, Kansas City, received a spot award for her efforts to develop a solution for desktop faxing for Agency resident agents.

Thomas Duggan, WRO, received a spot award for his extra effort and diligence in assembling an acquisition report for the Department of Justice regarding a proposed merger in the livestock industry.

Agnes Flinn, MRO, received a spot award for her dedication and the administrative support she provided for the P&SP/State of Nebraska Scale Training attended by the livestock industry.

Amy Goemmel, MRO, received a time-off award for her dedication and the administrative support she provided for the P&SP/State of Nebraska Scale Training attended by the livestock industry.

Lawrence Haller, Industry Analysis Division, Washington, DC, received a spot award for his extra effort and diligence in assembling an acquisition report for the Department of Justice regarding a proposed merger in the livestock industry.

Milton Hansen, WRO, received a spot award for his extra effort and dedication in training a new marketing specialist, which required significant travel.

Pinkie Harrod, MSS, received an extra effort award for her superior contributions to helping GIPSA meet USDA mission critical initiatives and leading MSS by researching and developing new programs.

*Continued, see Names
on page 3.*

Names, from page 2.

Timothy Johnson, WRO, received a spot award for his extra effort in managing the personnel and budget functions of the WRO.

William Kelly, ITS, Washington, DC, received a spot award for his outstanding personal commitment and technical skills in the implementation of FDCC network policies.

Jared Koch, WRO, received a spot award for his extra effort and dedication during on-the-job training as a new employee, which required significant travel.

Weylin Lucius, WRO, received a spot award for his extra effort and diligence in assembling an acquisition report for the Department of Justice regarding a proposed merger in the livestock industry.

Tanisha Mapes, MRO, received a time-off award for her dedication and administrative support she provided for the P&SP/State of Nebraska Scale Training attended by the livestock industry.

Gary May, MRO, received a time-off award for his dedication and the administrative support he provided for the P&SP/State of Nebraska Scale Training attended by the livestock industry.

Margaret Mills, WRO, received a spot award for her extra effort in developing the WRO business plan tracking spreadsheet.

Ryan Montgomery, WRO, received a spot award for his extra effort and diligence in assembling an acquisition report for the Department of Justice regarding a proposed merger in the livestock industry.

Steve Pappaducas, MRO, received a time-off award for his dedication and administrative initiatives he provided for the P&SP/State of Nebraska Scale Training attended by the livestock industry.

Kraig Roesch, WRO, received a spot award for his extra effort and diligence in assembling an acquisition report for the Department of Justice regarding a proposed merger in the livestock industry.

Robin Rother, ITS, Kansas City, received a spot award for her efforts in helping GIPSA meet its continuing computer security requirements.

Myron Simmons, WRO, received a spot award for his service as the motor pool custodian for the regional office for the past several years.

Dennis Thalacker, ITS, Washington, DC, received a spot award for

his expert knowledge on Microsoft Windows Operating Systems, for which GIPSA has been recognized as the leading agency for EIMS and dual-factor authentication.

Patricia Tolle, WRO, received a spot award for her significant contribution for planning and overseeing the first phase of the PSAS project in the WRO, including making improvements to the workflow process where needed, and recommending appropriate enhancements to the SOPs to reflect the new PSAS system.

Amanda Tucker, Office of the Administrator, Washington, DC received a spot award for providing training and leadership to new employees in the Packers and Stockyards Program's Office of the Deputy Administrator.

John Ver Linden, WRO, received a spot award for his significant contributions in planning and overseeing the first phase of the PSAS project in the WRO, including making improvements to the workflow process where needed, and recommending appropriate enhancements to the SOPs to reflect the new PSAS system.

Kenneth Weaver, Kansas City, received an extra effort award for providing exceptional leadership in managing the Wichita Field Office, thus contributing greatly to the increased effectiveness and efficiency of GIPSA's mission and the Wichita Field Office.

Are EEO/CR issues or concerns affecting your employment with GIPSA? Do you have questions? Need help?

Then let your voice be heard.

Call the EEO Advisory Committee at...

1-800-639-5167

Civil Rights Hotline

360 Leadership Assessments

*Rosemary Mayne,
Washington, DC*

Your peer or supervisor identified you to assess him or her using a 360 assessment tool. What is it and why does GIPSA do this?

GIPSA Directive 4315.1 sets out the training policy for its supervisors, managers, and executives. Biennially, as a component of this policy, GIPSA leaders use a 360-degree assessment tool to gather feedback on their leadership skills. The 360 is a structured process for giving and receiving feedback from the leader's supervisor, peers, and subordinates. It provides the participant an opportunity to compare self-perceptions with feedback from others.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) identified the tasks assessed in the 360 through research and practice, and developed the instrument specifically for the government. It is used as a developmental tool to promote self awareness and plan behavioral change. In GIPSA, the 360 tool has no connection with the participant's performance appraisal.

Supervisors, managers, and executives in P&SP and the Office of the Administrator will soon begin the 360 process. The OPM Eastern Management Development Center will administer the Internet-based survey.

If you are a peer or subordinate who is identified to complete an assessment, please respond candidly and objectively. Base your responses on observable behavior in actual work experiences, NOT on assumptions or personal feelings.

To ensure anonymity, responses by subordinates are grouped and responses of subordinates are grouped so that your responses cannot be identified by the individual.

Using the 360 as a developmental tool can be extremely valuable. The feedback provided to the leader gives her/him a view from all around, not just from herself or from the supervisor. Using the information learned from the analysis helps the leader develop a roadmap for improvement to move forward. GIPSA will receive an aggregate analysis that will help us plan for the succession needs of the Agency.

If you are asked to complete a 360 by a GIPSA employee, know that the participant selected you to provide input because she/he values your feedback, and your objective assessment benefits both the individual and the agency. Thank you!

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, D.C.

- GIPSA Directive 4451-1, "Employee Recognition Program," dated March 14, 2008
- GIPSA Directive 3610.1, "Local Registration Authority (LRA) Program," dated March 20, 2008
- Near-Infrared Transmittance (NIRT) Handbook, Change No. 7, dated March 24, 2008
- FGIS Program Notice 08-06, "United States Standards for Sorghum," dated April 14, 2008
- P&SP Policy Memorandum 9760-08-0066, "Follow-up to Notice of Violations," dated April 17, 2008
- FGIS Directive 9180.77, "Ochratoxin A Testing" dated April 21, 2008
- FGIS Directive 9180.82, "Inspection of Specialty Type Corn" dated April 28, 2008

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- Weighing, Feed, and Swine Contractors, published April 21, 2008
- Advisory Committee Meeting, published April 24, 2008
- Proposed Posting of Stockyards; Correction, published April 24, 2008

Rare Opening of the Bonnet Carre' Spillway in New Orleans

Linda Remondet and Mary Carmouche, New Orleans

The Bonnet Carre' Spillway is a vital element of the comprehensive plan control in the Lower Mississippi Valley. It is the southern most floodway in the Mississippi River and Tributary system. Located in Norco, Louisiana, the spillway protects New Orleans and other downstream communities during major floods on the Mississippi River. This protection is accomplished by diverting a portion of the flood waters into Lake Pontchartrain and then into the Gulf of Mexico, bypassing New Orleans. The spillway was completed in 1931, and first opened during the flood of 1937. Subsequently, it was opened in the floods of 1945, 1950, 1973, 1975, 1979, 1983, and 1997. Most recently, the spillway was opened on April 11, 2008 — for the first time in 11 years — when river levels in New Orleans rose to 17 feet due to the melting of heavy winter snows in the Midwest and local spring rains. The spillway opening relieves pressure on the local levees, lowers river stages, and decreases the velocity of the river current below New Orleans. Hundreds of people showed up



Louisiana Governor Bobby Jindal and FGIS' Linda Remondet at the opening of the Bonnet Carre' Spillway.



Hundreds of spectators gather to watch the first opening of the Bonnet Carre Spillway in more than 11 years.

to witness the opening.

The spillway structure consists of 350 bays and each bay has 20 creosoted timbers called needles. The needles are removed to allow river water into the spillway. At this time, there are approximately 40 bays open and the US Army Corps of Engineers is monitoring the flow of water.

The rising water has flooded the crops of nearby farmers, who may have incurred losses and may have to apply for disaster assistance because of damage. The flooding has also affected shipping on many U.S. rivers. The flooding has seriously impeded the transportation of grain and other bulk commodities on barges coming down from the North. Since many railroad tracks are located adjacent to elevators, their ability to transfer grain from barge to rail is impaired as well.

The spillway will remain open until the risks associated with high water are diminished.

Wanna Talk?

Don't forget that there are a number of ways you can share your ideas, concerns, and thoughts!



The **GIPSA Idea Hotline** is open and waiting for you to share your ideas for making GIPSA a better place to work. Ideas about work processes, our work environment, and any and all aspects of GIPSA are welcome. Your ideas are responded to and acted upon quickly. Submit your idea today via telephone to 800-455-3447 or 202-720-1013, via fax to 202-720-1015, or via email to gipsa-ideas@usda.gov.



The **Administrator's Confidential Communications** email site allows you to share comments and suggestions directly with the Administrator in a protected format that ensures your confidentiality. To email the Administrator, please visit <http://dcweb2/gipsaconfidential/>.



There is a similar site available to FGIS employees who'd like to share comments or inquiries directly with FGIS' deputy administrator. The **FGIS Deputy Administrator's Confidential Communications** site is at <http://dcweb2/FGISConfidential/> to send email directly to the deputy administrator.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Sammy Lewis Builds Catering Business



Sammy Lewis

Sammy Lewis, agricultural commodity grader, Jonesboro, has realized his dream of combining his love of cooking and goal of owning a business by establishing a catering business called Lewis' BBQ.

Sammy started by selling BBQ sandwiches, ribs, and other smoked meat from a mobile catering truck in the summer of 2000. The following summer, Lewis' BBQ landed its first major catering job at nearby horse shows. Soon, the family began to

cater events throughout the area for businesses, churches, and families. In 2004, **Sammy** opened a concession at Arkansas State University football games, and then at basketball games and other events.

Today, **Sammy** and his wife **Carolyn** have grown the business into a major catering operation for events of all sizes. Lewis' BBQ shows up at events in its signature black and gold catering truck that is a kitchen on wheels.

The whole Lewis family is involved in the business, including **Sammy** and **Carolyn's** two children. Running the business as a second job means **Sammy** spends nights cooking and times food to come off of the grill when he gets home from his day job!

Sammy plans to retire from GIPSA late this year, and is scouting out a location for a restaurant he hopes to open soon.

Source: Jonesboro Occasions, July 2007.

AgLearn Upgrade

Rosemary Mayne, Washington, DC

In the near future, AgLearn, the USDA learning management system, will undergo a significant upgrade and "facelift." New capabilities for employees and supervisors will be added. Following are some changes.



Welcome screen. The welcome screen will get a new look. It will also highlight the ever-expanding library of online courses (currently over 3,000 are available) by showing the new courses as they get added.



Continuing Education Credits (CEU's) and Certifications. Information for using online training for continuing education credits and for preparation for professional certifications will be more easily accessible.



Revised SF-182. More information will be collected by OPM through the revised SF-182 form.

IT Tidbit

Bruce Griffith, Washington, DC

Over the past year you may have heard the following phrases; HSPD-12, LincPass, or Two-Factor Authentication and wondered what they were or “what does this have to do with me?” The short answer is EVERYTHING.

HSPD-12 is the acronym for the Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 which mandates that all Federal Departments and agencies establish a “Common Identification Standard for Federal Employees and Contractors.” HSPD-12 deals with the ID card for all Federal employees and contractors, and standardizing the application / issuance process for the ID card.

The HSPD-12 standardized ID cards are based on “smart card” technology – there is a computer chip embedded in the card. The cards used by USDA are named “LincPass” in honor of President Abraham Lincoln.

USDA agencies have been directed that all applicable employees, contractors, and affiliates have a LincPass card by October 27, 2008. USDA LincPass cards will eventually be used for USDA computer system access by October 2009 and USDA building access by October 2011.

The LincPass uses two-factor authentication. An authentication factor is a piece of information used to authenticate or verify a person’s identity for security purposes. Two-factor authentication is a system wherein two different methods are used to authenticate that person’s identity. Two-factor authentication features two components: something the user knows, such as an ID or password, and something the user has, such as a LincPass card. Using your ATM card is an example of dual-factor authentication. Like ATM users, LincPass holders will first place the pass in a card reader, and then enter a PIN.

Two-factor authentication delivers a higher level of authentication assurance than single-factor authentication, and better derails many electronic attacks. Phishing, hacking, and spyware provide access to only one set of security components – the ID and password. To gain computer access, a perpetrator would have to steal the LincPass card AND somehow obtain the users’s PIN as well.

The Network & Telecom Branch is working closely with MSS to solidify the procedures and processes that will allow GIPSA employees to access the GIPSA network using the LincPass cards. Keep any eye out for more information pertaining to HSPD-12, LincPass, and Dual-Factor Authentication in the coming weeks.

Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

Washington, DC personnel, call...
1-800-222-0364

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

You Asked For It – 2nd Installment

Rosemary Mayne, Washington, DC

Results from the Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS) you completed continue to be realized. Here are additional improvements stemming from the recommendations of the OAS action planning teams.

✓ **Performance Appraisal Training.** The GIPSA Training Office analyzed the responses referencing performance in the OAS and collaborated with APHIS trainers to design a program for supervisors. A 3-day session was held in Riverdale in October 2007 for GIPSA senior managers. Another session is scheduled for New Orleans in June.

✓ **Mentoring Program.** In the near future, P&SP will roll out a mentoring program to help new employees become oriented to the business and culture of the Agency and to help with career development and knowledge transfer.

✓ **Specialized Enhancement Program.** This training program was successfully implemented in the Portland, New Orleans, and League City offices.

Work continues on other recommendations. I will keep you informed as more outcomes become reality.

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Workplace Safety – A Matter of Good Housekeeping. The basic rule of good office housekeeping is that individuals are responsible for themselves and responsible to their co-workers. The National Safety Council lists slips, trips, and falls as the most common causes of injuries in the office. In fact, office workers are twice as likely to be injured in a fall as workers outside the office environment. Falls happen so suddenly, many people are unable to react in time to prevent serious injuries. But with proper housekeeping, office workers can reduce the risk to themselves and their co-workers.

Don't wait – take action!



Report defective flooring. Worn spots in carpets, chipped tiles and uneven raised flooring are trip hazards. If you see broken or missing floor tiles, or worn carpet or stair treads, you should contact building management.



Pick it up! Pick up dropped pencils, paper clips and rubber bands. They can cause you to skid.



Move it out! Do not leave boxes and other items unattended in walkways, even if you plan to come right back. Walkways should never be blocked, not only to prevent falls, but to facilitate escape in a fire or other emergency. Remember, emergencies don't usually come with advanced warning. They are not likely to leave you time to clear cluttered escape paths.



Don't even think of leaving loose cords! Keep telephone, data and electrical cords under wraps.



Clean it up! Ensure that spills are wiped up immediately, whether you caused them or not. In wet weather, a dripping umbrella can be as hazardous as a large coffee spill. If a spill is too large to clean up quickly, contact building management.

We are all busy doing our jobs. But that can not be an excuse for causing or allowing hazardous working conditions. Take a little time each day to straighten up your workplace.

Courtesy: Environmental, Health, & Safety Articles.

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:

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by May 25, 2008!

Retiring? To be included on our email distribution list after you retire from GIPSA, please send your email address to dana.b.stewart@usda.gov.

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