



GIPSA News

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

May 2009

Giler Receives 2009 “Unsung Hero” Award

Randall Jones, Washington, DC

It is my pleasure and honor to announce that on May 5, 2009, the Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) presented to **John Giler**, director of the Field Management Division, its 2009 Unsung Hero Award. The award recognizes USDA employees who have demonstrated a high level of service to the public directly related to their duties.

John oversees GIPSA’s largest unit, comprised of 500 staff members in 8 field offices who work 24/7/365 to move \$20 billion of U.S. grain to customers around the world. He also manages a Washington, DC, headquarters unit and two offices in Kansas City, MO. In FY 2008, **John**’s staff and the official inspection system he oversees conducted 3.4 million inspections of 310 million metric tons of grain valued at over \$20 billion.

John is being recognized for his daily excellence, and for a 31-year career that is a testament to perseverance and success. Beginning as an agricultural commodity grader in 1978 in FGIS’ Philadelphia office, **John**’s expertise, professionalism, dedication, and gift for leadership, took him across the country, from Philadelphia to FGIS’ Mobile, Alabama, office to Savannah, Georgia, and finally to Washington, DC, where he joined the ranks of the Senior Executive Service in September 2007.

John’s dedication to public service surpasses the normal boundaries that define most careers. His devotion has him answering calls from staff and industry stakeholders through the weekends. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, he worked 24/7 to locate staff and arrange for the Agency to provide them with food and shelter.

John Giler is truly an unsung hero and for the past 31 years, he has served well America and American agriculture. He has graciously accepted and successfully met every professional challenge; he has achieved the highest level of success in his career and has been an exemplary leader. And, most importantly, he gained that success with the respect of his employees, colleagues, supervisors, and industry stakeholders.

On behalf of FGIS, I want to express publicly my gratitude for his service and hope you share my joy in this recognition. It is this type of acknowledgment that not only draws attention to individual contributions but just as important brings positive exposure to our Program. After all, our success as a Program depends upon the hard work and dedication of all of our team members. Congratulations to **John** for his receipt of this very prestigious award.



GIPSA acting administrator Alan Christian, John Giler, and Farook Sait, President, Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA)

Names in the News

PERSONNEL

Albert Conerly, director, Management Support Staff (MSS), will leave GIPSA on May 8, 2009, to take a position with the Food and Drug Administration. **Marianne Plaus**, chief of the FGIS Market and Program Analysis Staff (MPAS), will become acting director of MSS on May 10. She will serve in this capacity for a 90-day period. **Eric Jabs** will be acting chief of MPAS during **Marianne's** detail.

Pat Donohue-Galvin will leave GIPSA effective May 14, 2009. **Pat** is leaving to pursue other career interests.

Deborah Shipman accepted a position with the Justice Department on April 12. She received a certificate of appreciation for her 22 years of dedicated service to GIPSA and USDA.

Dana Stewart joined the Packers and Stockyards Program's Office of the Deputy Administrator on April 27, 2009. **Dana** will act as chief of staff for P&SP, coordinating with the Department on program issues and working to share our accomplishments and successes outside of GIPSA. While much of her time will be devoted to P&SP program issues, **Dana** will retain responsibility for GIPSA's communications programs, including news releases, GIPSA's websites, and the employee newsletter and will work to support the Administrator and FGIS as needed.

LEAVE DONATION

Ronald Taylor, agricultural commodity grader, League City, has been dealing with a very serious illness for months. **Ronald** was recently hospitalized and his diagnosis will require long-term treatment. He has exhausted his leave. Ronald has been accepted into the leave transfer program. All donated leave will be accepted. If you would like to donate either annual or restored annual leave to this employee, please complete form AD-1043 and either fax it or mail it (not both) to: USDA APHIS MRPBS HRD, Attn: LCT, Butler Square, 5th Floor, 100 North 6th Street, Minneapolis, MN 55403, fax: 612-336-3544. Form AD-1043 can be found on the web at: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/mrpbs/forms/ad.shtml>.

CONDOLENCES

Beth Hayden, who retired from FGIS in 2007, and her companion **Allan Melendy**, were tragically killed in a glider airplane accident on April 24, 2009. They were en route to visit family in California when their glider went down near Mammoth Lake, CA, on the last leg of their flight.

Travel Bits & Pieces

Irene Omade, Washington, DC

Beginning with the 3rd quarter report due July 31, 2009, the Department expects to roll out a web-based conference and training tracking system. The new system, Conference and Training Tracking System (CATTS), will be used to report all conferences/training exceeding \$10,000. The report will capture the name, location, and date of the conference, the number of USDA employees attending, the cost, and, for each conference sponsored or held by the Department in which the Department awards a procurement contract, a description of the contracting procedures related to the conference. Conferences held at USDA facilities will not need to be reported.

Stay tuned for updates.

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Quiet Heroes Step Out to Help Others

Deborah Edwards, League City Field Office

If you look around your office, you may see your normal everyday worker punching in 7:00 and out at 5:00 to leave to go to another life outside of work. Just talking to your colleagues every day may give you the impression that their concerns are to finish the day and then to go home to get an afternoon of relaxation. But little do we realize that behind the scene surfaces another personality that is yet to be discovered.

On several occasions, League City employees have gone the extra mile to share unselfish life saving support to colleagues and their family. Support has ranged from a small act of kindness of leave donations for long-time stays in local hospitals to platelet, red blood cell, and white blood cell donations to colleagues and family members. You can always be assured that the quiet heroes in the League City Field Office will always be there to help.

Working in the close-knit environment of an office allows for family relationships to form, and in forming those relationships, the League City field office has established a tight group.



Dave Grady, Field Office Manager, League City, giving white blood cells at the MD Anderson Blood Donor Center, Houston, Texas

Wheat Standards Review

Pat McCluskey, Kansas City

FGIS plans to initiate a review of the Official U.S. Standards for Wheat this year. The wheat standards were last fully amended in 1993, with a relatively minor change made in 2006. Advancements in wheat variety development, agronomic practices, grain handling, and milling technology are prompting us to ask producers, end users, and other stakeholders whether the wheat standards are effective and relevant in today's market, and if any specific amendments are warranted.

FGIS has contacted interested stakeholders, inviting informal feedback on all facets of the standards such as definitions, grade and nongrade determining factors, grade limits, damages, as well as grading procedures and new services they would like FGIS to offer. All aspects of the wheat standards are subject to this review.

We anticipate initiating the formal process by publishing an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the Federal Register in the future.



Great Green Ideas

Alan Christian, Washington, DC

I'd like to extend my personal thanks to the staff members who took the time to send in suggestions for making GIPSA greener and more energy efficient. Take a look at the following recommendations and see if you can put some to work in your office and home!

John Giler

Turn off overhead ceiling lights in offices.

Doug Lacefield

Reduce number of bulbs on all night; remove some bulbs from fixtures.

Gregory Andrews

Turn VTC plasma televisions OFF when not in use.

Eric Jabs

Shut off power strips for computers instead of using standby mode.

Randall Jones

Instruct GIPSA staff to turn off their computers each evening.

Gretchen VanWallbeek

Limit personal-use appliances.

Gretchen VanWallbeek

Ask the IT Staff to create a pop-up asking if printing is really necessary. (Gretchen added "*Please consider the environment before printing this email*" to her emails!)

Bruce Gardner

Timers for Breakrooms/Conference Rooms/Bathrooms

Please continue to send in your green ideas to the GIPSA Idea Hotline at telephone 800-455-3447 or 202-720-1013; fax to 202-720-1015; or via email to gipsa-ideas@usda.gov.

Issuances

Terri Henry, Washington, D.C.

- FGIS Directive 9180.40, "Pesticide Residue Testing for Grain," dated March 30, 2009
- FGIS Program Notice 09-05, "Equipment Check Testing Test Decals" dated April 6, 2009
- FGIS Program Notice 09-06, "Revision of the Fumigation Handbook, Chapter 2, In-Transit Fumigation-Vessels" dated April 2, 2009
- FGIS Directive 9180.48, "Stowage Examination Services," dated April 8, 2009
- DON (Vomitoxin) Handbook- Issuance Change No. 12 dated April 13, 2009

Regulatory Info

Tess Butler, Washington, DC

Federal Register Publications

- Designation for the Unassigned Areas of East Texas, published April 20, 2009
- Proposed Posting, Posting, and Deposting of Stockyards, published April 20, 2009
- United States Standards for Whole Dry Peas and Split Peas, published April 20, 2009

GIPSA's Master Scale and Railroad Track Scale Program

Byron School, Washington, DC

The Railroad Master Track Scale Program that GIPSA adopted from the National Bureau of Standards (now the National Institute of Standards and Technology) in 1980 is quite unique. The program calibrates railroad- and state-owned test weight cars using specially designed and very sensitive mechanical weighbeam scales, or "master scales." Much of the equipment, as well as the testing and calibration methods that were established by NIST in 1928 are still in use today. The old Master Scale Depot in Chicago, also built in 1928, is an important historical site.



There are 11 master scales in use throughout the country: 8 are owned by 4 of the major railroads, 2 are owned by state weights and measures departments (Oregon and Minnesota), and 1 is owned by GIPSA. Housed in Chicago, Illinois, GIPSA's master scale is one of the most unique master scales in the country and probably the world. The 150,000-pound capacity beam is specially designed, with gold-plated counter balance ring weights confined in a special cabinet. The weights are manipulated to counterbalance the load of the scale's weigh rails through the use of levers. The beam is sensitive to .5 pounds and has only rarely required calibration since it was built in 1928. It is literally irreplaceable.

GIPSA tests all of America's 11 master scales annually. The owners of the master scales then use their own master scales to calibrate their and other railroad's test weight cars. GIPSA also conducts special field calibrations of test cars that can't be transported to a master scale due to either the condition of the test cars or speed restrictions. GIPSA currently conducts annual field test car calibrations at the Union Pacific Railroad yard in Houston, Texas, using a select mechanical railroad track scale to compare GIPSA weight standards to the test cars being calibrated.

GIPSA has a staff of eight scale specialists qualified to conduct master scale tests and field test car calibrations: **Cary Brown** and **Al Rupert**, Master Scale Depot, Chicago; **Craig Klever**, Portland; **Sandra Metheny**, Stuttgart; **Harold Chaisson**, New Orleans; **Ray Lavine**, League City; **John Godfrey**, Toledo; and **Byron School**, Washington, DC. Each of these specialists has completed a rigorous 1-week metrology course conducted by NIST in Gaithersburg, Maryland. They also have participated in on-the-job training until they are completely familiar with testing and calibrations procedures. In addition to testing Master Scales, these scale specialists test railroad track scales, vehicle scales, and hopper scales. They also calibrate test weight standards in grain elevator headhouses under our Test Weight Reverification Program, which tests more than 500 test weights in 35 grain facilities in the ports of New Orleans, Portland, and Duluth/Superior. **Cary** and **Al** at the Master Scale Depot in Chicago also are certified by NIST to test and calibrate railroad test cars, test weight standards from 25 to 10,000 pounds, and test carts.

In addition to the "Master Scale Specialists," **Dave Skallerud**, Cedar Rapids, is certified to test hopper and vehicle scales, and is training to test railroad track scales. **Dave** performs the majority of the scale tests at container loading facilities in the Midwest. Most recently, **Charles Brown**, League City, became an industrial specialist and will be responsible for testing hopper and vehicle type scales in the League City field office circuit.

GIPSA participates in NIST's metrology laboratory certification program, which requires that certain procedures and conditions be followed, and requires annual certification by NIST. GIPSA is also subject to program review and proficiency testing as required by NIST. This annual certification by NIST allows GIPSA to calibrate the 10,000-pound standards that are used in three of our test cars, and to claim direct traceability to NIST standards. This, in turn, allows the owners of master scales tested by GIPSA to also claim weight traceability to NIST.

The integrity of the railroad weighing system starts at GIPSA's Master Scale Depot, where our scale specialists calibrate weight standards, maintain test cars, and perform testing. Since 1980, when GIPSA adopted the program, the railroad industry and state weights and measures departments have relied on GIPSA to ensure the accuracy and integrity of weighing systems used in interstate commerce.

New FOIA Guidelines

Joanne Peterson, GIPSA FOIA Officer, Washington, DC

On March 26, 2009, I attended a Governmentwide training conference for Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) professionals at which the Office of Information Policy, Department of Justice, explained the Administration's new guidelines governing the FOIA.

On March 19, 2009, Attorney General Eric Holder issued comprehensive new guidelines reaffirming the Government's "commitment to accountability and transparency" as directed by **President Obama** in his Memorandum on the FOIA issued January 21, 2009, his first full day in office. The combined impact of these two memoranda ushers in the President's "new era of open government."

The new FOIA guidelines are summarized below:

In the face of doubt, openness prevails.

- ★ Approach review of documents by asking, "What can I release?"
- ★ Do not withhold records because they technically fall within a FOIA exemption.
- ★ Review each document focusing on whether there is a **foreseeable harm** from disclosure of that particular record.
- ★ Make discretionary releases; when full disclosure is not possible, strive to make partial disclosure. Ask whether there is information that can be posted on the Agency's website to satisfy public interest.
- ★ The Department of Justice will defend denials of FOIA requests only if the Agency reasonably foresees the disclosure would harm an interest protected by one of the statutory exemptions or disclosure is prohibited by law.

Effective Agency implementation of FOIA:

- ★ Involves the commitment of all Agency personnel, not just FOIA professionals.
- ★ Means working cooperatively with requesters and making it a priority to respond to requests in a timely manner. Unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles have no place in the new era of open Government.
- ★ Uses technology to proactively post information online in advance of FOIA requests.

I believe GIPSA's FOIA program is effective, efficient, and meets the needs of the public. I attribute the program's success to the assistance and diligent support you provide and look forward to our continued exceptional working relationship. Together, we can achieve the "new era of open government."

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

Employee Assistance Program

Call for confidential help.

All GIPSA personnel,
1-800-222-0364

Fight Waste, Fraud, Abuse or Mismanagement of Recovery Act Funds

*Joanne Peterson
Management Support Staff*

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (Recovery Act) has distributed billions of dollars to create jobs, invest in infrastructure, and fund other measures to counter the current economic downturn. Experience tells us that the risk of fraud and abuse grows when large sums are spent quickly, eligibility requirements are established or changed, and new programs are created. Because of the risk, Congress and the President have insisted on increasing the Federal Government's accountability and transparency over these funds.

On March 4, 2009, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) issued a press release urging private citizens, government workers, contractors, and others to use GAO's FraudNet to report waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement of the Recovery Act funds.

Begun in 1979 as a toll-free phone number, FraudNet has expanded in recent years to receive allegations via the internet, fax, or letter. The public can:

- ▶ Call 1-800-424-5454 (an automated system);
- ▶ Send an e-mail to fraudnet@gao.gov;
- ▶ Send a fax to (202) 512-3086; or
- ▶ Write to GAO FraudNet, 441 G Street, NW, Mail Stop 4T21, Washington, DC 20548.

Evidence or suspicions of abuse may be provided anonymously to the GAO, which treats all inquiries confidentially. Internet information is transmitted over a secure connection. Tipsters are asked to provide as much detail as possible about their allegations. GAO may refer allegations for follow-up to its own investigative units, appropriate inspector general offices, or to the Department of Justice. Past reports of alleged mismanagement and wrongdoing have covered topics as varied as the misappropriation of funds, security violations, and contractor fraud.

Visit the FraudNet webpage on the GAO website at <http://www.gao.gov/fraudnet/fraudnet.htm> for more information.

IT Tidbit

Angela Emrich, Washington, DC

You may be wondering whom to contact if your phone number, address, or title have changed. You can easily check your information by right-clicking on your name in Outlook and selecting Properties. If you see that any of the information is incorrect, you can do one of the following:

To change your work, home, mobile, or fax number, go to <http://dcweb2/peopleupdate>. Search for your name and then once you select it, click on the business card icon to the left of your first name. Once your detailed information is displayed, you can click on Edit at the bottom of the page. This will open the phone number fields and you can edit as needed.

To change your address or job title, you can contact one of the following employees for your organization:

Amber McDonald
Deborah Edwards
Glenda Lasseigne
John Fisher
Judith Johnston
Judy Hawkins
Karen Guagliardo
Marsha Schwartz
Martha Carver
Norma Phelps

Pamela Lake
Penny Kilbride
Ronald Metz
Rose Alexander
Sara Ludwig
Tanisha Mapes
Terri Henry
Terry Taylor
Tim Johnson
Tina Crane

It's important to keep your contact information up to date so people know how to get in touch with you. So, remember to go to <http://dcweb2/peopleupdate> to update your phone numbers or contact one of the employees above to update your address or job title.

For Your Health

Mavis Rogers, Washington, DC

Achieving Work/Life Balance. Friends, family, coworkers, pets, social clubs, and professional organizations. The list of demands on our time can seem endless. Many of us struggle to balance full time jobs with full-time responsibilities at home. Meeting the demands of an increasingly complex world means developing strategies for maintaining balance in our lives. This article takes a look at balancing home and work responsibilities – how to tell if you are striking a good balance, consequences of an out-of-balance lifestyle, and practical tips for getting the most out of time spent at work and at home.

Is Your Life Out-of-Balance? How can you tell? You may find it hard to concentrate or feel less creative than you could be. You may feel overwhelmed and experience a range of emotions including anger, sadness, guilt, fear, frustration, resentment, hurt, and loneliness. You also may experience trouble sleeping, social alienation or conflict with others around you. Finally, you may find yourself feeling powerless and suffer from low self-esteem or self-confidence.

What Is a Good Balance for Me? Achieving balance means dedicating the most time and energy possible to the aspects of your life that are important to you. There is no set formula for living a balanced life. For example, some people find a 60-hour work week fulfilling while others want to spend less time at work and more time with family and friends.

Your priorities may vary quite a bit based on what phase of life you are in. If you recently finished college, you may be content working long hours. If you are 35 and have young children, spending time at home likely is a bigger priority for you. It is important to stand back and assess your situation before determining whether you need or want to change the balance in your life. You can start out by asking yourself these questions.

- ◆ Is my life right now the way I want it to be?
- ◆ If not, what is wrong with it?
- ◆ Is my current situation temporary?
- ◆ What can I change to make my life more fulfilling and enjoyable?
- ◆ Are the rewards of making these changes worth the sacrifice?

Depending on how you answer, you may decide that the benefits of your current circumstances outweigh the costs or you may determine that you need to make some changes to achieve the balance you seek. The most important thing to do is realize when your priorities have shifted too far in one direction or another, and then to do something about it.

How Do I Get Back on Track? If you are determined that you need to make some changes in the balance of your life, the following guidelines can help you get on the right track.

Set Realistic Expectations. You may not be able to have everything you want, at least, not all at one time. Establish realistic expectations and ease up on yourself when possible. Instead of vowing to keep your house or apartment spotless, simply try to keep it neat and orderly.

CFC Thanks

*Andy Greenfield
Washington, DC*

On March 25, 2009 GIPSA received a Combined Federal Campaign **Honor Award** for achieving a minimum of 60 percent employee participation or \$175 per capita given during the 2008 Combined Federal Campaign. Thanks to the headquarters key workers and everyone who contributed financially or with their time to support GIPSA's efforts in exceeding this year's CFC goal.

Prioritize. Determine what tasks you need to accomplish, and then rank them according to importance. Keep in mind your own needs, as well as those of loved ones. If you must work on a Saturday, for example, you might plan a recreational activity with your family or friends for Sunday.

*Continued, see **For Your Health**
on page 9.*

For Your Health, *from page 8.*

Set Realistic Goals. Be flexible and realistic in planning your schedule. Focus on things you know you can accomplish. At the same time, learn to expect the unexpected. Have a plan for dealing with those surprise visits from relatives and unannounced meetings at work. By taking steps like these, you will be better prepared to handle life's curve balls.

Modify Responsibilities. Sharing responsibilities is a good strategy to try at home. Start by determining what tasks need to be accomplished in your household. Next, decide who is most skilled at the various tasks, who likes or dislikes particular tasks and the availability of everyone in the household. Distribute tasks fairly; making sure that responsibility is shared for unpopular chores. If others in the household are unwilling to participate or you live alone, determine what is reasonable for you to accomplish and stick to doing just that.

Be Efficient. Develop ways to work smarter at home and at work. Combining or consolidating tasks may be more effective than trying to squeeze as many tasks as possible into the least amount of time. Encourage others in your household to save time as well. Involve others, including children, in the planning and decisionmaking process. Get input from others on how goals can be reached and offer them the opportunity to participate in achieving these goals.

Think Positively. Try to recognize that changes in your routine may be difficult at first. Do not blame yourself or others for limitations. Solving problems, not blaming others, produce positive change. Most importantly, have a sense of humor. While everyone feels sad, angry or frustrated sometimes, laughing can really help ease difficult situations.

Courtesy: Your Employee Assistance Program

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

by May 25, 2009!

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.

FGIS Seeks Comments on Pea Standards

Bev Whalen, Kansas City

FGIS is seeking comments on a notice proposing to revise the U.S. Standards for Whole Dry Peas and Split Peas.

Specifically, we are proposing to amend the general definitions "Whole Dry Peas" and "Split Peas," and the following specific definitions: "Smooth Green Dry Peas," "Smooth Yellow Dry Peas," "Wrinkled Dry Peas," "Green Split Peas," and "Yellow Split Peas." We also are proposing to modify the classification terms and associated definitions for "Winter Dry Peas" and "Winter Split Peas."

The official standards are the fundamental starting point for defining commodity quality in the domestic and global marketplaces. The proposed changes will help facilitate the marketing of new winter pea variety releases and help ensure the purity of class for Whole Dry Peas and Split Peas.

Comments on the notice are due by May 20, 2009.

OFFICE OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
USDA, GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS
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