



# GIPSA NEWS

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE GRAIN INSPECTION, PACKERS AND STOCKYARDS

APRIL 2014

## It's about Civil Rights''

Kevin Smith, Washington, DC

### INSIDE THIS

#### ISSUE:

- ◆ *Shout-Out!*
- ◆ *Names in the News*
- ◆ *Issuance Report*
- ◆ *Links of interest*
- ◆ *FGIS Matters...!*
- ◆ *PSP CCWG*
- ◆ *Training Updates*

Hello All,

As the Director of the Civil Rights Staff, improving civil rights, equal employment opportunity, and diversity policies throughout GIPSA is one of my top priorities. By pursuing this goal together we can lead the way in making GIPSA USDA's model organization.

We know that Civil Rights are freedoms guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the statutes and case law that have evolved from it. I would add that Civil Rights laws, once enacted, are meaningful *only* if they are duly enforced.

During my many visits to various offices in GIPSA, I have come to realize that many employees and supervisors have questions about Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), civil rights, the staff, and why we exist. Some managers believe that civil rights is only here for the employee. Some employees believe the opposite. Some employees believe that filing an EEO complaint is the only way to have their voices heard. Some believe that Civil Rights only helps certain groups.

I want to assure you that my staff and I are here to work for THE LAW. We must all strive to ensure that applicants and employees are treated in a non-discriminatory manner in compliance with established laws, regulations and executive orders. GIPSA must promote a culturally diverse workforce, create a work environment, which allows all employees equal opportunity to achieve their full potential, and incorporate our office's principles into the mission and value systems.

Below are other commonly asked questions that I want to answer with regard to EEO and Civil Rights:

**Q: What is the difference between EEO & Civil Rights?**

A: EEO policies and procedures apply to employment.  
Civil Rights policies and procedures apply to program delivery.

**Q: What protects me from discrimination?**

A: Many federal and state laws are created to protect workers from employment discrimination, but they don't protect every worker in every situation. The most important federal law on employment discrimination is probably Title VII of the Civil Rights Act. Title VII prohibits discrimination based on race, color, national origin, religion or sex. The federal Age Discrimination in Employment Act (ADEA) prohibits employer discrimination against people who are over age 40. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) prevents employment discrimination against qualified people with disabilities.

**Q: What is a "reasonable accommodation"?**



Kevin Smith

Continued, see **Civil Rights** on page 2.

### Civil Rights *from cover page*

**A:** A reasonable accommodation is any modification or adjustment to a job or the work environment that will enable a qualified applicant or employee with a disability to perform essential job functions.

**Q: Why do we have Special Emphasis Programs for particular groups?**

**A:** Several laws, Executive Orders, Public Law, Federal regulations, Presidential Proclamations and orders, and Supreme Court decisions have provided Civil Rights and Equal Employment Opportunity protections in America. They apply to all Federal employees and provide the statutory basis for the Special Emphasis Program Observances.

**B:** Special Emphasis Programs are implemented and observed primarily to ensure that minorities, women, people with various disabilities, and people with various sexual orientations are provided an equal opportunity in employment and program delivery activities. These programs improve the workplace environment by promoting and fostering diversity in the workplace through awareness and by educating employees and others to appreciate, value, understand, and celebrate social and cultural similarities and differences.

On another note, I'm sure that all employees within GIPSA want their voices heard. With that said, I want to take this opportunity to promote 100 percent participation in the **Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)**. Last year's feedback gave us an opportunity to gain insight into important factors such as leadership, perceptions, cohesion, morale, and the human relations environment; all of which have a direct impact on organizational effectiveness and GIPSA's mission accomplishment.

One of GIPSA's objectives this year is to increase GIPSA's 2013 FEVS participation rate from 50.3 percent to 70 percent in 2014. We expect this year's survey to be forwarded around the end of March and beginning of April. With your help, I know that we can beat our expectation and have 100% participation.

Thank you GIPSA. It is now time to proceed with our Civil Rights mission to provide leadership and direction for the fair and equitable treatment of all USDA customers and employees while ensuring the delivery of quality programs and the enforcement of civil rights.

## Names in the News

### Retirements

**Joann Perrilloux** retired on March 31, 2013, with 18 years of service. Joann is from Gramercy, Louisiana. Joann began her career with the FGIS-Lutcher Field Office in 1995 as a temporary intermittent, ACT-5. She worked various appointments throughout her career such as temporary intermittent, permanent intermittent, full-time seasonal and finally permanent full-time. Before joining FGIS, she worked over 30 years in the private sector. Joann is retiring from the Agency as an ACG-9. She participated in the Aspiring Leader Program in 2002, was Secretary for AFGE Local 3157 and presided as Vice-President of the National AFGE Local 3157.

In her retirement, Joann plans on spending time with her son, Darrick and her 2 grandchildren. She plans on relaxing, enjoying life and do a little traveling.



## GIPSA Idea Hotline

GIPSA Idea Hotline is open for business.

Please send your suggestions or ideas to

GIPSA-Ideas@usda.gov; fax them to 202-690-2173; or  
telephone them to 1-800-455-3447 or 202-720-7045.

It is best to send them via fax or email to reduce the possibility of transcription errors; however, ideas will be accepted regardless of the method of transmission.

## Names in the News *continued*

### New Hires

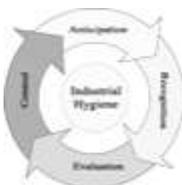


Mr. Dwight Roe is the newest addition to the Midwestern Regional Office. Dwight was hired as an auditor for the P&SP Financial Unit. He comes to P&SP from the Air Force Audit Agency, where he worked as an auditor. He has also worked with the Iowa National Guard as an Operations Logistics Officer.

He graduated with a Bachelor's Degree in Accounting from Central College in Pella Iowa and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Bellevue University in Nebraska. Dwight is also a veteran, and among other duties, he served in Iraq in 2006 and 2007, and was awarded a bronze star for his service.

### New Assignments

**Brian Adam** has accepted the position as Chairman, Board of Appeals and Review. He began his grain inspecting career with Washington State Department of Agriculture (WSDA); there he worked as an inspector grading and monitoring export grain lots. After working for ten years with WSDA, Brian started working for FGIS at the Kansas City Field Office and Grading Services Lab monitoring Official Agencies. Brian worked as a member of the Board of Appeals and Review from 2010 to 2014.



**Gary Hinshaw** is the new Industrial Hygienist (IH) at the NGC. Among his many duties as IH, Gary manages the health, safety, security, and environmental programs for the NGC, and is the point of contact for the Technology and Science Division's (TSD) Continuation of Operations Plan (COOP). Before assuming the IH position, Gary worked for more than seven years as a chemist in the TSD Analytical Chemistry Branch's Trace Analysis Group.

#### Joe Olson

Agricultural Commodities Technician from the Portland Field Office, ACG effective March 9th.



#### Julia Michel

Agricultural Commodities Technician from the New Orleans Field Office, ACG effective March 23<sup>rd</sup>.

#### Jesse Grelle

Agricultural Commodities Technician from the Portland Field Office, ACG effective March 9th.



#### Eric Chadwick

Former Agricultural Commodities Technician in the Portland Field Office coming back to us from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Portland Oregon, ACG effective March 23<sup>rd</sup>. He is a Portland State University graduate with over twelve years of Federal Service including two terms of service in the US Army. Eric resides in St. Johns with his wife Judy.

## FGIS Matters....!

Randall Jones, Washington, DC

Last month in this column I focused primarily on our goal of making GIPSA **the best** place to work in USDA and Federal government. Well, here we go again. Some of you may be asking “why?” and here is my response. By creating a work environment that is **the best** in USDA and **the best** in the federal government, we will guarantee that we will have **the best** workforce in USDA and **the best** workforce in the federal government. By creating an environment that values employees and their input, we will be the Employer of Choice. We will attract the best talent. We will provide the best customer service to our stakeholders. We will be successful in meeting our mission. Simple as that.



In an organization such as GIPSA – a service organization, our success is directly related to you - the team members doing the work and providing the services desired and needed by our stakeholders. We want and need your input (engagement) if we are to achieve our lofty goals and this is why you are hearing so much regarding “employee engagement.” But you may ask what exactly does this mean? So, like any good manager, I did a Wiki search and here is what Wikipedia says:

Employee engagement is a property of the relationship between an organization and its employees. An "engaged employee" is one who is fully absorbed by and enthusiastic about their work and so takes positive action to further the organization's reputation and interests. An organization with 'high' employee engagement might therefore be expected to outperform those with 'low' employee engagement, all else being equal.

We anticipate that beginning at the end of April or the beginning of May that the **Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS)** will kickoff. The FEVS measures employees' perceptions of whether, and to what extent, conditions that characterize successful organizations are present in their agencies. More detailed information regarding the FEVS can be found at <http://www.fedview.opm.gov/2013/>.

I will be the first to admit that at times I have “survey fatigue” with so many companies and websites and others asking for me to complete their survey. So I understand why there are some who may not feel motivated to complete the survey but again I ask you for your help. We all have a vested interest in GIPSA and we all have the same goal and desire to see GIPSA succeed so that we can serve our stakeholders. The first step is to take a few minutes and complete this survey. Let your opinion be known. We will make sure that you have time to complete the survey during official hours. No excuses - so let's get it done and have 100percent completion rate. With your support and engagement, we will be successful. Until next time, keep up the good work and stay safe!

Issuance Report  
Terri Henry, Washington, DC

FGIS Directive 9000-1, “Performance Appraisal System-Field Performance Elements and Standards” dated March 11, 2014.

## Canadian Grain Commission (CGC) Visit

*Scott Cooley, FGIS*

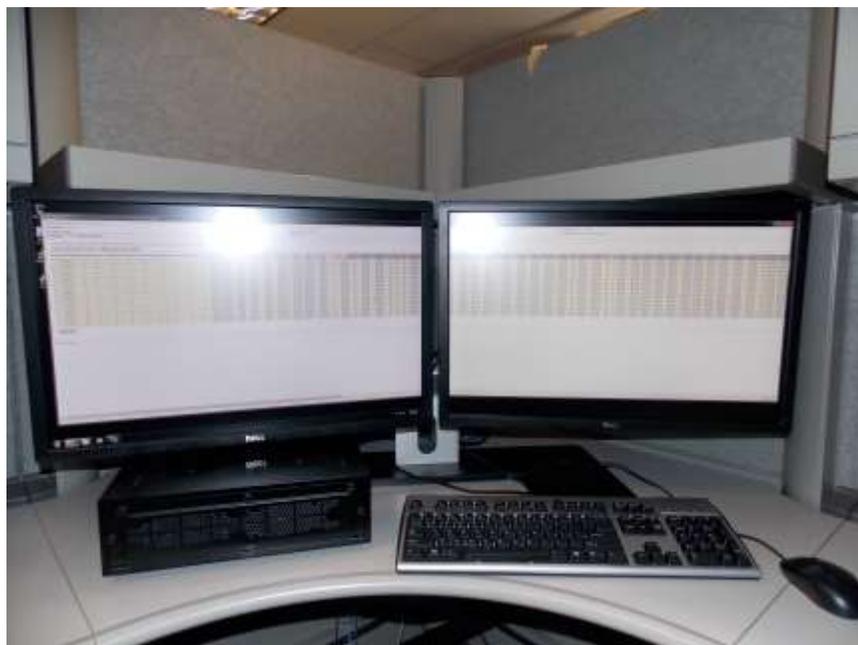


Photos from left to right: Jason Ferrante, WSDA Program manager; Scott Cooley, Laura Anderson, CGC National Manager; FGIS Assistant Federal Manager/QAS; Daryl Beswitherick, CGC Program Manager; Joey Vanneste, CGC Operations Manager; Randy Deike, FGIS Federal Manager

On March 4th through the 7th the Olympia Federal/State Office was visited by three team members from the Canadian Grain Commission (CGC); Ms. Laura Anderson, National Manager, Mr. Daryl Beswitherick, Program Manager, and Mr. Joey Vanneste, Operations Manager. The mission of our Canadian counterparts was to explore the relationship and mechanics of how FGIS managed the delegation and designation granted to the Washington State Department of Agriculture. The CGC is reviewing the internal structure of their inspection system in Canada and looking at options for greater oversight of officially licensed entities with a national oversight similar to what FGIS provides to the US system.

Historically the CGC has done all official inspection with CGC employee's but with the loss of domestic inspection at export facilities giving way to "in-house" or unofficial inspection on those domestic movements the CGC is reassessing its roll and is looking at our model. The group was particularly impressed with our FGISonline Program that pulls so many of our elements into one suite bringing monitoring, research and accountability tools to one central source. Our guests were very inquisitive, gracious, knowledgeable, and a pleasure to have join us for the week. We wish the best to our friends up north in their endeavor!

## Coming to your inspection desk ...



GIPSA will be rolling out new desktops and laptops for all inspection workstations. These machines are specially designed for the high dust environments found in our grading labs and are outfitted with redundant disks to ensure our data is preserved. Additionally, in response to the power fluctuations corrupting certain inspection computers, battery backups will be installed to ensure the continuity of our operations.

The most noticeable change is that we are installing two widescreen monitors in all field labs, which will provide the ability for viewing and entering additional factors without scrolling around.

**Look for them to be installed starting in April ...**

## News from National Grain Center



*Alfalfa, Oklahoma, May 22, 1981*

### Storm Spotter Training Held at NGC

The National Weather Service (NWS) uses sophisticated radar, satellite feeds, computers, and monitoring equipment to help them monitor the weather and provide warnings of hazardous conditions. However, those tools cannot detect hail or see funnel clouds or tornadoes. For that information, and to know what the weather is actually doing at ground level, the NWS relies on trained Storm Spotters.

Employees at the National Grain Center in Kansas City, Missouri had the opportunity to attend one of the NWS' Storm Spotter training sessions at the NGC on February 11, 2014. The training was provided by NWS meteorologist Andy Bailey who, in his current role as a Warning Coordination Meteorologist in Kansas City, serves as the principle liaison between the NWS and other members of the Integrated Warning Team, especially Emergency Management and Broadcast Meteorologists.

The training session at the NGC utilized videos, photographs, and graphics of clouds, storms, and storm structures to educate the participants in how storms develop and act, as well as how to identify severe weather threats. The training also focused on the specific types of severe weather reports needed from storm spotters: hail size, wind speeds, wind damage, flash flooding, heavy rain, trees or large limbs downed by wind, tornadoes, waterspouts, funnel clouds, rotating wall clouds, downed power lines or other structural damage caused by wind.

These real-time reports from volunteer Storm Spotters enable the NWS to provide more timely and accurate warnings of dangerous weather conditions to the public. Even as new technology allows the NWS to issue warnings with more lead time, Storm Spotters will always be needed as links between radar indications of severe weather and ground truth.

### Equipment Training

James McLaurin Equipment Program Coordinator , NGC



The first of two scheduled Equipment training seminars were held here at the National Grain Center in Kansas City, Missouri, on March 11-14, 2014. The first training seminar covered both grain and rice inspection equipment. The first group had a total of 32 attendees participating in this very successful training class. The group included FGIS's and Official Inspection Agencies Equipment Specialists.

There was a lot of information covered with great feedback from the attendees on grain and rice equipment, laboratory scales, Equipment Capability Training [ECT], testweight training device, Unified Grain Moisture Algorithm (UGMA) - moisture meters, rice broken scanner (in Development). Tom Runyon President of Seedburo Equipment Company, shared some great information on how some of the inspection equipment we use for official purposes is manufactured.

The second training seminar will begin on March 25-27, 2014, at the National Grain Center. This group will have around 25 attendees from both FGIS and Official Inspection Agencies Equipment Specialists. In this class we will only be covering grain inspection equipment. All rice equipment issues were scheduled in the first class.

I am looking forward to having another exciting second class with lots of questions, and plenty of hands on participations from everyone in attendance.

Thanks to all that took the time out of their busy schedules to come out to the National Grain Center to make these two seminars a great success.

Again, thanks for a great job to all here at NGC for their participation in these seminars.

## News from National Grain Center *continued*



Left to Right: Ramon Luevano, BAR; Gilbert Knight, League City; Maria Encinia, Corpus Christi; Jorge Gutierrez, Corpus Christi

### ODORS IN GRAIN

On February 25, 2014 and March 4, 2014, the Federal Grain Inspection Services' National Grain Center (NGC) in Kansas City, Missouri, hosted two training seminars focusing on sorghum odor. The Board of Appeals and Review's Ramon Luevano provided the training for League City personnel. The attendees for the first

class were Jorge Gutierrez, Robert Waller, and Maria Encinia. The attendees for the second class were, Julian Biley, Gilbert Knight, Darnel Kenerson, and Quality Assurance Specialist Gary Erskine. Participants trained in odor detection in several grains and edible beans with the emphasis on sorghum odors. Sorghum is one of the most difficult grains to make odor determinations on. While at NGC, all the participants also trained on various types of damages in grain, rice, and edible beans.

Odor determinations in grain continue to be difficult to make because of the subjectivity of the factor. Several factors can contribute to the proper assignment of the odor. Some but not all factors that may impair the inspector's ability to detect odors are: sinus and upper respiratory infections, polyps in the nasal cavities, frontal head injuries, hormonal disturbances, dental problems, exposure to certain chemicals such as insecticides and solvents, numerous medications, including some common antibiotics and antihistamines, radiation associated with head and neck injuries, and aging (odor detection deteriorates in some people, especially after age 60).

We want to thank everyone who came out to participate in the Sorghum odor training, and also thank everyone here at NGC for a great job in their participation in hosting the training.



Left to Right (Front Row) : Robert Waller, League City; Ramon Luevano, Bar  
Left to Right (Back Row) : Garry Erskine, League City; Darnell Kenerson, League City; Julian Biley, League City

## Field Location Sound-Off

P&SP Western Regional Office

### Climate Assessment, Sensing, and Diversity & Inclusion Training in the WRO Submitted by Steve Pollock



The WRO had a remarkable first week of March. Kevin Smith and Eli Salahuddin from GIPSA's Civil Rights Staff visited the office. This is my perspective on the week's meetings.

On Monday and Tuesday, Kevin conducted individual interviews to help the Civil Rights Staff assess the human relations environment in our office and to gain insight into some of the results from the Employee Viewpoint Survey. On Wednesday, Eli led two sensing sessions. The morning session was with non-supervisory employees, including resident agents who participated over the telephone. The afternoon session was with the region's managers and supervisors.

*Continued, see Diversity on page 9.*

## Field Location Sound-Off *continued*

**Diversity from page 7** The morning sensing session was a free-flowing group discussion on a wide range of topics. It was an opportunity for individuals to raise awareness of some perceived attitudes toward and treatment of employees and working groups in our office. Eli reminded us of the importance of communication. In particular, we should validate our perceptions before accepting them as reality. We should try to understand other persons' situations and viewpoints, and appreciate that everyone's perceptions are shaped by their own unique life experiences.

Another theme throughout the morning session was that we could improve our teamwork. Not just within the traditional teams or organizational units, but across units, grade levels, and job descriptions to work toward the single mission of our agency. If we regard all of us as members of a single team, working toward our agency mission, fair and respectful treatment will follow much more naturally

On Thursday morning, Eli led the diversity and inclusion training session with the entire office and resident agents. We viewed some thought-provoking (and sometimes humorous) videos, and Eli reminded us of the value that diverse perspectives bring to the workplace. We performed a role-playing exercise using an actual example of conflict that arose earlier in our session to help us understand the importance of being sensitive to the perspectives of others. Eli also led a discussion about the importance of inclusion, and how true inclusion is sitting at the table as a family member rather than as an invited guest.

The afternoon session was not like any Civil Rights session I had ever attended. The session was a kind of team-building, but we did not stand in circles passing a ball around or fall blindfolded and backward trusting someone to catch us. We had a sincere, and at times, uncomfortable discussion of real-life personal feelings about experiences we had when we believed we had been treated unfairly or in ways that were less than dignified or respectful. It was clear that these personal feelings ran very deep. It was truly eye-opening how profoundly and personally individuals in our office had been affected by these real-life experiences. And it was clear that these feelings could at times impact how our office fulfills its mission. Fairness, dignity and respect are much more than words printed at the bottom of a form letter.

## Links of Interest

### Vilsack blogs on women and girls in agriculture

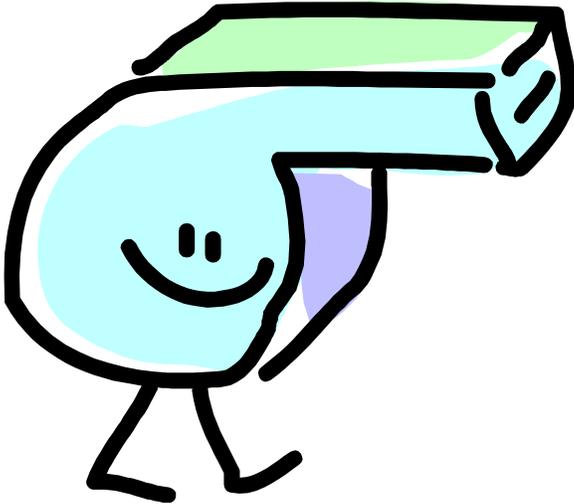
Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack on Friday blogged on the role of women in agriculture on the White House Council on Women and Girls blog site.

The [post](#) includes a link to the Obama administration's agency-by-agency accomplishments for women and girls, including those of the Agriculture Department.

- [White House Council on Women and Girls – The Power of Women in Agriculture](#)
- [– Recent Agency Accomplishments March 2014](#)

## GIPSA Represented in USDA Federal Internal Coach Boot Camp

By Caroline Thorpe, Training Officer, GIPSA MBS



Jared Koch, a Resident Agent and Certified Fraud Examiner with the Packers and Stockyards Administration in Kansas, was accepted in to the Virtual University Coaching Program.

When asked about applying to the program, Koch reflected that he is blessed to be a part of an incredible team of Agents and Marketing Specialists dedicated to protecting the integrity of our wonderful agricultural industry. Further, he applied for the USDA Coach Boot Camp out of a desire to, not only improve his leadership skills, but to be a positive source of motivation for others within his Agency and community. He stated; if, by being a positive influence in someone's life, I can help motivate them toward success, then I am inspired and motivated myself. I am very excited and humbled to be a part of this inaugural program and it is my truest aspiration to help lead others on to success in their own right.

To create the program USDA is partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) based on its successful model of creating a cadre of internal coaches. All participants will attend an intensive program with about 3 weeks of training and 24 hours of actual coaching of employees and will be expected to offer their coaching services to USDA upon completion.

Coaching, as defined by the International Coach Federation (ICF), is a relationship guided by a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires employees to maximize their personal and professional potential. Enrich your own professional work-life by becoming a coach to a new employee. USDA is partnering with the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) based on its successful model of creating a cadre of internal coaches. By helping employees identify what motivates them this can lead to more engagement on the job.

If you are interested in coaching, below are some basic coaching courses you may want to consider.

[Getting Ready to Coach \(Web Based mgmt\\_14\\_a01\\_bs\\_enus\\_SKILLSOFT\)](#)

[Conducting Coaching Sessions \(Web Based mgmt\\_14\\_a02\\_bs\\_enus\\_SKILLSOFT\)](#)

[Business Coaching: Building the Coaching Relationship \(Web Based mgmt\\_14\\_a03\\_bs\\_enus\\_SKILLSOFT\)](#)

# PSP Change Control Working Group

## CCWG.....A Model to Follow!

Did you know that CCWG is the first team of its kind in the USDA? In fact, other agencies have modeled their groups and charters similar to CCWG!

Prior to the implementation of CCWG, there were many existing groups in place handling change requests. Those groups include Change Agents, Sub-Process Module Team, Quality Program Improvement Committee (QPIC), Employee Manual Team, and RD-IT Initiative Team. As a result of an Organizational Assessments Survey and OIG Audit, CCWG was created and started in January 2009. Today there are none team members: One representative from ODA, One representative for PLD, and Two representatives from each regional office. Together, each member has a different area of expertise and helps guide our agency towards future change!

## Travel Bits and Pieces

**Concur Government Edition (CGE)**- Implementation to the new travel system, CGE, is being delayed due to interface problems. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

**Privately Owed Vehicle (POV) Mileage vs Travel Card Gas Purchase** – GIPSA has been informed by the department that government travel cards cannot be used to purchase gas for a POV used during official travel. The **traveler is** reimbursed for mileage occurred during official travel. Cardholders will be reimbursed for gas used during official travel for an authorized rental car. Government travel cardholders who use the card to purchase gas for POV travel will be flagged by the department for potential misuse/abuse.

## A Shout-Out Goes to...

“A ROARING shout out goes to Wayne Basford, Kevin Studer, and Ryan Montgomery for their thorough review of FOIA records which are responsive to a FOIA appeal and for their input regarding GIPSA’s response to that appeal.”

-Joanne Peterson

“Please give a “SHOUT OUT” to Marsha Schwartz – for making sure that the Equipment Training attendees were well fed!”

-Regina Landry

“I’d like to extend a big thank you to Daniel Knight and Kevin Smith for the opportunity to do a detail and to serve as a Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) in the Civil Rights Office. It was great working with Kevin as he served as a valuable mentor to me.

While working in the Civil Rights Office, I was able to effectively organize, plan, and execute the Martin Luther King Memorial Program and Civil Rights Law Training. I’ve learned the importance of leadership and the power of information through my experience. Finally, I’d like to send a thank you to Linda Alston, Dawn Cowan, Eli Salahuddin, Mark Kemp, Caroline Thorpe, Morris Johnson and Ruth Goff for sharing their knowledge and expertise and helping to make these Webinar/Training programs a success.”

With Gratitude, Pat Ogunyale

“A THUNDEROUS shout out goes to Amy Blechinger! Amy, a Program Analyst in the P&SP Policy and Litigation Division, worked tirelessly in modifying a P&SP Work Instruction to clarify the issuance, service, and enforcement of subpoenas. Her work was done in conjunction with a Change Request submitted to the P&S CCWG by Resident Agent Jason Corey. Amy worked with OGC and P&S attorneys to craft an excellent description of our work to meet all legal requirements, and also prepared multiple subpoena templates that can be used to obtain records and/or testimony. Thank you Amy!! “

-- Wayne Basford, P&S CCWG Chair

## AgLearn

Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

### AgLearn's Top Courses for 2013:

Since AgLearn has some many courses, listed below are some of the most popular courses to help you sort and identify some favorites that people are using. Just cut and paste the title into the search box of your AgLearn account and click the [Browse](#) button underneath the box. Launch the course and add it to your To Do List or launch the content.

### AgLearn Top 10 for 2013 were:

- Getting Started with Excel 2010
- Interpersonal Communication Communicating with Confidence
- Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concise
- Time Management: Planning and Prioritizing Your Time
- Being an Effective Team Member
- Diversity on the Job: The Importance of Diversity and the Changing Workplace
- Getting Started with Excel 2007
- Customer Service Over the Phone
- Using E-mail and Instant Messaging Effectively
- Interpersonal Communication: Listening Effectively

### AgLearn Books: Leadership in Books 24 X 7

- The Body Language of Liars: From Little White Lies to Pathology and Deception
- Make Your Brain Work: How to Maximize Your Efficiency, Productivity and Effectiveness
- It's The Way You Say It: Becoming Articulate, Well Spoken, and Clear
- How to Talk to Absolutely Anyone: Confident Communication in Any Situation

### AgLearn IT Books:

- Excel 2013 Bible
- Outlook 2013 Bible

### GIPSA most popular writing classes:

There is a wide range of courses available whether your focus is grammar basics ,or using words to persuade or technical writing. It is always good to identify your most immediate training need whether it be grammar, technical writing ,or run on sentences, first before looking at a whole list of courses. That way you can focus on what is most important to you.

- Business Grammar Common Usage Errors
- Business Writing: Editing and Proofreading
- Business Writing: How to Write Clearly and Concisely
- Business Writing: Know Your Readers and Your Purpose
- Business Grammar: Parts of Speech
- Business Grammar: The Mechanics of Writing
- Business Grammar: Working with Words
- Business Grammar: Punctuation
- Writing under Pressure: Preparing for Success



## Special Emphasis Corner

### Holocaust Remembrance Day

Sundown April 27<sup>th</sup> – Monday April 28<sup>th</sup>

Submitted by Stephanie Feinberg

#### ***“The Butterfly”***

*The last, the very last,  
So richly, brightly, dazzlingly yellow.  
Perhaps if the sun's tears would sing  
against a white stone...*

*Such, such a yellow  
Is carried lightly 'way up high.  
It went away I'm sure because it wished to  
kiss the world goodbye.*

*For seven weeks I've lived in here,*

*Penned up inside this ghetto  
But I have found my people here.  
The dandelions call to me  
And the white chestnut candles in the court.  
Only I never saw another butterfly.*

*That butterfly was the last one.  
Butterflies don't live in here,  
In the ghetto.*

*Pavel Friedmann 4.6.1942*

This poem was written by Pavel Friedmann, at Theresienstadt concentration camp on June 4, 1942. It was found amongst a hidden cache of children's work recovered at the end of the Second World War. On September 29, 1944 he was deported to Auschwitz where he died.

The US Congress established April 27-May 4, 2014, the Days of Remembrance, as the nation's annual commemoration of the Holocaust. The 2014 theme for the observance is “Confronting the Holocaust: American Responses.” This theme looks back on America's reaction in the face of the upcoming holocaust events and asks the American people: 1) What are the warning signs we should look for to help prevent future genocides and 2) What is our responsibility as a nation or as individuals when confronted with such crimes?

This theme plays a lot into why we study the Holocaust and why this day is important. The Holocaust provides one of the most effective subjects to understand the roots and ramifications of prejudice, racism, and stereotyping in any society. However, it also provides a context for exploring the dangers of remaining silence, apathy, and indifference in the face of the oppression of others. The Holocaust was not an accident in history—it occurred because choices were made that not only legalized discrimination but also allowed prejudice, hatred, and ultimately, mass murder, to occur.

One of the biggest reasons we study the Holocaust? To say – “Never Again.” However, in terms of Bosnia (1992-1995), Rwanda (1994), and other genocides, it's happening “again and again.” So this is a day to not only remember the 11 million people killed because of the Nazis genocidal policy (Jews, Soviet POWs, Soviet civilians, Polish civilians, Yugoslav civilians, mentally and physically handicapped, Gypsies, political prisoners, resistance fighters, homosexuals, and deportees), but a day to remember what we can do to prevent further genocides. As long as genocide remains a threat, we must continue to ask ourselves about the consequences of action – and of inaction.

Sometimes all it takes is one person – to create a movement. So, what are some things you can do?

- Pay tribute to Holocaust survivors and World War II veterans.
- Memorialize the victims of Nazi persecution
- Visit a holocaust museum
- Teach friends and family about the holocaust
- Raise awareness of threats of genocide today



## Special Emphasis Corner *continued*

### Executive Master Gardener Program

Submitted by Jennifer Weiland with contributions from Tracy Walton, Sylvia Midgett, and Morgan Arvaneh



In April 2013 Washington, DC area GIPSA employees Rita Hansberry, Jeana Harbison, Morgan Arvaneh, Tracy Walton, Sylvia Midgett and Jennifer Weiland all took their first steps toward completing the Executive Master Gardener (EMG) program. The mission of the EMG program is to train individuals interested in volunteering with the People's Garden at USDA Headquarters.

In 2009, Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack declared the grounds surrounding the property of USDA headquarters as the first People's Garden in honor of President Abraham Lincoln's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday. People's Gardens can vary in size and type but all are required to meet three criteria: (1) They must **benefit the community** by providing recreational space or food that can be donated to a local food bank or shelter; (2) they must be **collaborative** and maintained by a partnership of local individuals or organizations and (3) they should **incorporate sustainable practices**, such as use compost made by participants, contain native plants or encourage beneficial insects.

The EMG training is provided in exchange for a commitment to volunteer in the People's Garden programs. The training takes about 6 months to complete, and is an abbreviated version of Extension Master Gardener programs offered by County Extension offices throughout the country. It requires a commitment of 32 volunteer hours per calendar year and completion of 8 continuing education credits per year.

The EMG training program consists of both lectures and hands-on lab formats. Topics covered include garden botany, soils, fertilizers, general plant health, organic vegetable gardening, integrated pest management, water use and conservation, wildlife management, weed identification and control, woody plants, and finding answers to gardening questions. The GIPSA team that graduated from the 2013 EMG program found the training and volunteering both educational and fulfilling. Lectures and labs were mixed with many volunteer hours that consisted of weeding, planting and pruning in the gardens surrounding the Whitten Building, harvesting herbs and vegetables for food banks and chatting with visitors who stopped to learn about the People's Garden as they walked along the National Mall.

Morgan Arvaneh of the IT Applications Development Branch took the EMG training course to expand his gardening knowledge and share his interests with the public: *"Ever since I was a little boy, I have been fascinated by the color and shape of flowers and plants. As a hobby I enjoy grafting different colors of roses to achieve new colors. I attended the EMG training program last year to increase my knowledge of gardening and also share my skills and interests with others. I enjoyed working with other people with similar interests and sharing knowledge with them. I also enjoyed helping visitors during the USDA Farmer's Market on Fridays by talking with them and answering their gardening questions."*

Sylvia Midgett of the Field Management Division, enjoyed expanding her interests as well as the service aspect of the EMG program: *"I am new to gardening, and the knowledge I have gained through the Master Gardener's program is just a start to my gardening journey that I know will take me well into retirement. Gardening has helped me reduce stress and mentally relax after a long day in the office. I also enjoy knowing that the food I helped grow in the People's Garden is donated to the DC Central Kitchen to nourish those who are less fortunate."*

If you would like to learn more about the Executive Master Gardener Program and the People's Garden, look for an announcement in April regarding the 2014 EMG training class or visit the [People's Garden](#) website on the Internet.

## Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work Day/ Earth Day



USDA employees are busy preparing for our *Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work and Earth Day* event scheduled for April 24<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 am – 2:00 pm on the Jamie L. Whitten Patio. This year we are also partnering with the People's Garden to further promote Earth Day, with a theme of '*Plant a Seed, Grow a Future*'!



GIPSA had a fantastic group of volunteers last year and we had a number of fun activities to offer the kids and other visitors. GIPSA employees from the field offices and Kansas City also helped make the event a success by sending in various grains, beans and rice for our grain grinding and grain art activities.

It's time to start organizing for the event this year! If you'd like to volunteer or have ideas for activities, please contact Jennifer Weiland at [Jennifer.j.weiland@usda.gov](mailto:Jennifer.j.weiland@usda.gov).



### Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

(800) 222-0364

(888) 262-7848 (TTY)

<http://www.FOH4You.com>

Confidential toll-free number 24 hours a day/7 days a week



## Training Updates

Caroline Thorpe, Washington, DC

### Mandatory Training Due

Course	Due Date	Trainees
No Fear Act Comprehensive	Within 30 days of hiring (USDA)	New Employees
Cultural Transformation Training	Upcoming	All Employees
Calendar Year 2014 Ethics	Due Date June 30, 2014	All Employees
Reasonable Accommodations Telecon	April 10, 2014, 1-2pm (eastern )	FGIS Supervisors and managers (50 percent are complete)

### Optional Training Available

#### Training and Development Tools in a Nutshell from USDA and GIPSA

If you're not in an organized development program, what options and tools do you have to move forward in your career? Below is a standard list of ongoing resources employees may use to identify career moves and make sure they take the next step.

**1) Identifying next steps based on job series:** Considering a move in your current government series or to another series. First look at your own Position Description and also find the series on OPM's website for the next grade higher. Carefully review the documents to clearly identify associated competencies and review this with someone in your office on what those skills are. For those in FGIS that do grain grading you may want go to the *InGIPSA* website at <https://ingipsa.gipsa.usda.gov/training.aspx> and under "steer your career" click on Career Information for ACGs, ACTs, and ACAs.

**2) Goal Setting:** Individual Development Plans (IDPs) - Set developmental and training goals using your IDP and follow through. It is easy to identify activities but often the issue is executing or following-up on those plans. See if you can commit to a trusted friend to verify if you are following up on your developmental or training goals whether they are on your IDP (job related and organizational) or personal goals (financial, health, career or personal (house, family hobby)). Further, the Department will be rolling out a coaching program over the next year. Initially this will probably be open to those in leadership training programs. Coaching, is a teaching, training or development process via which an individual is supported while achieving a specific personal or professional result or goal. As a result, the coach often asks a lot of questions to clarify next moves that help the coachee identify their next best moves. This is for usually a short duration less than six months. The object here is to meet to move forward with your goals, ideally to become a more engaged employee.

**3) Mentoring:** Some of you may participate formally and others may opt out of the formal process and do this informally (finding someone with the skills you want and simply talking with them). Either way, this is a great opportunity for you to get information on both the technical skills or soft skills or career development of an employee. Mentoring is defined as an individual who facilitates personal and professional growth by sharing knowledge and insights learned through the years. The assumption is that, unlike coaching, the mentor has some form of information or advice needed by the mentee.

*Continued, see Training on page 15*

*Training from cover page 14*

**4) Developmental Opportunities:** With support and assistance of the supervisor, the employee's present job can be restructured or arrangements made to have the employee temporarily transferred to another area to learn firsthand the necessary technical and managerial competencies required for effective performance in that job.

Examples of developmental activities include the following list:

- **Shadowing:** Providing a trainee or learner with the opportunity to observe a well qualified, journeyman level employee perform a particular skill. Immediately after the shadowing period, the learner needs to have the opportunity to perform the same skill and be given feedback on that performance.
- **Detail/Rotational Assignments:** Short-term assignment particularly appropriate for important skills that make up a small portion of an individual's job, but can lead to full-time work in that field.
- **Task Force Assignments:** This is particularly effective if the learner has an opportunity to work with well qualified people who will provide feedback to the learner on his/her performance and participation in the group.

**5) Development of Job Aides:** Requires that the learner develop a product that will assist in the performance of the job, while, at the same time, serving as a vehicle for learning job-related information.

- Cross-Program Assignments
- Special Work Projects
- Coaching Lower Level Employees

**6) Finally, Communication, Communication, Communication:** Studies show that one skill clearly associated with job success and leadership is communication. Consider taking courses on AgLearn to strengthen both written and oral communication. If you want to enter leadership polish your briefing skills by joining Toastmasters, which is only about \$50 per year. See if you can find someone in your office who writes well and may be able to work with you on a basic writing program.

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 Civil Rights Staff at  
202-690-3640



**Have an idea?**



Then fill out your change request  
available at *inGIPSA* and email it to:  
[FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov](mailto:FGIS-CCWG@usda.gov)

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 April 23, 2014**

**Retiring?** To be included on our email distribution list after you retire from GIPSA, please send your email address to [Jennifer.s.hill@usda.gov](mailto:Jennifer.s.hill@usda.gov).

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