



# GIPSA NEWS

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

JUNE 2014  
2014

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## FGIS Matters....!

Randall Jones, Washington DC

**FEDERAL EMPLOYEE VIEWPOINT SURVEY.** Just as I have done in the past months, I will start by talking about the FEVS. First and foremost, I want thank those of you who took time and completed the viewpoint survey as this is a critical step in making GIPSA stronger and a better place to work for all. Your input and insight regarding the current state of affairs and how well we are performing certain activities will provide the foundation and roadmap for GIPSA as we move forward. The first status report that I received shows GIPSA is leading all of USDA as well as the entire government in completing our surveys. Way to go **GIPSA team members!**



*Randall Jones*

During the first 2 weeks of May, the **Office of Personnel and Management** provided an e-mail to many GIPSA employees inviting them to participate in the FEVS by completing a survey via the internet. If you received this invitation from OPM and have not yet completed the survey, I urge you to take a few minutes today and let your voice be heard by completing the survey. With your support and help, I am convinced that GIPSA can and will be the best place to work in USDA and the entire federal government. That is our goal and, with your input and support, together we can make this happen.

The deadline to complete the survey is nearing so don't let another minute slip away before you complete the survey.

**American Association of Grain Inspection and Weighing Agencies (AAGIWA).** On May 5 and 6, AAGIWA held its annual conference which is a key opportunity for FGIS to interact with AAGIWA's members who provide inspection and weighing services on behalf of the Secretary. As such, **FGIS senior managers** gave presentations regarding fall protection, the FGIS market overview, policy changes, and quality assurance to name just a few. Industry vendors who provide critical tools used in grain inspection and weighing also presented some of their new products currently on the market. For example, a new grinder is now available - the CS Bell Grist mill – which is able to grind grain 75 percent faster than our current grinders. I anticipate that in the near future we will purchase a few to analyze their performance in our labs.

**Water Based Test Kits.** We are hoping in the very near future to increase the utilization of water based test

*Continued, see FGIS on page 2.*

**FGIS** *from cover page*

kits for mycotoxins. A few elevators in New Orleans have started supplying these kits for our use in testing for mycotoxins. Not only are they safer for our employees to use but it is also better for the environment than the methanol based kits. However, just this past week, we had a minor setback as one of the primary water based test kits withdrew its Certificate of Conformance and is currently not approved for use in the Official System. We hope this is only a temporary setback in reaching our goal to reduce the use of methanol based test kits.

During the AAIGWA meeting a number of companies that produce test kits indicated that they are currently trying to develop water-based test kit for fumonisin. Let's hope that they are successful soon so that our transition can continue.

**Export Elevator View.** A big thank you to **Karen Guagliardo** and **Lee Capper's staff** for their work in getting the elevator view of the Inspection Testing and Weighing log fully operational. The elevator view allows export elevator staff to monitor in real-time the inspection log which facilitates their ability to meet the contract specifications.

**Improving Our Lab Work Environment.** We are always open to ways to improve the work environment and in particular our export labs which have historically presented many challenges. If you have any suggestions for lab enhancements please let us know. I am pleased to say that we have made progress in improving the exports labs through the purchase of chairs, anti-fatigue floor mats, and new computers including dual monitors. We have also purchased fall protection harnesses for the field offices. We are very excited about upcoming changes which include improvements in the use of technology as we are making preparations to network the equipment in our labs which will include the moisture machines, protein machines, desk scales, and some mycotoxin test readers. This change will greatly enhance and facilitate the work in the labs.

**Upcoming Events.** We have a variety of meetings and training sessions scheduled for this summer. First we have a **Quality Assurance Seminar** for all of the field office **Quality Assurance Specialists** at the **National Grain Center in Kansas City**. The **Grain Inspection Advisory Committee (GIAC)** meeting will be held at the National Grain Center on July 15 and 16. The GIAC is made up of members appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and provides advice with respect to the implementation of the U.S. Grain Standards Act and the delivery of our services. The GIAC represents the interest of all segments of the grain producing, processing, storing, merchandising, consuming, and exporting industries. The GIAC provides guidance to GIPSA that helps us to meet the needs of our customers and stakeholders. At the end of July there will be **supervisor training** at the National Grain Center for all first line supervisors and team leaders. Wrapping up the summer training sessions will be training for **newly hired inspectors** which will be conducted in August at the National Grain Center.

*Continued, see FGIS on page 5*



## 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

### Condolences



**Alvin "Poppa" "Big Al" Kelly, Jr.** of Edgard, La. departed this life on Tuesday, April 22, 2014, after a long battle with cancer at the age of 57. He first came to the New Orleans Field Office (NOFO) in July, 2009 as an Agricultural Commodity Technician ACT. He was chosen to participate in the Federal Career Intern Program in 2011 and had successfully obtained his license to grade corn and soybeans. Mr. Kelly was a graduate of Grambling University where he played collegiate football under Coach Eddie Robinson. His work ethic was admired by everyone at NOFO who knew that Mr. Kelly insisted on "carrying his own weight" even as his health declined. Although Mr. Kelly's time at NOFO was much too brief, he will long be remembered by all whose lives he touched. Mr. Kelly is survived by his wife, Ramona, three daughters, a son and two grandsons.

### Retirements

**Bart Di Giovanni** will retire June 27, 2014. Bart retired from the US Army in 1997 as a lieutenant colonel. At that time he was assigned as the Chief of Mobilization handling the mobilization of reserve forces for Bosnia, at First US Army, headquartered at Fort Gillem, Atlanta. Bart served 29 years in uniform (20 active and 9 as a reservist). He is a veteran of the Vietnam war having served as an infantry platoon leader with the 101st Airborne Division in 69-70.

Upon retirement from the US Army Bart partnered with an Army buddy as a real estate agent.

He was hired by the agency in November 2001 as a Legal Instruments Examiner; became a Marketing Specialist in May 2004; became a Resident Agent in August 2007.

Bart graduated from the Aspiring Leader Program in October 2004. His "developmental assignment" was with the USDA Food Safety & Inspection Service and my "shadow assignment" was with the USDA Food & Nutrition Service.

Bart has served on a number of agency teams, notably the MAR and the CCWG (3 years).

Bart and his wife Cyrila have been married 43 years. They have a son, Adam, who is serving as a US Army Officer currently stationed at Fort Lee, VA; and a daughter, Elisa, who is married to a US Army Officer, currently stationed at Fort Knox, Kentucky. They have six grandchildren, the oldest is 11 and the youngest is 1.



**Robert Medley**, an Agricultural Commodity Grader with the New Orleans Field Office, retired on May 2, 2014, with over thirty-four years of service. Bob began his career in February, 1978, in Washington, D.C., in the AMS Grain Division of USDA. After working for a brief period of time in D.C., his next assignments sent him to Baltimore, Philadelphia, and finally to the New Orleans area. During his career with FGIS, Bob served on several committees including the GIPSA EEO Advisory Committee. He also held various offices in numerous organizations. One of his appointments was as the President of the National Safety Council. Bob also worked with the Compliance Division assisting with reviews and traveled to many locations on detail assignments. Some of the assignments that Bob enjoyed the most took him to Canada, Portland, Chicago, and California. Everyone at the New Orleans Field Office wishes Bob and his wife Ilean all the best and hope they have a wonderful time enjoying their time together after his retirement.

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## Retirements



**John B. Pitchford** will retire on June 25 after nearly 39 years of creditable service to GIPSA/FGIS. John began his career in January 1977 as an Agricultural Commodity Grader in the Portland Field Office sampling railcars, and implemented the new official wheat protein testing program at Oregon and Washington elevators in 1988. He transferred to the Standards and Procedures Branch in Washington, DC, in November 1979. In 1984, he transferred to the International Monitoring Staff, became Chief in 1986, and then became Director in 2000 when it became the Office of International Affairs, which was renamed in 2009 to Departmental Initiatives and International Affairs. Below are his parting reflections.

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“It seems that my career has been characterized by working to resolve international trade barriers involving “unwanted things” that show up in grain shipments; from TCK smut and Karnal bunt fungi, to mycotoxins, to industrial glass balls (who remembers that one?), to treated seeds, to unapproved transgenic events. Some of these issues were resolved in the course of a week, others carried on for over 10 years. In any case, it made for an interesting career in that each morning I never knew what might greet me that day; in the case of StarLink corn, a single Washington Post article on September 18, 2000, which I read in a taxi cab in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, changed my life for the next 10 years.

“This career path, largely unplanned, has proven to be fascinating: it came with continually needing to learn about new technologies, applying a defensible balance of science, policy, and practicality, and negotiating for (hopefully) successful outcomes. That in itself has been challenging and rewarding, but by far the most rewarding aspect of my career has been the people I have met and the friendships and relationships that I have formed. I have many fond memories of those who ‘showed me the ropes’ when I first arrived in Portland one day straight out of college; all the rest of you in the collective GIPSA family; and others I have met in the public and private sectors around the world. I have been blessed over the years with a terrific staff that works as a loyal, cohesive team – most notably Byron Reilly, who has worked on my Staff for 28 years.

“On a lighter note, I’ll share a few amusing facts and anecdotes from my past:

I still have my grain picks and scoop, and orange hard hat, in my office to remind me of my roots.

I have had 11 passports and have travelled to about 55 countries – in the case of China, about 12 times.

I have 5 shoe boxes of business cards from people I have met – organized in a sophisticated system that no one but me could understand.

I have had emergency plane landings from such things as a bomb threat and a flock of birds getting sucked into the engines. I have had planned landings aborted because the runway was occupied by another airplane.

I once was violently (“GET OUT!!!”) ordered out of a high level Chinese authority’s office (he didn’t like our arguments during TCK tolerance negotiations).

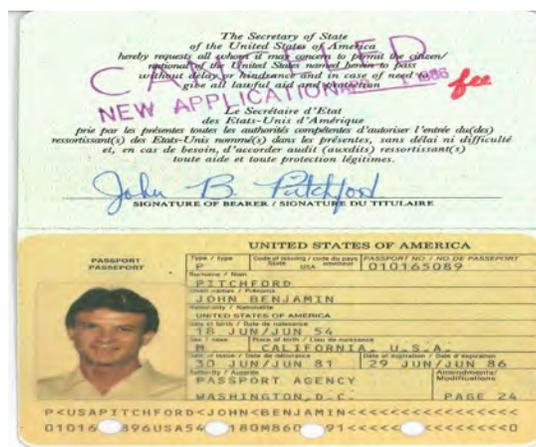
I once had the chance to shake our President’s hand in the White House Rose Garden (Bill Clinton, after he signed legislation admitting China into the WTO after our successful TCK negotiations).

“I have always lived by two mottos: “Work hard, play hard” and “Nothing is permanent...except change” – and they have led me to where I am. All this said, it’s been a really wonderful ride, but it’s time to step aside and let someone else have some of the same opportunities. I challenge you younger folk (that means all of you) to be the best you can and always strive for the success of yourself and the organization.

“I have established residency in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware, with my partner, dog, cat, and many friends, but we’ll continue to maintain a small condo in Alexandria, Virginia. Keep up the great work of GIPSA, and in the shorter term, please keep in touch. [johnbpitchford@gmail.com](mailto:johnbpitchford@gmail.com) or (cell) 302-362-2688.”

Best wishes,

John



## Names in the News continued...

### GIPSA Spotlight



## Employee Spotlight



**Name:** Mary Knutson  
**Years with GIPSA:** 17 1/2 years  
**Division:** FGIS  
**Title:** Agricultural Commodity Technician  
**Major Duties:** Certification, Safety  
**Greatest accomplishment:** Learning to Quilt  
**Interesting fact:** GFFO has over 64 thousand certificates in the FGIS Certificate System.  
**Favorite unhealthy food/ healthy Food:** Blueberries/Popcorn with Butter  
**What did you want to be when you grew up:** Teacher  
**Favorite quote:** One Day at A Time



**Name:** Bart Di Giovanni  
**Years with GIPSA:** Almost 13  
**Division:** P&SP  
**Title:** Resident Agent  
**Major Duties:** Ensure compliance with the P&S Act and P&SP Regulations by conducting reviews, audits, investigations, checkweighs and assembling case files for enforcement  
**Greatest accomplishment:** Served 3 years on the Change Control  
**Interesting fact:** Retired from the US Army as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1997 (22 years of service)  
**Favorite unhealthy food/ healthy Food:** Ham sandwich (lunch); steak (dinner)  
**What did you want to be when you grew up:** Soldier  
**Favorite quote:** Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country. (JFK)

### FGIS from page 2

**Reauthorization Under U.S. Grain Standards Act (USGA).** The USGSA contains a provision that authorizes FGIS funding for appropriations to perform standardization and compliance activities, as well as monitoring in foreign ports of grain officially inspected and weighed under the USGSA. This provision is set to expire on September 30, 2015. In order to ensure continued funding, Congress will have to take action to extend the sunset provision by amending the statute which in the past has included Congressional hearings that have taken place during the spring just prior to the expiration of the authority. In this case, the hearings, if there are any, would typically be held next spring. I will keep you updated as we proceed through this process.

Until next time, keep up the good work and stay safe!

**MAKE  
YOUR  
VOICE  
HEARD**

2014 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey  
Ends June 16, 2014!!!

**FEVS**



## GIPSA'S 2014 Feds Feed Families (FFF) Campaign

Secretary Vilsack announced on May 12, 2014, that USDA will once again lead the 2014 effort with support from the Chief Human Capital Officers Council and other agency partners. This year's campaign will run from June 2 through August 27, 2014. This year's GIPSA FFF Champion is Linda Alston, Civil Rights Staff.

The FFF initiative started in 2009, when Congressman Frank Wolf (Virginia) informed then Office of Personnel Management, Director John Berry of food banks' dire need for food during summer months when children are out of school. Donations generally drop during summer months and children do not have access to school lunch programs that are so important to ensuring that they are well nourished. The FFF initiative helps to fill that gap. Our donations help ensure that those children are not greeted by empty pantry shelves when the need is the greatest.

Congressman Wolf asked the question, "Can Federal workers help?" The past five summers, Federal employees have collected 24.1 million pounds of food and other non-perishable items to support families across America who are in need during this time of persistent economic austerity. Last year, USDA donated over 4,329,225 pounds. ***GIPSA donated 10,785.25 of those pounds!***

With your support, GIPSA can go over that 10,785.25 pounds. This year's most wanted items includes, canned fruits, vegetables, proteins, multigrain cereals, grains, soups, 100 percent juice, condiments, snacks, baking goods, hygiene items, paper products and household items.

***THANK YOU*** for the work that you do to help your neighbors who are in need. We are looking forward to another exciting and successful FFF campaign.

## FAS Recognizes GIPSA



On May 20 at their annual awards ceremony, the Foreign Agricultural Service recognized GIPSA's contributions toward two interagency initiatives during the past year. The first citation was for "outstanding interagency work that quickly re-opened the U.S. wheat market in Japan, valued at over \$1 billion, after the discovery of unapproved transgenic wheat in Oregon." The second was for "exemplary teamwork displayed by the U.S. China Joint Soybean Inspection Comparison team that reduced trade quality disruptions for U.S. soybean exports to China."

After the awards were presented, Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services Michael T. Scuse interrupted the program to emphasize the tremendous impact of these teams on U.S. trade, saying that (in the case of China) "one out of four soybeans produced in the United States ends up in China, and it is essential for us to address concerns expressed by our foreign markets."

The awards recognize the work of the many GIPSA employees who contributed to these initiatives; John Pitchford and Byron Reilly accepted them on behalf of GIPSA.



## FY2014 LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PARTICIPANTS-SELECTED

Congratulations to this year's selected participants! Management has again committed time, money, and resources to support a strong leadership program in GIPSA. This is in acknowledgement that, like the rest of the Federal government, a high percentage of GIPSA's employees are retirement eligible. This means that those who will continue in the agency for the coming years will need to have skills to take on new opportunities as more senior employees retire.

Selectees and their offices are:

### **Aspiring Leader Program (GS 4-6)**

Sheena Fox, FGIS Toledo  
Wanda Erhabor-Emokpae, FGIS NOLA

### **New Leader (GS 7-11)**

Rene Acosta, FGIS Portland  
George Banks, FGIS NOLA  
Ronald Bundy, FGIS Toledo  
George Dumun, FGIS TSD  
Stephanie Feinberg, P&SP Policy & Litigation  
Jesse Grelle, FGIS Portland  
Shane Minden, FGIS Moscow, Idaho  
Courtney Trask, FGIS NOLA  
Glenda Plautz, P&SP Des Moines  
Brian Zarek, FGIS Portland

### **Executive Leadership Program (GS 12-13)**

Robert Anderson, P&SP Denver  
Caleb Bott, P&SP Denver  
Kendra Kline, FGIS DC ODA  
Andrew Ping, FGIS DC DIIA  
Gilbert Sanchez, GIPSA DC IT

There were about 30 applicants this year who showed their commitment to their development by filling out an application. This is a special thanks for all applicants' submissions.

## USDA Bee Watch



Dear Friend of The People's Garden:

May 15, 2014, we launched #USDABeeWatch at [www.usda.gov/beewatch](http://www.usda.gov/beewatch) to increase public awareness about bee activity and the actions Americans can take to support pollinators. We encourage you to support USDA's work by adopting pollinator-friendly gardening practices!

This live feed ("bee cam") of The People's Garden Apiary located on the roof of the Jamie L. Whitten Building at USDA Headquarters in Washington, DC, is viewable 24/7. You can take [this virtual tour](#) for a look inside the hive.

So what will you see on our bee cam? This time of year, the camera – placed several feet from the entrance of the hive – shows female worker bees entering and exiting the hive gathering nectar and pollen to convert into honey. Be on the lookout for bees carrying a load of pollen on their hind legs. As bees groom, they'll move the pollen onto their back legs creating a pellet of pollen.

The availability of pollen and nectar from flowering plants in surrounding landscapes is very important to the growth, development and productivity of any honeybee colony. Populations of honeybees, native bees and other pollinators like birds, butterflies, beetles and bats have declined due to habitat loss, disease, adverse weather, and other conditions. We need pollinators to pollinate most of our flowering plants giving us the foods that give our diet nutrition, diversity and flavor.

Helping pollinators is essential. That's why we've adopted pollinator-friendly gardening practices at USDA Headquarters and encourage you to do the same. Simple actions you can take on your farm, ranch or garden to create or improve pollinator habitat include:

- Planting a variety of native flowering shrubs, trees and wildflowers that bloom continuously throughout the seasons; allowing small plants like clover in your lawn instead of trying to eradicate these "weeds" with herbicides.
- Finding non-chemical solutions to insect problems;
- Providing a source of clean water for birds and other pollinators such as a birdbath;
- [Using native plant species that are from your ecoregion;](#)
- Leaving dead foliage on native perennials as a source of food and nesting material for wildlife in winter; or

Become involved. Plant a small pollinator garden and experience the pleasure of observing pollinators in your garden. Share your findings with us using hashtag #USDABeeWatch. Most importantly, get outside with your family and friends and explore the natural and urban habitats that we share with pollinators and flowering plants.

Bee Well,  
The People's Garden Team

### Follow Us

@PeoplesGarden

### Join Us

[www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden](http://www.usda.gov/peoplesgarden)

#USDABeeWatch

[www.usda.gov/beewatch](http://www.usda.gov/beewatch)

## 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)

## A Shout-Out Goes to...

A shout out goes to Patti Tolle and Regina Ware would like to send a Shout to Julie Shamblin (WRO RA) for assisting the first entity to submit their Annual Report using the new efile application.

A shout out goes to Andy Greenfield, Randall Jones, Bob Lijewski, and Dan Knight for sharing their grilling skills during the spring Employee appreciation luncheon.

A shout out goes to the set up and break down team for the Headquarters Spring Employee appreciation luncheon.

A shout out goes to the GIPSA employees who completed the FEVS early putting GIPSA in the number one seat.

A big shout out to the DC Employee Engagement Facilitators Team for kicking off the first round of REAL TALK sessions in HQs.

A shout out to Sherri Murphy for her above and beyond contributions to social events held at headquarters.



A shout out to Ana Alvarado and Sylvia Midgett for repotting and presenting Kendra Kline with a plant for her new office.

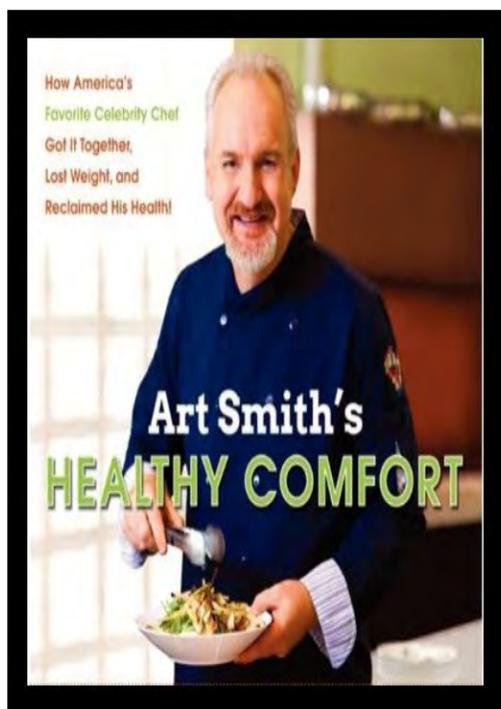


## Special Emphasis Corner



June is declared the “Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Pride Month.” This year’s theme is “Build our Bright Future.” The LGBT movement has accomplished a lot in the past year, which has helped to build its future even brighter.

- The Supreme Court ruling striking down key parts of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) giving rights and Federal benefits to legally married same-sex couples. (United States v. Windsor)
- Eight states added marriage equality (Currently 37.7 percent of Americans live in states with marriage equality).
- U.S. Senate passed the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) as a step toward achieving workplace protections for all Americans.
- Delaware added gender identity & expression to its anti-discrimination law (16 states currently have this).



This year the USDA celebrates the LGBT Pride month on June 5, 2014 in the Jefferson Auditorium (South Building). This year the observance will feature celebrity **Chef Art Smith**. Chef Art Smith talks nutritious cooking and reclaiming our health! He has received the culinary profession’s highest awards and is a frequent TV guest star on shows like Top Chef, Top Chef Masters and Rachel Ray. For 10 years, he was Oprah Winfrey’s personal chef. He has also authored numerous successful cookbooks. Additionally, Chef Art is the founder of Common Threads, a non-profit organization teaching low-income children to cook wholesome and affordable meals. He is also a strong advocate for LGBT equality.

## Special Emphasis Corner *continued*



The news had arrived. The date was June 19, 1865 and Union soldiers, led by Major General Gordon Granger had finally arrived in Galveston, Texas to deliver the following message:

*The people of Texas are informed that in accordance with a Proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free.*

This two-sentenced but extremely important message, delivered to the people of Texas that day is the reason why every year people of all backgrounds recognize June 19<sup>th</sup> as Freedom Day or Emancipation Day.

June 19<sup>th</sup>, or “Juneteenth” as it is more commonly known, is recognized as the oldest known celebration commemorating the abolition of slavery in the United States. Nearly three years after President Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation there remained African-Americans who were still enslaved due to the absence of a credible number of Union troops in their area to enforce the new Executive Order ending slavery. However, the year of 1865 brought about the surrender of Confederate General Robert E. Lee at the Appomattox Court House, Virginia and the arrival of Union General Granger’s regiment to Texas.

It is because of all of this that we celebrate Juneteenth as the day when nearly 150 years of slavery in America was met with the refreshing presence of a newfound freedom for millions of Americans. The importance of Juneteenth transcends race and ethnicity because it is a celebration of the commonly held notion that the right to be free of enslavement is a right naturally held by every man, woman and child.

There are precious moments in American history when our country gets the opportunity to live up to the motto of its creed and Juneteenth is one of those days and moments when we as a country, reiterated with action, that we are in fact, “one nation, under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.”

As a sixth generation Texan, I want to wish a Happy Juneteenth to all of you!

Dr. Joe Leonard Jr.  
Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights



### **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



# CARIBBEAN AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

In June 2005, the U.S. House of Representatives unanimously adopted H. Con. Res.71, sponsored by Congresswoman Barbara Lee, recognizing the significance of Caribbean immigrants and their descendants in the history and culture of the United States. It wasn't until February 2006 that the resolution passed the Senate. Since then, the White House has issued an annual proclamation recognizing June as National Caribbean-American Heritage Month.

From athletes to musicians to Attorney Generals to Secretary of State, to Surgeon General to Supreme Court Justice, to Senators, many individuals of Caribbean descent, have made their mark in US History.

Some of these history makers are

**Antonia Novello** – 14<sup>th</sup> Surgeon General of the US. First woman and first Hispanic, Puerto Rican, to serve in this position.

**Nydia Velazquez**- US Congresswoman. First Puerto Rican woman to be elected to Congress.

**Collin Powell** – 65<sup>th</sup> Secretary of State. Born to Jamaican parents.

**Eric Holder** – 82<sup>nd</sup> Attorney General. Born to Barbadian father.

**Sidney Portier** – Academy award winner. Born to Bahamian parents.

**Tim Duncan** – NBA star. Born and raised in St. Coix.

Many see the Caribbean as a dream vacation, and only wish they could enjoy it without the hassle of passports, currency exchanges and language barriers. However, did you know that there are five islands to which (1) you can travel to without needing a passport; (2) all use the U.S. Dollar as their primary currency; and (3) English is either the primary or secondary language? That is correct, there are five islands you can travel to Puerto Rico, U.S. Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix.

So what are you waiting for? Make the Caribbean your next vacation!

## Issuance Report

Terri Henry, Washington, DC

Issuance Change No. 103 to the Pea and Lentil Handbook dated April 28, 2014.

Issuance Change No. 110 to the Grain Inspection Handbook, Book II, Grain Grading Procedures, dated May 1, 2014.

FGIS Program Notice 14-06, "Charm Sciences Rosa Wet Fumonisin Quantitative Test Method" dated May 1, 2014.

FGIS Program Notice 14-08, Sample Collection Responsibilities for Verifying the Accuracy of Moisture Meter Calibrations Crop Year 2014 dated May 12, 2014.

FGIS Program Notice 14-10, "Charm Sciences ROSA® FAST Quantitative Aflatoxin Test Method, dated May 23, 2014.

## Individual Development Plans (IDP); Opportunity to Plan for Employees, Supervisors and Managers



IDPs will be due **August 31, 2014**, for FY2015. Look out for the announcements and webinars in the coming months. IDPs can help employees who seek career growth or are even considering retirement. They can also aid supervisors or managers who are wondering what to do about staffing changes by setting the ground work for all to better meet organizational and mission goals.

Traditionally, the IDP is meant to allow reflection and identification of training and developmental opportunities for an employee. The employee with the supervisor's help and guidance can determine particular activities that can improve an employee's skills within an existing position. With this in mind, it is important that both take the time to problem solve and identify tools and training to ensure the effectiveness of all employees within the organization.

Employees may want to take time to consider whether they want to strengthen the skills they excel at or identify a weakness to overcome that may get them to their next career stage. When deciding on future training, consider informational interviewing of colleagues, managers, and senior employees, especially those in positions you are interested in. Ask them about the skills they developed to strengthen their career at GIPSA. Ask a variety of people, as often career development is an individual path, and you will get a number of different answers some that may or may not be better suited to your needs.

Further, supervisors and managers can leverage the IDP to assist employees in identifying new career opportunities based on future organizational needs. To do this, consider career ladder positions and laying out next steps to create a diverse pool of employees who are ready to take on new tasks. What training for employees will help them be considered for new positions? Try to reduce barriers (lack of back-ups, time, and money) and problem solve to allow employees to try new developmental opportunities. What could employees do to enhance the organization and ensure a smoother operation in the future. A little planning can help make sure employees with skills will be available as the organization changes.

*Continued, see IDP on page 14.*

# PSP Change Control Working Group

The PSP CCWG group met in Denver, CO for a face-to-face meeting in April. One suggestion that has been heard from all around is to create an easier process for submitting change requests (CRs). Well now it is! Any PSP employee can submit a change request (using the word document form) to any CCWG member by email or the mail. They can even be anonymous if requested. So now – CCWG wants to hear from you!

We look forward to reviewing your change requests!

Pictured below left to right (Regina Ware, Caleb Bott, Stephanie Feinberg, Mallory Wagoner, LaDondra Taylor, Robbie Obiekwe, Marilynn Gallagher, and Wayne Basford



*IDP from page 13*

In considering the IDP, remember different types of training. Below, as covered previously, are the two types of training. Job related training often “On-the-Job” (OTJ) is the most prevalent. However, many mistake classroom training as the only type of training available. Below are several definitions.

**Job Related Training-**Job related training is what usually goes on your IDP and is tied to your performance elements. This can include technical training and any of the soft skills identified by OPM that are directly related to your job performance. These may include Integrity/Honesty (Ethics), Interpersonal Skills, Continual Learning, Resilience, Oral Communication, Written Communication, Flexibility (Time Management), and Problem Solving. Developmental training enhances employee career opportunities and organizational performance and can include things such as participation in Civil Rights Special Emphasis Program Training, Career Training, Resume Writing, Retirement and Networking.

Beyond class room training, remember to consider details, cross-training, rotational assignments and special projects.

While employees are told to be proactive, it is also up to the supervisors and managers to reflect among themselves on opportunities to help support training and developmental planning that can provide the strongest pool of future employees in the organization. Thus IDPs offer that opportunity for all.

## 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
Veteran Employment Training for Federal Hiring Manager	August 31, 2014	Hiring Managers
Calendar Year 2014 Ethics Sweepstakes	June 30, 2014	All Employees
Managing Performance in Marketing and Regulatory Programs	June 30, 2014	All Employees
TBD	August 31, 2014	Employees
Policies for Pay, Leave and Tours of Duty	July 21, 2014	All Supervisors and Managers
WebTA for Supervisors	July 21, 2014	All Supervisors and Managers

### 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. Men-

*Continued, see Training on page 16*

**Training** *from cover page 15*

training 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.

**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

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