



GIPSA *NEWS*

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

Strength in Our Numbers—Even Small Ones

Thanking Farmers, Ranchers, and Veterans

By Larry Mitchell



WASHINGTON— There’s always something to give thanks for at harvest time, but our gratitude shouldn’t be limited to this page of the calendar. Farmers, ranchers, and veterans come to mind as leaves become memories and daylight diminishes. This small portion of our population ensures that what we sometimes take for granted as plans for the holiday season unfold, is also available for all year round.

When you think about it, each time we lift a fork from our table, a farmer or rancher makes possible almost every morsel of food on the plate. At night as we enjoy resting peacefully in the comfort of our homes, a member of our military is somewhere in harm’s way providing a blanket of security for our uninterrupted sleep. The men and women responsible for these gifts display the best of rural America’s cultural landscape.

Those who make our lives secure and grow the food we consume are really a small portion of our population. According to the 2012 agricultural census 2.1 million farmers in our country generate food, fuel, and fiber for America and nations around the world. Numbers for our active duty armed forces total 1.3 million—that’s about 1.6 percent of the U.S. population. Whether they wear cowboy or combat boots, farming and ranching seem like a natural fit for many who grew up in agricultural families. Recent data shows that 45 percent of the military come from rural America. Their values are tied to the land as well as a culture of service to their communities.

These groups are small in numbers yet they are powerful reflections of our national character—indomitable in spirit, committed proudly throughout generations to our land, and its defense. They stand for the common good in moments of natural disaster, during bountiful harvests, in times of peace, and in war.

It’s no wonder that nearly 4 million veterans reside in rural and agricultural communities. Secretary Vilsack commented that our veterans embody the values that stand at the heart of rural America: hard work, a love of their country, and a sense of

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Strength in Our Numbers—Even Small Ones (continued)



duty to give back to a nation that has done so much for us all. Returning veterans also bring back additional education and technical skills that reinforce their capability for leadership roles in their home towns.

Veterans transitioning from active duty face many challenges. The agricultural industry is a logical solution to fill the economic gap veterans face. USDA is committed to assisting veterans start or continue farming and ranching operations in order to strengthen the American economy and provide livelihoods to our returning veterans.

In addition to efforts to hire returning veterans and qualifying family members, the USDA is strengthening connections with members of the military who live in rural America or wish to pursue careers in farming or ranching. The USDA for Veterans, Reservists and Military Families Task Force is working to create models of how the diverse array of USDA programs can work together to help communities establish job training programs and other efforts to assist returning military.

Secretary Vilsack recently noted that “agriculture is not often the first thing people think of for returning veterans.” USDA is consequently expanding its efforts to discuss resources and opportunities for veterans across the country and recently launched a new website, <https://newfarmers.usda.gov/veterans>. The site is specifically designed to educate veterans and currently serving members of the military about USDA programs and available resources.

We owe these past, and present generations of farmers, ranchers, and veterans a heartfelt thanks that stretches beyond harvest time. It is a debt that carries into the future honoring men and women who currently serve as much as those transitioning back to civilian life.

This is a season to put matters in perspective and give thanks, but words only go so far. Some veterans explain that the perfunctory, *Thank you for your service* too often rings shallow. Perhaps we should extend a helping hand in the agricultural community and also say, *Welcome Home*.

Our nation’s history is forged in agriculture as much as the sacrifice of men and women whose devotion to liberty and basic human rights guarantees the freedoms we enjoy today.

As America comes together this month to celebrate holidays, I encourage everyone across our enterprise to recognize the service of our nation’s returned service members, the hard work of our farmers, ranchers and the bounty they provide our great country. They deliver the difference.



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;





FGIS Matters

By Randall Jones, GIPSA Headquarters, Washington, D.C.

Reauthorization and Implementation Measures

FGIS staff have been working diligently composing the proposed rule for the changes to the regulations since the recent reauthorization of the U.S. Grain Standards Act. We are committed to meeting a timeline to posting a proposed rule for public comment by January followed by publication of the final rule in May 2016.

Grain Inspection Advisory Committee Fall Meeting

The advisory committee conducted its fall meeting October 27-28 at the National Grain Center and passed several resolutions:

- ◆ The advisory committee recommended that Qualitative Mycotoxin Tests be phased out as the current supply meets their expiration date.
- ◆ The advisory committee recommended FGIS move forward to certify testing results to a minimum of significant figures as a default for mycotoxins. FGIS will allow the results on the certificate to be shown as either a whole number or the nearest tenth at the request of the applicant using current FGIS rounding rules.
- ◆ The advisory committee recommended that FGIS make financial results available on the FGIS web site. This information would include sufficient detail to show revenues, expenses and operating reserves for each account (520, 530, 570 and 580). Additionally, each revenue and expense area in the 520 account should be detailed to reflect national tonnage fee, local tonnage fee, and the hourly/inspection fees as well as expenses attributed to each.
- ◆ The advisory committee recommended that FGIS explore options for standardizing calibrations between NIRT models to improve the overall reproducibility.
- ◆ The advisory committee commended FGIS on the development of the USDA Rice Studio Rice program; and recommended studying imaging technology for possible use in the determination of percent Dark Hard and Vitreous (DHV) for spring wheat sub classes. Furthermore, FGIS should also study possible use of this technology to determine shrunken and broken kernel count in all wheat classes.
- ◆ The advisory committee encouraged FGIS to initiate a study with rough rice to determine the effectiveness of the Grainman Miller No. 65 for predicting commercial rice milling yield. Factors to consider in addition to milling yield are total broken kernels, whiteness and chalkiness. Newer rice hybrids along with their harvest and drying history should also be included in the study.
- ◆ The advisory committee encouraged FGIS to obtain background information pertinent to understanding the possible degree of condensation that could form when cold grain is unloaded from barges or railcars and transferred to a FGIS inspection site at a humid location. The intent is to record grain temperature data as already provided by moisture meter determinations on sublots of grain. Grain temperatures from a





FGIS Matters

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random sampling of 100 sublots during each month of the year would provide an indication of the months of the year when moisture condensation is most likely to occur. Data could show that if seasonally cold grain is detected, it might be prudent to allow the cold samples to have a few additional minutes to warm up before testing for moisture and test weight.

Presentation summaries, resolutions, and minutes are posted to the GIPSA website.

FGIS FY16 Strategic Initiatives.

Every year the FGIS Executive Management Team (EMT) works with staff and develops priorities for the program for the upcoming year. The following strategic initiatives are in effect for the 2016 Fiscal Year:

1. Enhance the inspection process through automation of data collection and utilization to improve efficiency of operations and certificate accuracy.
2. Create a customer centric, engaged, and high-performing workforce by identifying opportunities for employees to develop competencies identified for mission-critical technical and leadership positions within FGIS through succession planning.
3. Address changing market needs and trends by strengthening and expanding working relationships with stakeholders to enhance our responsiveness to their needs, evolving/new industry practices, and emerging market barriers.
4. Implement GIPSA's Signature Process Improvement for document development, clearance, issuance, and presentation in order to provide accurate and timely program information to FGIS stakeholders.
5. Make needed changes to the Federal Regulations to implement reauthorization.
6. Honor the centennial anniversary of the United States Grain Standards Act and 40th anniversary of FGIS.

Planning for the initiatives begins during the summer FGIS managers meeting and concludes after the EMT crafts them into initiatives. Our initiatives are aligned with the USDA and GIPSA strategic plan and are part of the performance plans for staff. Progress on many of the initiatives is already underway and I look forward to updating you on developments.

FGIS Online Upgrades.

We anticipate major improvements to FGISonline this year including modernization in handling and managing data in our labs. You likely will hear me say, "No More Paper, Pens, and Calculators in the labs!" I plan to make this a reality within two years. We also need to improve how we report data on the 922s and 938s in addition to getting the moisture meter check-testing into the Equipment Capability Testing program completed this year.

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Diversity and the Next Generation

Know Your Farmer? Know Your Food? Get to Know Millennials, Too.

Reprinted by permission of the author, Mr. Steve Fairchild in *Today's Farmer*.



New management is on the way. Millennials, the generation born between 1980 and 2000, now make up 25 percent of the American workforce. The oldest members of that generation are headed into higher work responsibilities and management. The younger, of course, are still trickling into employment.

Generations are used as markers to measure social change over time. And if you follow the popular press, you may have noticed an inordinate number of stories trying to crack the Millennial nut. The gist has been that this particular generation shares a massive change in attitudes, employability and worldview.

Baby Boomers and the oldest members of Generation X have brought up our Millennials, and differently than parents in previous generations. The term “helicopter parent” became popular as a way to describe how parents of Millennials have tended to hover over their children. Good parents wanting good things for their children, goes the theory, thought they could fortify their childrens’ confidence and self esteem through constant praise and making them consistent winners—at least in their own minds.

A few years ago, Owen Hannay, owner of an advertising agency in Dallas famously said that Millennials are “overparented, overindulged and overprotected.”

“They get an apartment and a kitty, and they can’t cope. Work becomes an ancillary casualty. They’re good kids with talent who want to succeed. That’s what makes me nuts,” he told a Dallas Morning News reporter. That was in 2008. Since then, the generation has increasingly come into the workforce. A cottage industry has developed to advise employers how to manage Millennials.

Hannay’s broad statement wasn’t the most charitable. Millennials view the world differently, it’s true. But consider the social and economic environment they soaked up in their formative years. Economic turmoil with massive job loss; general economic malaise; a major terrorist attack; the ever-present computer phone; the dominance of social media—these have had a great influence on how Millennials see and act in the world. They connect differently. They approach the idea of loyalty differently. They consider their time as a currency. They see the future differently, but they want to succeed.

Millennials on the farm may share some of these outlooks with their urban cohorts, but not all of them. According to the 2012 Census of Agriculture, about 119,833 Millennials operate farms. That’s about 6 percent of total farmers.

Millennial farmers are more than just the one on the farm that can make the GPS work. They are working into real capital positions and represent the future of agriculture. But think about what agriculture has “always been” to them. Since they’ve been actively farming, herbicide-resistant cropping systems have always existed. To Millennials, farmers without soil mapping and yield data are flying blind. These young farmers have always done business via cell phone or e-mail from the cab of the tractor or pickup as they check the cows.

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Tips from the Human Resource Staff

A Few Words of Advice from the Experts

Planning a Trip?

Pack Carefully—And Remember to File Your Travel Voucher on Time

WASHINGTON— Planning to travel on official business soon? For most us, timing becomes critical for everything from connecting flights at airports to on-time arrival for the important meeting. Before you start packing, it may help to keep in mind a few thoughts about the Federal Travel Regulations (FTR) and the Agriculture Travel Regulations (ATR), especially when it comes to the timely submission of vouchers.

Employees at the U.S. Department of Agriculture must have either written or electronic authorization prior to incurring any travel expense. When impractical or impossible to obtain authorization for reimbursement prior to travel, approval may still be granted for specific authorization after the travel is completed according to FTR § 301-52.7.

Every GIPSA employee is also required to submit a travel voucher or Standard Form (SF) 1164 within five working days following completion of a trip, or every 30 days if the employee is on a continuous travel status as explained in FTR § 301-52.7.

The GIPSA definition of “period of travel” for local trips with per diem and or mileage only is a maximum of one quarter from October 1-December 31, January 1-March 31, April 1-June 30, and July 1-September 30. Employees requesting reimbursement for local travel are required to submit a voucher or SF 1164 within five working days after each quarter for local trips.

If you have questions, contact Ms. Rose Alexander, GIPSA travel point of contact at (202) 690-0881 or rose.d.alexander@usda.gov Now don't forget your toothbrush. Safe travels.

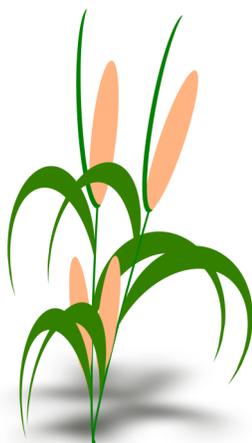


Issuances and Cancellations

WASHINGTON— The following issuances and cancellations are in effect immediately: FGIS Policy Memorandum Reference No. 263, Country of Destination on 921-2 for Cargo Transloading in Canada, dated September 25, 2015; Mycotoxin Handbook, dated September 17, 2015.

With the issuance of the Mycotoxin Handbook the following are canceled:

- Aflatoxin Handbook
 - DON Handbook
 - FGIS Directive 9170.71, Fumonisin Testing Services
 - FGIS Directive 9180.77 Ochratoxin A Testing
 - FGIS PN 13-01 Reconditioning Options for Aflatoxin Contaminated Lots
 - PPB #257 VICAM AflaTest Supplemental Analysis
 - PPB #251 Suspension of Romer FloraQuant Aflatoxin Test Kit for Sorghum
 - PPB #249 Romer Fluoroquant Afla Supplemental Analysis
 - PPB #243 Removal of Expired Mycotoxin Test Methods
 - PPB #236 Revised DON Testing of Corn to a Sublot Basis, and Supplemental Testing Certification Options
 - PPB #227 Sample Size Requirement DON Testing – Corn
 - PPB #221 Mycotoxin Testing Equipment
 - PPB #215 Testing Rice Samples for Aflatoxin
- Direct questions to Ms. Terri Henry, (202) 205-8281, or terri.l.henry@usda.gov



Diversity and the Next Generation

Get to Know Millennials (Continued from page 5)

What farming Millennials have in common with the entire generation is a quick adaptation of technology and seeking new channels of communicating. If you want a response, text.

In general terms, Millennials seek recognition for the work that they do. While a lot of business publications lament the fact that Millennials have a hard time with the structure of a workplace, human resources consultants almost universally suggest that positive feedback is a critical tool for managing them.

Farming Millennials have learned a few lessons that separate them from the rest of their generation. You don't always win on the farm. You can pull the calf, but it might die. The drought doesn't bother worrying about your self-esteem.

I doubt that Hannay, that advertising agency owner, hired any farm kids.

Here is one place that the farm levels out the differences between generations. There is a time to sow and a time to reap, after all. Flextime won't work in spring or fall. No generational attitudes can alter that.

We should let young people help make decisions in agriculture, but we ought not to kowtow to their worldview. Farm experience means something. And yours can improve the Millennial generation. Use your experience as a guidepost to explain the hows and whys of managing your operation. If you do, Millennials will observe the wisdom you may have gained, absorb it and then use it to help frame their own worldview.

Then they'll post it on Facebook.

Mr. Fairchild has been editor of *Today's Farmer* since 2003. He previously served as the associate editor for two years. Before joining *Today's Farmer*, Mr. Fairchild was field editor at *Missouri Ruralist* for 7 years.

Editor's Note—Opinions in this article do not necessarily represent those of the USDA or the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyard Administration.

In Plain Language, USDA Earns More Than Grade A (+)

Washington, D.C.—The Federal Plain Language Report Card for 2015 is in and the Department of Agriculture scored high marks for compliance with the Plain Writing Act of 2010. Each year the Center for Plain Language evaluates federal departments in two categories. The compliance category scores agency efforts in areas that include webpage language, timely feedback to public queries, and staff training on plain language. Writing and Information design make up the second category. Graders evaluate documents on a variety of areas including awareness of the intended audience, avoiding jargon, limiting use of the passive voice, typography, conciseness, and use of graphics and photographs to reinforce the narrative. Submissions are scored against center criteria using Acrolinx, an electronic tool for grammar and style review that provides a readability score for each sample.



Classes on Writing Effective Policies and Procedures took place at the National Grain Center in October and November. FGIS staff included 28 members from across the country. (USDA Photo by Ruth Goff)

FGIS Matters

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Pathways Program

After six months of rigorous training current Pathways Program participants are finally reporting to their new duty stations. Shawnwa Lee, Joshua Diaz Lopez, and Emil China Pérez are heading to the the New Orleans Field Office. Staff at the Stuttgart field office will be welcoming Justin Johnson. I look forward to the next round of the Pathways Program at the beginning of 2016.

Combined Federal Campaign Fall Festival

GIPSA held a fall festival fundraiser October 29 for the Combined Federal Campaign. Headquarter staff shared treats, participated in games and activities with shift supervisors Charles Guidry, Brandon Harness, Courtney Trask, Ceneda Trufant, and Arthur Williams who were in town for training and stopped by during a break.

Passing of Mark Ruth, BAR Member

The FGIS team lost a very valuable member with the unexpected passing of Mark Ruth last month. Throughout a distinguished career as an expert grader, Mark's contributions over the years were instrumental in building the FGIS gold standard. He will be sorely missed. On behalf of every member of our organization, I extend my deepest sympathies to his wife and high school sweetheart of 35 years, Sheila Ruth and Mark's family during this sorrowful time.

Until next time, enjoy a relaxing holiday, keep up the great work, and stay safe.



Advisory Committee Semiannual Meeting

KANSAS CITY, Mo— The fall meeting of the Grain Inspection Advisory Committee took place October 27-28 at the National Grain Center. Attendees included **Front Row** (Pictured from left to right): Mr. Randall Jones, Mr. Larry Mitchell, Mr. Scott Averhoff.

Middle Row: Ms. Jessica Wilcox, Ms. Maria Reinitz, Mr. Nick Friant, Ms. Kia Adams-Mikesh, Mr. Cesar Ramirez.

Top Row: Mr. Marvin Paulsen, Mr. Steven Wirsching, Ms. Janice Cooper, Mr. Tim Paurus, Mr. Todd Russom, Mr. Jimmy Williams. (USDA Photo by Ruth Goff)

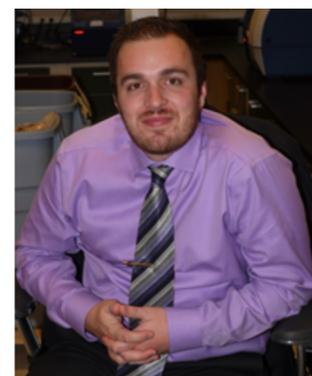
Making a Difference at GIPSA

New Members, Advancements, Retirements, Announcements



Ms. Jennifer Helber was recently promoted to a newly created microbiologist position in the Commodities Testing and Reference Laboratory (CTL) within the Biotechnology and Analytical Services Branch. Ms. Helber worked with Technology and Science Division (TSD) since 2009 as a microbiologist in the CTL and biotechnology labs. Prior to joining TSD, she held positions in industrial and municipal wastewater laboratories, and the Boulevard Brewing Co. as a microbiologist in its Quality Assurance Lab. Ms. Helber earned a masters degree in microbiology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, and is a member of the American Society of Brewing Chemists. Her knowledge and experience will continue to be a valuable asset within CTL.

Mr. Dustin Miller reported to the National Grain Center October 19 and is assigned as a technician with the Near Infrared Transmittance (NIRT)/Nuclear Magnetic Resonance (NMR) laboratory within the Inspection Instrumentation Branch. For the past three years, Dustin worked for the Enid Grain Inspection Service in Enid, Oklahoma. Mr. Miller has been involved in most aspects of grain inspection including sampling, grading and instrument analysis. His field experience will be a welcome addition to the NIRT/NMR laboratories.



Ms. Jody Boydston-Johnson retires next month from the Packers and Stockyards Program after a 32 year career. She began working in Denver as a food inspector for the Food Safety and Inspection Service in 1984 and later transferred to the Agricultural Marketing Service as a commodity grader. Ms. Johnson worked in many now-defunct meat packing plants along Colorado's Front Range. She transferred to the Packers and Stockyards Administration's Denver Stockyards office in 1985 until moving to Fort Worth following a promotion to Supervisory Marketing Specialist in 1988. When P&SP reorganized in 1999 she moved back to Denver as a Senior Marketing Specialist until 2007 when she moved once again to Fort Worth as a Resident Agent Supervisor. Somewhere along the journey between Colorado and Texas she and husband Doug of 33 years, raised two daughters, Courtney and Clare. They now have 3 grandchildren. Ms. Johnson earned a B.S. degree from Michigan State University in Animal Science and Agricultural Education. She and Doug plan to hit the road in their camper-truck and explore America, at least

until the money runs out. Move over, John Steinbeck. **(Photo by... ok, it's a selfie)**

Mr. Alexander Cain Dobbins is the latest addition to the GIPSA family. He began his career September 28 weighing in at 7 pounds, 2 ounces and announced his arrival to proud parents Sara and Josh. Mr. Dobbins was unavailable for an interview at the time of this publication, but he left word through his publicist that he was born a Kansas City Royals fan. **(Photo Courtesy of Mom and Dad)**



(More Employee News on page 12)

National Grain Center Staff Mourns Loss of Esteemed Colleague

Mark A. Ruth

KANSAS CITY, Mo.—The Federal Grain Inspection Service mourns the recent passing of one of its most influential members, Mr. Mark Ruth. He died unexpectedly October 24 at age 53. Mr. Ruth was a member of the Board of Appeals and Review (BAR) at the National Grain Center.

Mr. Ruth began his career with Enid Grain Inspection in Enid, Oklahoma. In 1989, he joined FGIS and worked in both the Kansas City and Moscow field offices.

Mr. Ruth was selected as a member of the BAR in 1996, and quickly distinguished himself as an expert grader. He remained with the board for over two decades and was a long-time contact for quality assurance specialists in the Pacific Northwest.

During his tenure Mr. Ruth was the lead on many of the board's projects including the Collegiate Crops Contest, annual QAS seminars, and manager of the board's opinion library. In past years, he worked closely with representatives of the U.S. Dry Pea and Lentil Council to develop new visual grading standards for the changing needs of the pulse industry. His career was highlighted by numerous contributions to industry and the official system.

Colleagues at the National Grain Center held a memorial service celebrating Mr. Ruth November 4. Current and former FGIS employees attended. The ceremony was highlighted by a candle lighting, and a photo slide show entitled, "*Moments with Mark.*" Photographs illustrated Mr. Ruth's twenty-five years of service with FGIS.

Current and former BAR members Mr. Dempsey Lewis, Mr. David Lowe, and Mr. Bill Azmy shared their anecdotes about Mr. Ruth's life and career with FGIS. Mr. Azmy conveyed sympathies from friends who could not attend, including members of the Egyptian Center for Food and Feed. Throughout the years Mr. Ruth fostered a long standing relationship with colleagues from Egypt during annual grain grading seminars at the National Grain Center. The memorial concluded with the unveiling of a plaque bearing Mr. Ruth's name beside those of other FGIS members that have passed away while in service at the National Grain Center. All at GIPSA mourn his loss and celebrate the gift of his memory.



National Finance Center Announces Salary Payment Dates for Calendar Year 2016

NEW ORLEANS—The National Finance Center recently released the 2016 schedule of 26 paychecks customers will receive, dates that Direct Deposit net salary payment will post to personal bank accounts, and, dates when paper paychecks will be mailed.

The first business day after payroll processing weekend is the official payment date for Direct Deposit and paper check net salary payments. Generally, net salary payments are processed with Monday's date. However, when a Federal holiday falls on payroll Monday, these payments are processed with Tuesday's date.

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Finance News

Pay Period	Direct Deposit/Paper Check Mailing
PP 25/2015	Monday, January 4, 2016
PP 26/2015	Tuesday, January 19, 2016
PP 01/2016	Monday, February 1, 2016
PP 02/2016	Tuesday, February 16, 2016
PP 03/2016	Monday, February 29, 2016
PP 04/2016	Monday, March 14, 2016
PP 05/2016	Monday, March 28, 2016
PP 06/2016	Monday, April 11, 2016
PP 07/2016	Monday, April 25, 2016
PP 08/2016	Monday, May 9, 2016
PP 09/2016	Monday, May 23, 2016
PP 10/2016	Monday, June 6, 2016
PP 11/2016	Monday, June 20, 2016
PP 12/2016	Tuesday, July 5, 2016
PP 13/2016	Monday, July 18, 2016
PP 14/2016	Monday, August 1, 2016
PP 15/2016	Monday, August 15, 2016
PP 16/2016	Monday, August 29, 2016
PP 17/2016	Monday, September 12, 2016
PP 18/2016	Monday, September 26, 2016
PP 19/2016	Tuesday, October 11, 2016
PP 20/2016	Monday, October 24, 2016
PP 21/2016	Monday, November 7, 2016
PP 22/2016	Monday, November 21, 2016
PP 23/2016	Monday, December 5, 2016
PP 24/2016	Monday, December 19, 2016

NOTE: Some financial institutions may credit direct deposit funds to personal bank accounts prior to the above official payment date. When this occurs, the bank will process the net salary pay-



ment as “pending” or “memo posting” transactions with an effective date as Monday or Tuesday (if Monday is a Federal holiday). This earlier posting to personal bank accounts is a courtesy by some financial institutions.

By regulation, financial institutions are not obligated to post funds earlier than the official payment date. NFC customers should not rely on their financial institution providing an earlier “memo posting” of their net salary payment prior to the above official payment date.



Secure a Brighter Holiday for Someone with a CFC Donation

Search for charities in the 2015 Catalog of Caring or by clicking “charity search” at www.cfcnca.org.

Contribute online at www.cfcnca.org or complete a paper pledge form. You can donate through payroll deduction, the most convenient way to give, or by credit/debit card, eCheck, cash, or check.

Employee News

Balancing Work, Life, and Wellness

Federal Benefits Open Season Continues Until December 14

MINNEAPOLIS—The annual period to make changes to enrollment in the Federal Employees Health Benefit (FEHB) program and the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Programs (FEDVIP) closes December 14.

Personnel officials at APHIS remind GIPSA employees that it's also time to enroll in the Federal Flexible Spending Accounts (FSAFEDS) for health care and/or dependent care for 2016.

Human resource staff at APHIS also stress that new this year is the Self Plus One option for health insurance. Open Season provides employees an opportunity to make this change.

Visit the website

Go to [the MRP Open Season Website](#) for information on what is new this year. You will find links to information and tools to help you get started reviewing your coverage and making your decisions for 2016.

View OPM's webcasts

The Office of Personnel Management has developed a recorded webcast to assist you in making your benefit decisions. You can visit www.opm.gov/NewEmployeeInsurance. For additional information visit: [Fast Facts about Open Season](#)



USDA Pulls Smoke Alarm to Reduce Cancer from Tobacco

WASHINGTON—The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) joined the American Cancer Society recently in promoting the 'Great American Smokeout' by sounding the 'USDA Smoke Alarm'!

We continue to encourage all smokers to join the effort by putting down the tobacco. Tobacco use remains the single largest preventable cause of disease and premature death in the U.S., yet about 42 million Americans still smoke cigarettes — a bit under one in every five adults.

Quitting tobacco is not easy, but it can be done. Whether you're a smoker, someone who uses smokeless tobacco, or just someone trying to help a friend or loved one, you'll find the information you need by visiting the American Cancer Society at [Stay Away From Tobacco](#).



USDA's Employee Assistance Program can provide you with support and assistance to stop smoking. Please contact your Mission Area/Agency Work/Life and Wellness Coordinator in your Human Resources Division for contact information. For information on additional steps you can take, visit <http://www.cancer.org/smokeout> or call the American Cancer Society at 1-800-227-2345.

For more information on this and other work/life and wellness initiatives, visit USDA's [Work/Life and Wellness community webpage](#) from the USDA Connect website, or contact the USDA Work/Life and Wellness team by email at wellness@dm.usda.gov.

GIPSA Employees Making a Difference

PSP Eastern Regional Office Staff Feeds the Hungry

ATLANTA—The Packers and Stockyards Program Eastern Regional Office collected 250 pounds and more than 100 food items during the Feds Feed Families Food Drive that concluded last month. “We are especially proud because we have a very small office staff, but we are larger than life when it is time to give,” said Mr. James (JC) Cannon.

Most of the items included large assortments of canned foods and dried goods. “More importantly, was the organization chosen to receive our donation,” said Mr. Cannon. “After some careful research the selection committee found the perfect organization—one that not only cares during the giving seasons, but throughout the entire year,” he said. The committee’s choice was *Hosea Feed the Hungry and Homeless*.

Mr. Cannon explained that staff members at *Hosea* were very grateful. “They acted as if our 250 pound contribution was a thousand-pound donation,” he said. Mr. Cannon explained how he was impressed by the overwhelming response of appreciation by the members at *Hosea*. “Thank you USDA. This will go a very long way in feeding the homeless!” he said in describing the chorus of gratitude from the staff.

Mr. Cannon noted that the Eastern Regional Office will continue its best effort at lending a helping hand.



GIPSA Employees Making a Difference

New Members, Advancements, Announcements



FGIS Announces New Assistant Field Office Manager at the Big Easy

NEW ORLEANS—A seasoned veteran of the Federal Grain Inspection Service (FGIS) was recently announced as the new assistant field office manager at the FGIS office in New Orleans. Area Field Office Manager Mr. Kerry Petit recently announced that Mr. George Banks will take over the reins from Mr. Merle Russelburg who now works directly under the Field Management Division.

“George brings a wealth of experience with him to this position,” said Mr. Petit.

Mr. Banks began his career with FGIS in 1978 in the Old Lucher Field Office as an agricultural commodity grader GS-5. He received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agricultural Education at Alcorn State University in Lorman, Mississippi.

“Early in his career, he was recognized as an exceptional analyst by the Quality Assurance Specialist, the Chairman and the Assistant Chairman of the Board. This recognition afforded him many opportunities in the grain division,” said Mr. Petit.

Mr. Banks completed the first New Leadership Program in 1998. During his career Mr. Banks served in numerous positions of increasing responsibility including Assistant Protein Coordinator, Lab Leader, Shift Supervisor, Quality Assurance Specialist, Quality Assurance Manager, A representative on the QAS teams (Grain and Rice) across the country, A representative for International Affairs in Costal Rica, A representative on field office and state compliance review teams.

Notable during his tenure at FGIS, Mr. Banks was the recipient of the Best Analyst and Odor awards, The Golden Picks Award as an assistant QAS, QAS, and QAM at seminars in Kansas City. He was also a past recipient of the New Orleans Field Office Manager’s Award.

USDA Mentor Program Keeps Careers on Track

WASHINGTON— Interested in enhancing work and career skills, boosting self confidence and expanding networks? Give USDA’s Mentorship Program a try. Discover new perspectives and promote fresh ideas with renewed energy.

GIPSA encourages staff members to maximize individual potential and contribute to the organization’s success by participating in the mentorship program, but the December 15 application deadline is fast approaching.

Talk with your supervisor or training officer. For additional information at FGIS contact Mr. Tony Goodman (202) 720-0291 or by e-mail, [Antho-ny.T.Goodeman@usda.gov](mailto:Anthony.T.Goodeman@usda.gov); PSP staff may contact Ms. Gale Mason, (202) 720-7051 or Gale.L.Mason@usda.gov Headquarters staff can contact Ms. Caroline Thorpe, (202) 690-2332; or Caroline.C.Thorpe@usda.gov Don’t wait, get going!



GIPSA Employees Making a Difference

Recognizing Contributions to Federal Service



WASHINGTON—Administrator Larry Mitchell recognizes staff members recently with USDA pins and certificates for their years of federal service and dedication to the Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration during presentations at headquarters and at the National Grain Center in Kansas City, Mo. **Top left**, Mr. Kirk Masterton, 20 years; Ms. Ebony Broadwater 10 years; **Top right**, Mr. Jamie Pitman, Technology and Science Division, 25 years; **Bottom left**, Mr. Larry Franz, Field Management Division, 30 years; **Bottom right**, Mr. Don He, Technology and Science Division, 10 years. (USDA Photos)

GIPSA Employees Making a Difference

In Tribute to All Veterans Throughout GIPSA

WASHINGTON— Sometimes real heroes don't wear capes. They wear dog tags. Currently there are more than 50 former members of the armed forces that continue to serve in a federal capacity. Whatever they wore, there's no dispute that GIPSA veterans served our nation proudly. Among these include: **(top left)** Ms. Shoshana Avrishon, U.S. Army (1986-1992); **(top right)** U.S. Navy submariner Mr. Kirk Masterton (1997-2004) and U.S. Naval Academy graduate (class of 1997); **(bottom left)** Mr. Marcus Day, U.S. Navy radioman (1989-2009); **(bottom right)** Mr. Mark Kemp, U.S. Air Force (1982-2006).



GIPSA Employees Making a Difference

In Tribute to All Veterans Throughout GIPSA



Ms. Ana Alvarado
U.S. Air Force (1992-1996)



Ms. Catherine Deren
U.S. Army National Guard (2006-Present)



Mr. Fred Felix
U.S. Air Force (1971-1975)



Ms. Kayla Burke-Chacko
U. S. Marine Corps, (2010-2013)



Mr. Gary Foushee
U.S Army (1966-1969)



Ms. Lisa Fyall
U.S. Army (1981-2001)



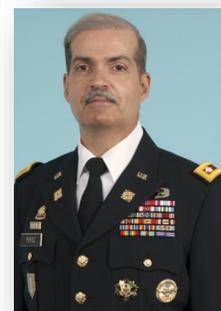
Mr. Gregory Giese
U.S. Army (1990-1998)



Mr. Mark Craig
U.S. Navy (1981-2001)



Mr. Christopher Bueckers
U.S. Air Force (1991-2011)



The Editor
U.S. Army, (1982-2014)

Making a Difference at GIPSA

Selfless Service Earns P&SP Member USDA's Top Volunteer Honor



WASHINGTON—The Secretary of Agriculture recognized a member of the Packers and Stockyards Program for exceptional volunteer service during a recent ceremony at USDA headquarters. Ms. Katie Marie Stout, a legal instruments examiner from the Des Moines regional office received the President's Volunteer Service Award at the Abraham Lincoln Honor Awards November 5. She joined more than 400 top employees from across USDA agencies and offices honored on stage at the Thomas Jefferson auditorium. Ms. Stout volunteers more than 500 hours in support of veterans and animal welfare organizations yearly.

Ms. Stout served as the president of the Des Moines Chapter of Operation Barnabas (OB) which provides support for the active and retired military community and their families. OB sponsors two supply drives for veterans each year to gather donations of gently-used coats, clothing, hygiene items, coffee, and various other items for struggling veterans through the Des Moines Veterans Hospital. OB adopted families of two disabled veterans during Christmas in 2014. Volunteers gathered presents and gift certificates to improve holidays for the young families.

Ms. Stout also serves as president of Heartland Buckskin Horse Association, an Iowa based non-profit horse club that promotes animal welfare through horse shows and community outreach events. Heartland offers opportunities for youth activities involving horses. The group hosts several yearly horse show competitions and participates in the annual Iowa Horse Fair with breed presentations and riding demonstrations. Ms. Stout organizes membership, outreach activities, demonstration rides, and mentors new horse owners. Besides managing the office at shows, she designs show awards as well as the club website. ***Editor's Note—Following the ceremony Ms. Stout and Administrator Mitchell took a moment to display the award certificate from Secretary Vilsack. (USDA Photo)***