

# USDA news

USDA's Employee News Publication—For You & About You!

## We Honor Our Award-Winning USDA Achievers

by Charlene Baker  
RD Human Resources Staff

**U**SDA honored a number of its employees, for their outstanding achievements, at its 58th Annual Honor Awards Ceremony, which took place June 25 at the Ronald Reagan Building and International Trade Center in Washington, DC.

Cecilia Matthews, USDA's incentive awards program manager with the Office of Human Resources Management and coordinator of the Ceremony, said that USDA honor awards were awarded to 102 recipients, including 32 individuals and 70 groups.

147 nominations, which included 50 individuals and 97 groups, had been submitted earlier to the USDA Honor Awards Evaluation Committee. That group, chaired by Alma Hobbs, special assistant for diversity and outreach in the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, was composed of Hobbs and five individuals selected from within USDA and from elsewhere in the federal government. The six-member Committee had reviewed those nominations in April and had then made its recommendations to Secretary Ann M. Veneman.

At the ceremony Veneman delivered the keynote address. "In many ways, these awards are USDA's 'time capsule,' a reflection of the body of work we are building, and the times in which we live," she noted. Veneman then

singled out Danny Woodyard, a staff attorney in the Office of the General Counsel's field office in Little Rock, Ark., who—while serving as a Lt. Col. in a U.S. Army Reserve Unit in Baghdad—helped to rebuild Iraq's Ministry of Agriculture and helped select the Ministry's new leadership.

LaWuan Waring, USDA's incentive awards assistant with OHRM, said that the highest USDA honor awards are the Plow Awards. Three individuals and four groups received Plow Awards this year. Those recipients have that particular annotation by their respective names in the lists that follow.

In addition to the 102 USDA honor award presentations, USDA's awards program noted the Department's 24 Presidential Rank Award recipients for 2003, the USDA recipients of major awards sponsored by external organizations, and the 521 Departmental employees across the country who have 40 or more years of federal service. Of those, 19 have 50 or more years of federal service. Within that group, and for at least the fourth year in a row, the USDA employee with the longest years of federal service is reported to be Harold "Bruno" Mangum, currently a program specialist with the Farm Service Agency's state office in Raleigh, N.C., who, at press time, has 68 years of federal service—and all of it is with USDA.

**The 32 Individuals receiving USDA honor Awards included:**  
*For Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural*  
*continued on pg. 4...*



Events are literally a hectic blur around Freeman Walker (left, pointing finger), acting chief of the Continuity of Operations Planning Staff in OPPM, as he coordinates an all-hands briefing of a roomful of USDA's "Crisis Action Team" members. This activity was one of many which constituted USDA's recent participation in "Exercise Forward Challenge." Note the story below.—PHOTO BY RON HALL

## "Forward Challenge" Tested The Strength Of USDA's COOP Plan Aflatoxin, Fumes, White Powder— They Just Kept On Coming

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

**A** suicide terrorist attack with chemicals is thwarted at a subway station in Washington, DC. Two large water tankers are stolen from a secured parking compound at a water treatment facility, resulting in a police-issued all-points bulletin. The "Star Blast" computer virus is infecting many government computers. A light plane carrying a chemical warfare substance crashes into a popular theme park in Orlando, Fla. And both the secretary of agriculture and the secretary of health and human services, on their way to an emergency meeting at the White House, are killed in a traffic accident when a tour bus runs a red light, hitting

their limo.

Those were just a few of the "injects," or simulated problems to be dealt with, in the playing field for "Exercise Forward Challenge 2004," a government-wide emergency operations exercise that took place in May.

According to Freeman Walker, acting chief of the Continuity of Operations Planning Staff in the Office of Procurement and Property Management, over 45 federal departments and agencies were players in Forward Challenge, held on May 12-13. At USDA 118 employees participated in the exercise.

"This was a governmentwide exercise designed to test the Continuity of Operations—or COOP—Plans for those participating federal departments and agencies, including our own COOP Plan here at USDA," he explained. "The idea was for agencies to test how they would carry out their own previously defined 'essential functions'—at  
*continued on pg. 2...*



# Ann M. Veneman *Secretary of Agriculture*

**O**ne of the lessons learned in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 is the need to properly guard against intentional as well as unintentional threats to the nation's food supply and be prepared to respond if they happen. President **George W. Bush** initiated the development of a National Incident Management System (NIMS), which is now in place.

The centerpiece of NIMS is the Incident Command System (ICS), which was originally developed in 1970 by the Forest Service to deal with wildfires. ICS, simply put, is a cooperative effort that gives responders at all levels of government one unified structure in which to operate. Jurisdictional barriers are overcome in order to deal with threats or an incident. The basic principle is that every disaster is local, even though it might be national in scale.

The ICS is so effective that five Forest Service ICS teams were in place the morning of September 12, 2001—three in New York City and two at the Pentagon.

I had the opportunity about three weeks later to visit some of the Forest Service teams who were in New York City, and I think that the deputy chief of the fire department in New York City said it best when

he told me, "I never could have imagined that we, the Fire Department of New York, would be working with the U.S. Department of Agriculture." But he went on to say, "We could not have handled this situation without you."

Forest Service ICS teams also were called into action during the recovery of the Space Shuttle Columbia.

Yet ICS is not limited to the Forest Service. That is why USDA's Homeland Security Office has worked the past year and a half to develop ICS training for employees, which you can find at [www.golearn.gov](http://www.golearn.gov). Not only will this training enhance our emergency response and support capabilities, but it will also strengthen our homeland security at the federal, state, and local levels. Every employee is essential to building the kind of coordinated and prepared workforce that is so critical to USDA's prevention and response network.

Ongoing training in our response mechanisms will enhance our ability to help carry out USDA functions as we deal with critical issues and potential threats to our food and agriculture supply. Employee ICS training will make USDA a better and more effective department. Thanks in advance for strengthening your personal readiness on behalf of USDA and the public we serve. ■

## *"Forward Challenge" ...continued from pg. 1*

an emergency relocation facility."

"That's because some emergency or disaster, either natural or human-caused, would have made the normal work location not available or otherwise uninhabitable."

**Len Benning**, an emergency management program specialist in the Continuity of Operations Planning Staff, noted that USDA had tested its COOP Plan in the past—most recently during "Exercise Bright Future" held in February.

"But in this most recent operation," he said, "we tested how effectively our USDA employees—who have been designated to deploy when the COOP Plan is activated—were, in fact, able to deploy to USDA's emergency relocation facility in Elkins, West Virginia—and then set up shop there, carry out the essential USDA functions to which they had been tasked, and effectively communicate the status of their efforts."

Most of the 118 USDA employees, who were designated to deploy, left Washington, DC and relocated to Elkins, relying on the facility which is normally the Forest Service's headquarters building of the Monongahela National Forest.

**Klaus Werner**, a COOP consultant to the Continuity of Operations Planning Staff, pointed out that the scenario for Exercise Forward Challenge involved a specific threat to the Washington, DC area and a failed terrorist attack. At the same time, USDA employees involved in the exercise dealt with 'exercise injects' that were specific to USDA's mission.

Such 'USDA-specific exercise injects' included: school children in Mexico City have become

ill after eating products made with corn that was grown in the U.S.—and that may have been purposely tainted with aflatoxin; a group calling itself "Government Interference in Free Trade" is sending messages threatening to interfere with food, water, and feed supplies, to include targeting Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service labs and quarantine facilities; an explosion in Chicago is affecting food supplies in that area; three tractor-trailers have crashed—possibly intentionally—in the vicinity of USDA's labs in Ames, Iowa, emitting fumes, contaminating the local water supply, and affecting several acres of crops; white powder has been discovered in the mailroom of the Rural Development facility in St. Louis; and USDA's plan for its 'order of succession' needs to be implemented due to the death of the secretary of agriculture.

**Tom Comi**, chief COOP consultant to the Continuity of Operations Planning Staff, said USDA employees designated as COOP "Crisis Action Team" (CAT) members immediately deployed to Elkins, following the activation of USDA's COOP Plan, as part of the exercise.

"Their job," he explained, "is to respond to problems and activities occurring within their respective areas of responsibility. They'd coordinate the gathering of information about those events, coordinate the development of responses to resolve those events, and coordinate the communication to USDA senior officials about how the problems are being resolved."

**Dave Sloan**, the information technology specialist in the Continuity of Operations Planning Staff, recounted that during the exer-

cise the CAT members worked in shifts, normally hunched over their laptops, elbow-to-elbow in a room designated as the COOP Emergency Operations Center, as they grappled with the exercise injects they were provided. "Those injects kept being updated, which required additional strategies for resolving the brushfires that kept cropping up," he recalled.

Emergency management program specialist **Cynthia Powell** added that CAT members provided periodic updates to a "journal of activities" designed to reflect an up-to-the-minute status of each event being dealt with. "I kept the official journal up-to-date," she explained. "And I also projected a scrolling image of the journal onto a wall in the 'bullpen room,' where most CAT members were working—so that they could keep up with developments from other mission areas, as needed."

Staff secretary **Mikael Carter** added that CAT members also conducted daily update briefings by videoconference for USDA subcabinet officials situated at another location.

So, any "lessons learned?" "Yes," Walker replied. "We were able to validate that our current COOP Plan and procedures work. USDA employees *are* able to deploy to their emergency relocation facilities, continue to perform their essential functions under emergency conditions, and effectively communicate both internally and with other federal departments and agencies."

"Lessons learned from Forward Challenge will help us refine our COOP planning—and be better prepared for future exercises or COOP emergencies." ■

# Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

As farmers continued planting what USDA economists expect will be another record crop of corn and soybeans, Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** in May told a tele-news conference of other noteworthy developments in the agricultural economy. In early June, USDA released the 2002 agriculture census results, began increased surveillance of the nation's cowherd for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE), and pressed new home-ownership initiatives.

## Historic Time For

**Agriculture:** "The farm economy is exceptionally strong. The trade picture is very bright and the safety net for producers is firmly and fully in place," Secretary Veneman told reporters in May. USDA analysts are currently predicting record crops of corn, soybeans, rice, and almonds. In addition the forecast of agricultural exports has been raised to \$61.5 billion, ten percent of which comes from purchases by China. If realized this amount would surpass the previous export record set in 1996 of \$60 billion.

Producers are also benefiting at this time from record high prices. "Strong markets and improved financial health span most of the farm economy today both for crops and livestock. In fact, we now expect sales of farm products this year to top a record \$215 billion," Veneman said.

Despite interruptions in beef and poultry trade due to animal disease worries, the livestock sector is experiencing continued growth, and record production and prices are likely. Dairy farmers are receiving record-breaking prices for milk and "next year we may also have record cattle prices, broiler production, and pork exports," she said.

Veneman said the health of today's farm economy clearly

underscores the importance of exports to our agricultural industry. Trade is helping more and more farmers' income to be from the marketplace. Trade is also benefiting our rural communities. Export sales now support 900,000 jobs, 40 percent of which are in rural areas.

## 2002 Census Of Agriculture:

Half of America's farms and ranches have Internet access and nearly 39 percent report using a computer for their farm business, according to new data released from the 2002 Census of Agriculture.

"These data illustrate the importance of the eGovernment initiatives being implemented by USDA," said Secretary Veneman. "We are making more information available to farmers and ranchers through the Internet and helping to provide broadband access to rural communities. To date, this administration has provided over \$253 million in broadband loans for rural areas."

Conducted every five years by the National Agricultural Statistics Service, the census of agriculture attempts to survey every agricultural operator in America through the mail, by telephone, or personal interview. Data represent all agricultural operations, defined as any place, which sold or normally would have sold more than \$1,000 worth of agricultural products during the census year.

Highlights of the agriculture census include:

- The top five states in value of agricultural products sold are California (\$25.7 billion), Texas (\$14.1 billion), Iowa (\$12.3 billion), Nebraska (\$9.7 billion), and Kansas (\$8.7 billion).
- Ninety percent of farms are operated by an individual or family. The number of corporate farms declined by 18.4 percent from 1997 to 2002, which reverses a trend that has



As an area farmer (right) looks on approvingly, Secretary **Ann M. Veneman** (center) and Agricultural Marketing Service Administrator **A.J. Yates** officially open—for its ninth season—USDA's farmers market on June 4. Farmers from states including Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia sell fresh fruits and vegetables, baked goods, fresh-cut flowers, and more. The market—located at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC—is open to USDA employees and the public and runs every Friday until October 29.—**PHOTO BY ALICE WELCH**

continued without interruption since 1974.

- Direct sales to consumers through farmers markets and other venues increased 37 percent from 1997, totaling \$812.2 million in 2002.
- The value of organic commodities reached \$392.8 million in 2002.
- The estimated market value of land and buildings on the Nation's farms rose 24 percent from 1997 to 2002.
- The average age of principal farm or ranch operators was 55.3-years-old compared to 54-years-old in 1997. But, for the first time, NASS collected information about more than one operator on the same farm. Results showed an average age of second operators at 49.4-years-old and third operators at 41.9-years-old. For more information go to: [www.usda.gov/nass/](http://www.usda.gov/nass/)

**BSE Surveillance:** On June 1, results of BSE tests from the enhanced surveillance program began to be posted on the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's website. Under the program, using statistically geographic modeling, sampling some 268,000 animals will allow for the detection of BSE at a rate of 1

positive in 10 million adult cattle with a 99 percent confidence level. In other words, the enhanced program could detect BSE even if there were only five positive animals in the entire country.

## Homeownership

**Achievements:** In Little Rock, Ark., Sacramento, Calif., and Kennett Square, Pa., Secretary Veneman visited with families who have participated in the Rural Development self-help housing program and highlighted President **George W. Bush's** commitment to increasing minority homeownership by 5.5 million by 2010. USDA Rural Development programs are an important part of this initiative. In the past three years, nearly \$13 billion has been provided through USDA programs to help more than 188,000 families buy or make improvements to their homes.

While 50 percent of current participants are minorities, USDA is pledging to increase participants by 10 percent to help meet the President's goal. "We are making progress," Veneman said. "So far this year we have provided 5,100 new homeownership loans to minorities in America."

—**PATRICIA KLINTBERG**

**Award-Winning...continued from pg. 1**

**Producers:** **Larry Heatherly** [Plow Award] (Agricultural Research Service), Stoneville, Ms.; **Donald Martin** (National Agricultural Statistics Service), Honolulu, Hawaii; and **Mitchell Morehart**, (Economic Research Service), Washington, DC; *For Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural Areas:* **Thomas Birkett** (NASS), Washington, DC; **Terry Klopfenstein** (Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service and the University of Nebraska), Lincoln, Neb.; **Ambrose McGuire** (Rural Housing Service), Des Moines, Iowa; **Dave Paul** (Risk Management Agency), Spokane, Wash.; **Marilyn**

**Smith** (CSREES and the University of Nevada), Elko, Nev.; and **Michael Taylor** (RHS), Alexandria, La.; *For Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply:* **John Huntley** (National Association of State Departments of Agriculture), Albany, N.Y.; and **William Lyons** (California Department of Food and Agriculture), Sacramento, Calif.; *For Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health:* **Eliot Herman** [Plow Award] (ARS), St. Louis, Mo.; **Patti Mitchell** (Food and Nutrition Service), Alexandria, Va.; and **Judith Stern** (CSREES and the University of California), Davis, Calif.; *For Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment:* **James Doolittle**

(Natural Resources Conservation Service), Newtown Square, Pa.; **Helen Flach** (NRCS), Davis, Calif.; **Jeff Goebel** (NRCS), Beltsville, Md.; **Hal Gordon** (NRCS), Portland, Ore.; **Robbie LeValley** (Colorado State University), Delta, Colo.; and **Lena Ma** (CSREES and the University of Florida), Gainesville, Fla.; *For Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights:* **John Cooper** [Plow Award] (RHS), Raleigh, N.C.; **Carl Butler** (Agricultural Marketing Service), Memphis, Tenn.; **Karen Citizen-Wilcox** (Office of Inspector General), Atlanta, Ga.; **Jane Kohlman** (Forest Service), Madison, Wis.; **Thomas Mills** (FS), Washington, DC; **Irene Seastrum** (Farm Service Agency), Washington,

DC; and **Douglas Wolfe** (OIG), Beltsville, Md.; *For Heroism and Emergency Response:* **Thomas Ackerman** (OIG), East Lansing, Mich.; **George Aldaya** (FSA), Kansas City, Mo.; **William Coats** (AMS), Washington, DC; **Mark Hopko** (OIG), Lakewood, Colo.; and **Mary Kennedy** (Montana Conservation Corps), Helena, Mont.

**The 70 Groups—which include over 955 Group members—receiving USDA honor awards included:**

*For Enhancing Economic Opportunities for Agricultural Producers:* the Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch (AMS), Washington, DC, **James Riva**, Group Leader; the Biotechnology Team

# Individual Honor Award Winners



L. Heatherly



D. Martin



M. Morehart



T. Birkett



T. Klopfenstein



A. McGuire



D. Paul



M. Smith



M. Taylor



J. Huntley



W. Lyons



E. Herman



P. Mitchell



J. Stern



J. Doolittle



H. Flach



J. Goebel



H. Gordon



R. LeValley



L. Ma



J. Cooper



C. Butler



K. Citizen-Wilcox



J. Kohlman



T. Mills



I. Seastrum



D. Wolfe



T. Ackerman



G. Aldaya



W. Coats



M. Hopko



M. Kennedy

(Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration), Washington, DC, **David Shipman**, Group Leader; the California Marketing Order Program Team (AMS), Fresno, Calif., **Kurt Kimmel**, Group Leader; the “Fantesk” Research Unit (ARS), Peoria, Ill., **George Fanta**, Group Leader; the Market Analysis Program Team (ERS), Washington, DC, **Joy Harwood**, Group Leader; the Ministerial Conference and EXPO on Agricultural Science and Technology (Foreign Agricultural Service), Washington, DC, **Christian Foster**, Group Leader; the North Dakota Sham Farm Operations Investigative Group (OIG), Bismarck, N.D., **Paul Ward**, Group Leader; the United States Embassy Mexico City North American Free Trade Agreement Team (FAS), Mexico City, Mexico, **William Brant**, Group Leader; the United States Rice Genome Consortia (CSREES and the University of Arizona), Tucson, Ariz., **Rod Wing**, Group Leader; and the Wheat-Based Bioproducts Group (ARS), Albany, Calif., **Gregory Glenn** and **William Orts**, Group Leaders; *For Supporting Increased Economic Opportunities and Improved Quality of Life in Rural Areas*: the Pohnpei Field Office [Plow Award] (NRCS), Pohnpei, Micronesia, **Philip Giles** and **Jed Johnson**, Group Leaders; the American Growers Resolution Team (RMA), Kansas City, Mo., and Washington, DC, **Denise Hoffman** and **Michael Hand**, Group Leaders; the Hawaii Fruit Fly Area-Wide Pest Management Core Team (ARS), Hilo, Hawaii, **Roger Vargas**, Group Leader; the Lower Hamakua Ditch Watershed Implementation Team (NRCS), Honolulu, Hawaii, **Douglas Toews**, Group Leader; and the Northeast Center for Food Entrepreneurship (CSREES and the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station/Cornell University), Geneva, N.Y., **Olga Padilla-Zakour**, Group Leader; *For Enhancing Protection and Safety of the Nation's Agriculture and Food Supply*: the Food Safety Incident Response Group [Plow Award] (Food Safety and Inspection Service), Washington, DC and Chicago, Ill., **Vella Holmes** and **Paul Wolseley**, Group Leaders; the Canadian Bovine Spongiform

Encephalopathy Response Team (Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service), Washington, DC, **Peter Fernandez**, Group Leader; the Carcass Inspection Systems Team (ARS), Ames, Iowa, **Thomas Casey**, Group Leader; the Department of Homeland Security Reorganization Transition Planning Group (APHIS), Washington, DC, **Ric Dunkle**, Group Leader; the Exotic Newcastle Disease Eradication Project (APHIS), Washington, DC, **Ron DeHaven**, Group Leader; the Federal Register Notice Rule Change and Implementation Group (APHIS), Riverdale, Md., **Rebecca Bech**, Group Leader; the Food Safety Mobile Team (FSIS), Beltsville, Md., **Susan Conley**, Group Leader; the Food Safety Regulatory Essentials Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Bobby Palesano**, Group Leader; the Memorandum of Agreement Development and Implementation Team (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Laurie Lindsay**, Group Leader; the Operational Rations Inspection Management Team (AMS), Washington, DC, **Terry Bane**, Group Leader; the Oversight of Production Process and Recall at ConAgra Plant Audit Team (OIG), Kansas City, Mo., **Dennis Gannon**, Group Leader; and the Security Analysis System for United States Agriculture (ERS), Washington, DC, **Paul Chan**, Group Leader; *For Improving the Nation's Nutrition and Health*: the Fruit and Vegetable Pilot Program 2002-2003 (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Peter Murano**, Group Leader; the One Public Face Website Development Team (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Ronald Johnson**, Group Leader; and the USDA Food Security Measurement Team (ERS), Washington, DC, **Mark Nord**, Group Leader; *For Protecting and Enhancing the Nation's Natural Resource Base and Environment*: the Protozoan Parasite Epidemiology Team [Plow Award] (ARS), Beltsville, Md., **Ronald Fayer**, Group Leader; the Airport Training Committee (APHIS), Morris Plains, N.J., and New Market, Md., **Janet Bucknall** and **Alton Dunaway**, Group Leaders; the Animal Waste Management Team (ERS), Washington, DC, and Beltsville, Md., **Noel Gollehon** (ERS) and **Daniel Meyer** (NRCS), Group Leaders; the Ecological Area-Wide Management (TEAM) of Leafy Spurge

(ARS), Sidney, Mont., **Gerald Anderson**, Group Leader; the Florida Automated Weather Network (CSREES and the University of Florida), Tavares, Fla., **John Jackson**, Group Leader; the Hayman Fire Restoration Team (FS), Colorado Springs, Colo., **Brent Botts**, Group Leader; the Master Tree Farmer/Master Wildlifer Programs (CSREES and Clemson University), Clemson, S.C., **George Kessler**, Group Leader; the North Carolina Phosphorus Loss Assessment Team (NRCS), Raleigh, N.C., **John Havlin**, Group Leader; the Resource Conservation and Development Coordinators (NRCS), Emmett, Idaho, **Russel Manwaring**, Group Leader; the Rhode Island Eelgrass Restoration Partnership (NRCS), Emmett, Idaho, **Andrew Lipsky**, Group Leader; the Saltcedar Biological Control Research Team (ARS), Albany, Calif., and Temple, Texas, **Raymond Carruthers** and **Jack DeLoach**, Group Leaders; the Shasta County Conservation Partnership (NRCS), Redding, Calif., **Robert Bailey**, Group Leader; the SmarTech Development Team (NRCS), Fort Worth, Texas, **Arnold King**, Group Leader; the Southeast Region American Indian Initiative Workgroup (NRCS), Atlanta, Ga., **Charles Adams**, Group Leader; the Sustainable Coffee Production Team (NRCS), Atlanta, Ga., **Charles Adams**, Group Leader; and the Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus Team (CSREES and the University of Florida), Quincy, Fla., **Joseph Funderburk**, Group Leader; *For Supporting the President's Management Agenda and Civil Rights*: the Emergency Loan Streamlining Taskforce (FSA), Washington, DC, **Michael Hinton**, Group Leader; the Emergency Preparedness and Programs Branch (FSA), Washington, DC, **Lynn Tjeerdsma**, Group Leader; Extension en Espanol (CSREES and Texas A&M University), College Station, Texas, **William Watson**, Group Leader; the Farm Loan Program Chief Mentoring Project (FSA), Washington, DC, **Almeda Cole**, Group Leader; the Food Aid Request Entry System (FSA), Kansas City, Mo., **Ethel Bowers**, Group Leader; the Hazard and Flood Compliance Team (RHS), St. Louis, Mo., **Thomas Morris**, Group Leader;

the Labor-Management Agreement Implementation (FSIS), Washington, DC, **Cheryl Dunham** and **Jonathan Theodule**, Group Leaders; the Mentoring Program (CSREES), Washington, DC, **Gladys Vaughn**, Group Leader; the National Employee Development Team (FNS), Alexandria, Va., **Geoff Gay**, Group Leader; the RadioSource.net Land-Grant Internet Audio Project (CSREES and the University of Florida), Gainesville, Fla., **Ashley Wood**, Group Leader; the Small Business Capacity Building Team (Departmental Administration, the Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization), Washington, DC, **James House**, Group Leader; the Streamlining and Cost Savings Initiative Team (NRCS), Fort Worth, Texas, **Humberto Hernandez**, Group Leader; the Travel Card Audit Team (OIG), Washington, DC, **Richard Davis** and **Jane Bannon**, Group Leaders; the Water and Waste Grant Eligibility Audit Team (OIG), Kansas City, Mo., **Dennis Gannon**, Group Leader; and the Zone 2—District Conservationists and Tribal Resource Conservationists (NRCS), Stillwater, Okla., **Mark Habiger**, Group Leader; *For Heroism and Emergency Response*: the Space Shuttle—107 Columbia Recovery Mission Group [Plow Award], (FS), Zavalla, Texas, **James Sowell**, Group Leader; the Afghanistan and Iraq Agriculture Reconstruction Team (FAS), Washington, DC, **Lee Schatz**, Group Leader; the Exotic Newcastle Disease Research Response Team (ARS), Athens, Ga., **David Suarez**, Group Leader; the Glen Pittsenbarger Rescue Team (FS), Marlinton, W.Va., **David Buck** and **Edward Burton**, Group Leaders; the Mountain Area Safety Task Force (FS), San Bernardino, Calif., **Gene Zimmerman**, Group Leader; the Old Fire—Highway 18 Defense Group (FS), Big Bear, Calif., **Randall Clauson**, Group Leader; Preclearance Programs (APHIS), Riverdale, Md., **David Reeves**, Group Leader; the Ralstonia Incident Response Team (APHIS), Riverdale, Md., **Matthew Royer**, Group Leader; and the Wildlife Services Hurricane Isabel Relief Team (APHIS), Annapolis, Md., **Stephen Kendrot**, Group Leader. ■

# Editor's Roundup *USDA's people in the news*



**M**ike Torrey is the deputy chief of staff to Secretary Ann M. Veneman.

From February 2003 until his appointment to this position Torrey served as deputy assistant secretary for congressional relations at USDA. The April-June 2003 issue of the *USDA News* carried his complete biographical sketch, following his appointment to that position.

From 2002-03 Torrey served as vice president of legislative affairs for the International Dairy Foods Association, after having been its senior director for legislative affairs from 1998-2002. During the 1990s he worked as a legislative assistant to three [then] U.S. Senators representing Kansas: Bob Dole, Nancy Kassebaum, and Sheila Frahm, concentrating on agricultural policy

and related issues.

**Kevin Herglotz**, the previous deputy chief of staff who also served as director of communications at USDA, is now vice president for government relations and legislative affairs at Safeway, Inc., based in Pleasanton, Calif. ■



**A**lisha Harrison is the director of communications at USDA.

From March 2003 until her appointment to this position Harrison served as acting director of communications and press secretary at the Department. She was deputy director of communications and press secretary since November 2001. The Jan.-March 2002 issue of the *USDA News* carried her complete biographical sketch, following her appointment to those positions.

From 1986-2001 Harrison served as the executive director of public re-

lations for the National Cattlemen's Beef Association, where she managed all media and public relations activities designed to support consumer marketing and public policy goals. She worked as an editorial assistant for the University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension Service in Knoxville from 1983-86.

**Kevin Herglotz**, the previous director of communications at USDA who also served as deputy chief of staff to Secretary Ann M. Veneman, is now vice president for government relations and legislative affairs at Safeway, Inc., based in Pleasanton, Calif. ■



**M**ike Yost is the associate administrator for programs in the Farm Service Agency.

Before joining USDA, from 1979 until his appointment to this posi-

tion Yost served as president of Yost Farm, Inc., a fifth-generation corn, soybean, wheat, and alfalfa farm in Murdock, Minn. He worked as a grain merchant for the Pillsbury Company in Minneapolis, and was a member of the Minneapolis Grain Exchange, from 1973-79.

Yost served as chair of the American Oilseed Coalition from 1998-2000 as well as vice president, president, and then chair of the American Soybean Association from 1995-2000. He also served as a member of the USDA/Department of Energy Biomass Advisory Board from 2002-2004, as well as a member of USDA's Biotech Advisory Board from 2000-2001.

**Teresa Lasseeter**, the previous associate administrator for programs in FSA, is now working in her family's agribusiness operation in Moultrie, Ga. ■

## PROFILE PLUS *More About: Nancy Bryson*



**N**ancy Bryson, USDA's point person on all legal matters, grew up in Hancock, Mass., population about 700. Founded in 1762, textile mills were once the biggest employer but farming has also been historically important. Today the community remains a favored residence for cows and skiers drawn to Hancock's proximity to the mountains. Tourists also

frequent the town's Shaker Village.

"When I was growing up, social life revolved around the school and the church and organizations like the Ladies Auxiliary, the American Legion, and for the kids, 4-H. I learned to cook and sew. My specialties were cinnamon rolls and goulash. My three brothers liked the cinnamon rolls but preferred my mother's goulash," she said.

Bryson's career path was also born in Hancock. "I became an attorney because of my 10th grade social studies teacher. We had a project on the rise and fall of the Roman Empire and my assignment was to explain both sides of the prominent theories for its demise. So I got through the presentation and my teacher said, 'You know, you would be a very good lawyer.' And I seized on the idea. From that day on, I just decided well OK, I am going to be a lawyer. I had no idea what this would involve. But as it turned out, it was a very good choice for me," she said, "because much of the training a lawyer experiences in school and applies in the practice of law, is to analyze facts, identify pros and cons, and find solutions. All investigations involve many disparate pieces of information and the job of a lawyer is to synthesize them into a story that makes sense and supports your advocacy position."

Bryson earned a degree in history from Boston University and a Juris

Doctor degree from Georgetown University. She spent the early part of her career as a government lawyer at the Department of Justice where she handled both civil and criminal environmental matters. She then became a partner in the Washington law firm of Crowell & Moring, LLC, where she practiced environmental and natural resources law and was co-chair of the firm's biotechnology practice. She was sworn in as General Counsel of USDA on April 1, 2002.

"When you are in private practice you have the luxury of being expert in a relatively small number of areas, but being General Counsel means, as the name implies, that you are generally responsible for a whole range of issues," she said. "This is a huge challenge. A typical day can involve issues relating to the Forest Service, Rural Development, antitrust issues in agriculture, country of origin labeling, BSE, biotechnology, international agricultural disputes, and so on."

Bryson said the job is doable only because of the fine career lawyers on her staff. "We have some absolutely fabulous career lawyers who are just remarkable public servants. They are absolutely tireless. They know their stuff from A to Z and they make it possible for people like me to come into this job and function. Without them it would be impossible," she said.

**Last Book Read:** *"The Secret Life of Bees,"* by Sue Monk Kidd

**Last Movie Seen:** *"The Lavender Hill Mob,"* with Alec Guinness

**Hobbies:** Cooking, gardening, needlepoint, reading, piano, traveling

**Favorite Weekend Breakfast:** Pancakes

**Major accomplishment:** "My children, Sam and Alex."

**Priorities In The Months Ahead:** "Educating everyone on what it means to say 'OGC signed off on this'."

—PATRICIA KLINTBERG

## USDA Spotlights Its "Unsung Heroes"

by Ron Hall  
Office of Communications

**U**SDA recognized 10 employees as "Unsung Heroes" during its recent observance of Public Service Recognition Week.

According to **Otis Thompson**, a retired USDA public affairs specialist who then served for 13 years as executive director of the Organization of Professional Employees, U.S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) until he retired from that position in May 2004, the purpose of the "Unsung Hero" designation is to identify those employees who have been "unusually dedicated and efficient and had a positive attitude."

He noted that nominees as "Unsung Heroes" are based on actual "hands-on" activities rather than on supervisory or managerial efforts. "However," he added, "all USDA employees were eligible to be nominated."

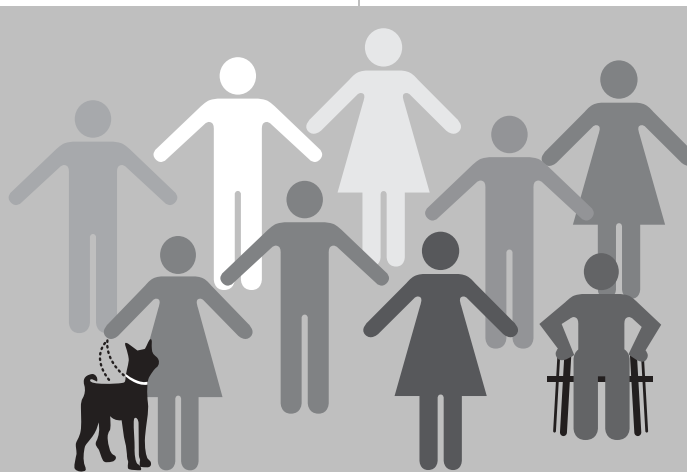
The idea for an "Unsung Heroes" contest was developed in 1987 by a group of six representatives of professional organizations in the Department. In addition to OPEDA, current sponsoring groups include the Association of Technical & Supervisory Professionals, USDA's Employee Services & Recreation Association, the National Association of Federal Veterinarians, and the USDA Chapter of the Senior Executive Association.

This is the 17th year of the contest, which was conducted USDA-wide. Thompson said that following a Departmentwide solicitation, 26 employees were nominated by fellow USDA employees. The final selection was made in April by a team of USDA officials. Related photos can be found at [www.usda.gov/opeda](http://www.usda.gov/opeda).

USDA's "Unsung Heroes" for 2004 include:

❶ **Bill Beverley**, head of the Utilities Services Section at the Agricultural Research Service's Beltsville (Md.) Agricultural Research Center (BARC), who oversaw three capital construction projects that replaced or upgraded BARC's water production plant, wastewater treatment plants, and central heating plants—while ensuring there was no disruption of service or negative effect on the agricultural research conducted at BARC.

ing programs in the Foreign Agricultural Service, who employed within his area of responsibility 35 Student Cooperative Education Program employees, seven Student Temporary Employment Program interns, and 18 Summer Interns all during his three-year tenure in that position to date; assigned a graduate from USDA's 1890 Scholar program to a permanent position as an agricultural marketing specialist; and provided support for employee development through short-term and long-term detail opportunities.



❷ **Marie Buchanan**, the national program outreach manager for the Risk Management Agency, who has administered over 200 cooperative agreements and other outreach activities for RMA over the past two years—to ensure that small and limited resource, women, and other historically underserved farmers and ranchers are provided an equal opportunity to participate in RMA programs and activities.

❸ **Rondi Hammond**, an equal employment opportunity specialist with the Office of Civil Rights, who processed allegations of discrimination at the Department while using a good knowledge base in the complaint area, applying a personality designed to lend confidence and calm to the complainants, and displaying a high level of empathy without losing her objectivity or professionalism.

❹ **Frank Lee**, deputy administrator for commodity and market-

❺ **Virginia Lewis**, the National Asian and Pacific Islander (AA/PI) Program Manager for the Natural Resources Conservation Service, who was one of the founders of the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO), an employee organization in NRCS; initiated and coordinated the first AA/PI Strategic Plan for the agency in 1999; and recommended and then assisted in establishing an AA/PI liaison officer for NRCS at California Polytechnic Institute in Pomona, Calif., in 2000.

❻ **Joe Realdine**, the regional import supervisor for the Food Safety and Inspection Service's Northeast Region, based in Philadelphia, who uncovered unsafe and unsanitary conditions in a meat and poultry processing plant in Linden, N.J., and documented the infractions. This led to the withdrawing of the grant of inspection at that plant, to ensure public health. This case is cur-

rently being used as a training module for new FSIS enforcement investigation and analysis officers.

❼ **Doris Roach**, an equal employment opportunity specialist with the Forest Service, who has been dependable, has performed well under pressure, has served as a gentle coach, a co-worker, and a team player, and has been diligently conscientious, all with a high sense of integrity and ethics.

❽ **Susan Scarcia**, an enforcement investigation and analysis officer at FSIS's District Office in Philadelphia, who was a member of FSIS's first Consumer Safety Officer Class in 2002 and who monitors lab results on meat and poultry samples. If there are presumptive positive findings for *Listeria monocytogenes*, *E.coli*0157:H7, or salmonella, she ensures that the meat or poultry product is placed on hold, or can be located quickly, and then provides the District's recall officer with information within two hours.

❾ **Steve Shelor**, the assistant director for program delivery and outreach with the Civil Rights Staff in the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, who has maintained a steady calm and provided a great deal of stability in the flow of work and in the workforce, with knowledge, dedication, and professionalism, in helping to achieve voluntary compliance with civil rights laws and Departmental regulations.

❿ **Sam Vang**, a soil conservationist with NRCS at the USDA Service Center in Fresno, Calif., who collaborated with several community-based organizations—including the Khmer Society, the Lao Family Community Inc. of Fresno, and the Agape Refugee Ministry and Services (ARMS), a faith-based organization—to plan, initiate, and implement a USDA-focused outreach educational program on behalf of Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, and other Southeast Asian ethnic groups and families in the area. ■



*It's all business in the elbow-to-elbow environs of USDA's "Emergency Operations Center" in Elkins, W.Va., as several members of the Department's Crisis Action Team (CAT) methodically respond to some of the many 'injects' of "Exercise Forward Challenge." They include (L to R) Office of Procurement and Property Management CAT member **David Shea**, Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services CAT member **Pam Phillips** (back to camera), Food Safety CAT member **Yvonne Davis**, Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services CAT member **Lynn Tjeerdsma** (on phone), and FFAS CAT member **Rob Huttenlocker**. Note the story on page 1.— **PHOTO BY RON HALL***



**HELP US FIND**

**Sharquita Michelle Richardson**

Missing: 9-13-2003

From: Jacksonville, FL

D.O.B. 3-15-1990

Sex: Female

Hair: Brown

Eyes: Black

Height: 5 ft.

Weight: 100 lbs.

*If you have information, please call*

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**U.S. Department of Agriculture**  
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