

USDA *news*

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

Specific Actions USDA Has Initiated To “Reinvent” Diversity And Inclusion In Our Workplace

by Ron Hall
Office of Communications

We want a USDA workplace where each employee feels trusted, valued, respected, and appreciated for everything they bring to the table.”

Elaine Ho was describing a prime goal of several recent efforts at the Department to “reinvent” diversity and inclusion in the USDA workplace. Ho is the Director of USDA's Office of Diversity, which was created in April 2007 within the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights.

Within the past two years the Department has issued two memos to all USDA employees, at headquarters and field locations, on the subject of diversity in the USDA workplace.

The first memo, titled “Workplace Diversity and Inclusion,” dated Jan. 10, 2007, and signed by Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights **Margo McKay**, advised that, in a workplace that values diversity and inclusion, employees demonstrate their respect for each individual's unique attributes, so that the workplace is free from harassment, discrimination, and intolerance. Such a workplace “makes ‘people sense’ and ‘business sense,’” the memo read. “When people feel good about their

jobs, enjoy coming to work, and believe that they are being treated fairly and with respect, they are more productive.”

The second memo, titled “USDA's Diversity Mission Statement,” dated Feb. 29, 2008, and also signed by McKay, established “USDA's Diversity Mission Statement.” As delineated in the memo, in establishing the Department's Diversity Mission Statement, “Each of us should strive: To embrace diversity and inclusion as core values that will spur growth and change across the Department; to ensure leadership accountability in the cultivation of a workplace culture where the uniqueness, background, and experience of every employee is trusted, valued, and respected; to strengthen our diversified workforce so we can continue to effectively serve our diverse customers, recruit the best talent, stimulate an environment of productivity, and eliminate underrepresentation, discrimination, and harassment throughout the Department.”

In promoting the need for, and the core values of, diversity and inclusion in the USDA workplace, both memos ended with the same eight words: “The success of USDA's mission depends on it.”

“Essentially,” Ho advised, “we're using these two docu-



“So, we all agree, it was another successful Diversity Lunch,” affirms **Elaine Ho** (2nd from left), Director of USDA's Office of Diversity. She was conferring with several of her Diversity Program Managers, including (L to R) **Jean Parker**, **Sae Mi Kim**, **Bill Scaggs**, **Raul Dinzey**, and **Terry Thir**, following the August 13 Diversity Lunch. It was the latest in USDA's “Diversity Lunch Series,” held at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. That activity is also one of several examples of recent efforts to “reinvent” diversity and inclusion in the USDA workplace. Note the story on this page.—*Photo by Alice Welch*

ments to set the stage for us to reinvent diversity here at USDA.”

The Office of Diversity initiative falls in line with the aforementioned Feb. 29, 2008 memo which advised that “. . . we must be willing to reexamine and even reinvent our approach to diversity and inclusion to ensure an effective outcome in this global marketplace.”

“Our purpose is to provide a fresh perspective on diversity in light of today's rapidly changing demographics and the impact that has on our workplace,” Ho emphasized. “Reinventing diversity means that we, first, must redefine ‘diversity’ as being something broader than the tradi-

tionally-defined racial, ethnic group, gender, or disability categories. Second, we need to recognize that unconscious bias and unconscious perceptions—rather than intentional discrimination—can be barriers to diversity. Third, our diversity initiative here at USDA needs to spark institutional change, and not just be program-based.”

“Ultimately,” she added, “our end goal is that diversity and inclusion aren't just some form of lip service or an afterthought, but should be integrated into our everyday activities—in other words, infused

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Ed Schafer *Secretary of Agriculture*

Dear Fellow Employees,
One of the greatest rewards of being Secretary is the chance it gives me to meet so many students and USDA interns.

Our Department has built a strong student connection over the years. It's amazing when you think about it—but this Department brings on board about 6,500 interns nationwide every year.

These young people include American Indian and Alaska Native interns, the USDA/1890 National Scholars, students from Hispanic Serving Institutions, interns from FFA, and many other partnerships.

Many of you mentor these students and interns. You know they are smart, educated, and eager to find their place in the future of the nation's food and agriculture systems.

They are fully engaged and full of questions. Their conversations are current and on-point. They want to understand the challenges of food security and energy independence.

In the past few months, I've been delighted to welcome interns to USDA's summer programs. And I've also spoken to White House interns, Congressional interns, and student leaders who are in Washington, DC to learn about policy and our nation's challenges.

What they all share is an interest in public service and a sense—if not a complete understanding—that 21st century food and agriculture offer tremendous opportunities for their generation.

As one example, in late July I was delighted to speak with state presidents of the national FFA organization. Many of them were preparing to head off to college. These 18 and 19 year-olds wanted to know what they can do now.

They wanted to hear about emerging issues—like feeding a growing world—that FFA members should be aware of and perhaps address in their programs.

I told them their generation faces the reality of a planet that must find a way to feed another 50 million mouths a year, without any more land. Food security in the 21st century involves more than just production agriculture. It draws on trade policy, development aid, natural resources, and science, among many other subjects.

I have found students are particularly eager to learn about the role biotech crops can play in bridging the gap between the world's rapidly growing population and its limited land and water resources.

I ask every USDA employee who has the opportunity to work with these students to impress on them how issues like food security and renewable energy—wind and solar, as well as ethanol and biodiesel—are broadening the scope of American agriculture as we know it.

There is a world of opportunity open to graduates who are aware of and eager to work in these fields. As a nation, we have an urgent need for the next generation of scientists, engineers, conservationists, economists—all the food and agriculture professions.

At some point, in some capacity, with some interaction, each of us has the chance to influence a student's path.

I urge you to use these “teachable moments” to open students' eyes. Outline agriculture's challenges today and the dynamic opportunities they open for tomorrow. You'll not only be influencing a young career. You'll be strengthening USDA's student connection and helping the nation prepare its leaders for our future. ■

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into our mission and all we do.”

As an example of recent efforts to reinvent diversity and inclusion in the USDA workplace, Ho noted that the mandatory civil rights training course for all USDA employees for 2008 is titled “Re-Inventing Diversity for Today's USDA.” “USDA has been exploring what diversity looks like in the 21st century and how we can address it in a powerful and meaningful way,” she pointed out. “This course will help us accomplish that.”

She said that the training course is to be available, as an ‘AgLearn’ course on the Internet and through other formats for accessibility—to include live discussions on this subject at headquarters and field locations—before the end of this calendar year.

As a second example of recent efforts to reinvent diversity and inclusion in the USDA workplace, in April 2008 the Department held a “Civil Rights and Diversity Conference” in College Park, MD. Diversity Program Manager **Bill Scaggs** noted that several hundred USDA employees, from headquarters and field offices, attended the three-day activity. “USDA generally holds a civil rights conference for its employees every two years,” he advised. “But what was

different at this conference was its decided emphasis on diversity and inclusion.”

As a third example of recent efforts to reinvent diversity and inclusion in the USDA workplace, Diversity Program Manager **Richard Regan** said that the Office of Diversity has been sponsoring a monthly “Diversity Lunch Series,” held at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. Beginning this past February, the themes of the monthly lunches thus far have included “Power of Words and Images,” “It's Okay Not to Be a Superwoman,” “Personalities and Workplace Diversity,” “Working with the 4 Generations,” “Disability Awareness and Etiquette,” “How to Plan Events That Are Accessible,” and “A Selecting Official's Perspective.”

“The great thing about the Diversity Lunch Series,” he emphasized, “is that, for employees in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, you can come and eat your lunch while the speaker presents for 30 minutes. If you're able to stay around for the discussion, that's great—and, if not, you're back in your office in no time.”

“This was an easy program to plan, the speakers didn't cost us anything since most were federal employees, and the feedback has been overwhelmingly positive,” Regan

added. “We hope this can be a model that can be replicated at USDA's field locations.” Additional information on the Diversity Lunch Series can be found on the website of the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights at www.ascr.usda.gov/usda_e_lunch08.html

A fourth example of recent efforts to reinvent diversity and inclusion in the USDA workplace is the Department's “Diversity and Inclusion Forums.” In June USDA held the first of a series of “Diversity and Inclusion Forums,” held at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC. The estimated 30 attendees included USDA senior executives plus representatives of 19 “recognized employee organizations” at USDA.

“The purpose of the Forums,” explained Diversity Program Manager **Terry Thir**, “is to serve as a communication vehicle and a sounding board for the participants on the general topic of diversity at USDA. For instance, the first Forum focused on such topics as reinventing diversity at USDA by understanding the past, identifying current issues, and describing what USDA will look like in five years.”

She added that at these Forums, representatives of the various USDA employee organizations *continued on pg. 7...*

Notes *from USDA Headquarters*

Fresh Produce For School Students:

In anticipation of the beginning of the 2008-09 school year across the country, USDA announced on August 6 that it will provide \$49 million for schools to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables for elementary school children during the school day.

Cindy Long, Director of the Child Nutrition Division in the Food and Nutrition Service, noted that this was a result of a section in the 2008 farm bill titled the "Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program." "This new section replaces a previous program, begun in 2002, that had only been in a limited number of states," she said. "It now expands fresh fruits and vegetables to selected schools in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands."

Long pointed out that this particular program is separate from FNS's School Breakfast Program and School Lunch Program, and is intended to provide a variety of free fruits and vegetables throughout the school day.

Bob Eadie, Chief of the Policy and Program Development Branch in the Child Nutrition Division, pointed out that the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is targeted to students in the neediest elementary schools in each state. "All students in the expanded number of participating schools," he said, "will now receive fresh fruits and vegetables at no cost where a high proportion of children are eligible to receive free- or reduced-price school meals. Under this new program, elementary schools may apply to their states for funding to operate the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program on their own campuses."

"And with this new program," added FNS Program Analyst **Mara McElmurray**, "we're hoping that students will improve

their diets outside of school by adding fresh fruits and vegetables into their daily meal choices."

Tax Compliance:

Don't let anyone try to brand USDA employees as 'tax dead-beats'—because we're not. In fact, according to data provided by the Internal Revenue Service, the tax delinquency rate by USDA employees compares favorably to employees in other federal departments and agencies.

"The IRS advised us that USDA employees had a 2.17 percent delinquency rate on paying individual federal income taxes as of October 2007," noted **Barbara Holland**, Chief of the Executive Staffing and Compensation Branch in the Office of Human Capital Management. That delinquency generally was through a federal income tax balance owed and/or an unfiled federal tax return.

"That figure for USDA employees was below that of the Federal government as a whole, which had an average Federal employee delinquency rate of 3.8 percent as of October 2007," she pointed out. In fact, of 78 executive branch departments, agencies, and other offices which IRS listed in its stats, the delinquency rate of USDA's employees was lower than all but 14 of the others. In addition, of the 18 'major,' generally cabinet-level, federal departments, USDA's employee delinquency rate was lower than all but U.S. Department of the Treasury employees (1.13 percent) and U.S. Department of Justice employees (1.72 percent), while USDA tied with U.S. Department of Energy employees (2.17 percent).

Plus, the USDA employee federal income tax delinquency rate of 2.17 percent as of October 2007 was an improvement over its comparable figure of 2.25 percent as of Oct. 2006.

Incidentally, the federal tax



While Secretary **Ed Schafer** (3rd from right) gets briefed by **Ryan Shelton** (2nd from right) and **Jennifer Coglianese** (right), **Barbara Kreuger** (center) gets ready to milk **Champaign** the goat. The three students—currently participating in a 'Supervised Agricultural Experience,' or SAE, summer school session—are among the 600 students who attend the Chicago High School for Agricultural Sciences in Chicago. That school focuses on agricultural sciences and gives its students a hands-on agricultural experience—in an urban setting—throughout the entire year. Schafer toured the school on June 27.—
Photo by Joseph P. Meier, SouthtownStar Newspapers

delinquency figure for IRS employees, as of October 2007, was less than one percent. "No surprise there," Holland quipped. "Maybe we can catch up to 'em next year."

"Web Connect":

Just in time for the 18th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act which was on July 26, USDA's TARGET Center is now providing a new method of delivering its services to USDA headquarters and field employees. It's called "Web Connect," and it allows any employee, who has Internet access with Adobe Flash Player installed on his/her computer, to access live, interactive training events presented by the TARGET Center.

Examples include courses related to assistive technology in the workplace, compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and ergonomics.

This system also lets participants in remote locations employ a web camera to interact, live on

the Internet, with TARGET personnel on accessibility issues.

"Before," said **Kevin Curtin**, Director of the TARGET Center at USDA headquarters in Washington, DC, "in order to participate in our training sessions, employees had to be physically located in the TARGET Center here in DC. But now, through 'Web Connect,' they can be located literally anywhere—as long as they have access to the Internet."

Kathleen Herleikson, a Systems Accountant with USDA's National Finance Center in New Orleans, had inquired, on behalf of a colleague, about a Web Connect training session held on June 25 concerning a new "Mobile Reader" device for persons with visual impairments.

"Through this interactive training," she quipped, "you all are breaking the distance barrier by allowing one to attend or gain info—without the cost of an airline ticket!"

—**RON HALL**

Employees *make these things happen*

NATURAL RESOURCES AND ENVIRONMENT

USDA's 'Helpful Handprints' Are Prominent In "Dig It!" Exhibition

Maxine Levin, a Soil Scientist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service in Washington, DC, took another look at the soil "monolith," or soil profile—lying on a gallery floor at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History—and liked what she saw.

A few days earlier, Levin had worked to repair the soil monolith by gluing back chunks of soil that had fallen away during its journey from its storage location in Maryland to the Museum. After carefully examining her handiwork on the repaired soil profile, she gave it her stamp of approval. It was ready for public viewing.

That soil monolith is among 54 others that are part of a 5,000-square foot "soils exhibition" called "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil" that opened July 19 at the Museum, located on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

This exhibition explores the world of soils and its significance to the well-being of the world. The soils are a reservoir for life and play a role in almost every aspect of human existence, including food, housing, clothing, medicine, and ecosystems. This exhibition is intended to raise public awareness about the role that soils play in sustaining life on Earth.

In addition to NRCS, the Agricultural Research Service, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, and the Forest Service provided funding, technical expertise, creative input, or coordination of contacts with outside entities.

Levin, who coordinated NRCS's contribution to the exhibition, noted that USDA lent the Smithsonian Institution soil samples from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

Eddie Earles, an NRCS Soil Scientist based at the USDA Field Service Center in Calvert County, MD, explained that each monolith in the exhibition is between 45-48 inches long, about 8 inches wide, and up to 2 inches thick, and shows the soil's natural layers. "When we extract an intact slice of soil from a soils pit," he said, "that's the first step in a lengthy process of creating a monolith, which we then preserve."

In addition to the soil monoliths, "Dig It!" also includes interactive displays, hands-on models, and videos.

NRCS National Leader for World Soil Resources **Hari Eswaran** and NRCS Soils Geographer **Paul Reich** co-developed an extensive map to show visitors to the exhibition the 'big picture' thereby helping them to learn more about soils around the world.

The exhibition also features Eswaran in an interactive display and on the exhibition's website, which is <http://forces.si.edu/soils>. As a Soils Explorer, he shares with visitors his favorite soils—Oxisols—which are tropical, nutrient-poor soils. He also explains the value of studying soils of other countries.

"It's important because some of America's food, our raw materials for clothing, and other necessities come from other countries," Eswaran said. "As a result, Americans should know the conditions under which our food and raw materials are produced."

Chuck Gordon, NRCS's State Soil Scientist in Bozeman, MT, said that the reason to exhibit soils is to increase discovery and understanding. "There are more living creatures in a shovelful of soil than there are human beings on the planet—and so many organisms contribute to the health of soil that scientists haven't even named them all," he said. "We know more about the dark

side of the moon than about soil."

Gordon added that Montana's state soil, called the "Scobey Series" from north-central Montana, is among the soil monoliths in the exhibition. He coordinated with others to get that soil monolith to the Smithsonian's exhibition.

Research on soil and earthworms—by ARS scientists throughout the country, particularly Iowa and the ARS Plant Science Research Unit in St. Paul, MN—was incorporated into the exhibition, according to **Jerry Hatfield**, Laboratory Director of the ARS National Soil Tilth Laboratory in Ames, Iowa. Part of ARS's contribution to the exhibition is reflected in descriptions of soil management and environmental protection practices.

"People worldwide depend on soils, and in a sense, soils depend on people to take care of them," Gordon affirmed. "Entire civilizations have perished because they failed to protect their soils. To protect our soils, we must understand them."

— SYLVIA RAINFORD



"Gimme a High-Five, Sammy!" declares NRCS Soil Scientist **Maxine Levin** (left). She is sharing a greeting with NRCS's 'Sammy Soil' during a recent USDA event to promote the July 19 opening of an exhibition, titled "Dig It! The Secrets of Soil," located at the Smithsonian's National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC.—Photo by Ken Hammond

RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Synthetic Mesh Produce Bags Are Fighting Litter On Louisiana Waterways

"Yeah, I think that putting litterbags on boats to stop pollution was one of the better ideas we've come up with."

Mark Schexnayder was musing about an initiative that he spearheaded in the state of Louisiana and which, to his understanding, may have spawned similar initiatives in other

states in the southeastern U.S. Schexnayder is a Metairie, LA-based area agent for fisheries in the Louisiana Sea Grant Extension Program within the Louisiana State University AgCenter. A portion of the funding for his activities comes from the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

"Awhile back I was on vacation in Arkansas," he recounted. "My wife and I were

camping overnight, and when we rented canoes, we were given reusable mesh litterbags to be used for bringing back any recyclables and any trash that we would generate during our trip."

He acknowledged that he had never seen anything like that in Louisiana, and made a mental note to check it out further.

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



Cynthia Clark is the Administrator of the National Agricultural Statistics Service.

Before rejoining USDA, from September 2004 until her selection for this position Clark was the Executive Director for Methodology with the United Kingdom's Office for National Statistics. In that position she directed statistical research and survey methodology, within that Office's

mission, for the United Kingdom. From 1996-2004 she served as the Associate Director for Methodology and Standards with the U.S. Census Bureau at its headquarters in Suitland, MD, where her activities included overseeing an evaluation program of the 2000 Census of Population and Housing.

Clark served as the Director of NASS's [then] Survey Management Division from 1992-96, after having served as the Director of NASS's [then] Research and Applications Division from

1990-92. From 1983-90 she served in several positions in the Agriculture Division at the U.S. Census Bureau, where she worked on the planning and execution of the 1987 Census of Agriculture as well as the completion of the 1982 Census of Agriculture. She began her federal career in 1977 as a statistical researcher at the Census Bureau.

Ron Bosecker, the previous Administrator of NASS, retired from that position following over 42 years of Federal service, all with NASS. ■



Christian Foster is the Deputy Administrator for the Office of Trade Programs in the Foreign

Agricultural Service.

From September 2002 until his selection for this position Foster served as the Assistant Deputy Administrator for the Office of Capacity Building and Development in FAS, where he focused on helping transform

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"It took me a little while," he confessed. "But I never did forget about bringing such bags back to Louisiana to help clean up our lakes and streams." Soon thereafter he teamed up on this idea with **Brad LaBorde**, at the time an intern from the University of New Orleans.

They began by checking to see who might be interested in a program like this in the state. "We knew that the Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries had a program that deals with clean marinas," Schexnayder said. They also contacted **Brian LeBlanc**, a water quality specialist with the Louisiana Sea Grant Extension Program, which is part of CSREES's Southern Regional Water Quality Program. In addition, they contacted the Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation. "They all provided funding," Schexnayder noted. "So the project took off pretty fast."

One obstacle, Schexnayder advised, was figuring out where to get the right bags.

"We weren't sure where we could get the right-sized bags until I talked with one of our LSU AgCenter specialists, who was doing research on commercial vegetable production, about where he got the 50-pound mesh sacks that produce was delivered in," he recalled. "I figured that

that type of large, synthetic mesh bag would be what we'd want to use in this initiative." They ultimately found a manufacturer in the region to produce the bags, at approximately 50 cents per bag.

LaBorde worked with **Melissa Dufour**, a web specialist with the Louisiana Sea Grant Extension Program, to design the graphics for the bags. The design includes an egret in a circle with a blue background to connote a clean lake or river. The message on the purple, 50-lb. synthetic mesh bags is "Don't Trash Louisiana Waters." Each bag provides simple instructions on how to use it most effectively to capture trash and recyclable items—and then to keep reusing the bag itself once it is emptied. Each bag also includes logos from the eight sponsoring organizations, including CSREES.

So the next question was how to get the word out quickly about the availability of the 5,000 litterbags they now had on hand.

Schexnayder and LaBorde managed to locate most of the canoe vendors, canoe rental operations, tubing outfitters, and boat rental locations in the state. They then mailed sample bags and information to those operators, noting that the purpose was to reduce debris along waterways throughout Louisiana.

"Five thousand reusable mesh litterbags have been ordered and will be distributed to local canoe and tubing outfitters," their cover memo noted. "Customers can be given these bags before a canoeing or tubing trip to use as a trash bag. By providing these bags at your facility, you can help reduce the amount of trash in waterways and along the coastline."

"This bag," the memo affirmed, "gives recreational users no excuse to litter and is more aesthetically pleasing than trash cans at numerous locations along the shoreline."

Would-be participants were then invited to respond with an

indication of the number of litterbags requested, free of charge.

Schexnayder noted that they distributed the initial 5,000 reusable mesh litterbags within a month.

He added that he plans to move to the second round of this project in the near future, by ordering a new quantity of litterbags.

"I really like knowing," Schexnayder emphasized, "that people who use these litterbags can actually see the beauty of their use—literally and figuratively."

—**JOHNNY MORGAN**



"Don't Trash Louisiana Waters" is the message on the 50-lb. reusable purple synthetic mesh litterbags that **Brad LaBorde** is mailing out, free of charge, to local canoe rental, boat rental, and tubing outfitters throughout Louisiana.—**Photo by Mark Schexnayder**

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fragile and transition economies into viable two-way trading markets for food and agricultural products. He served as the Acting Assistant Deputy Administrator for the Office of Capacity Building and Development from 2001-02.

Foster was the Chief of FAS's Trade and Investment Program

Branch from 1999-2002. From 1997-99 he was based in Washington, DC on a detail from FAS to the U.S. Agency for International Development, where he served as a senior advisor on agriculture, following the collapse of the Soviet Union. He was Chief of the [then] New Independent States and Baltics Section in the Economic Research Service

from 1992-97. From 1990-92 he was based in Brussels, Belgium with the [then] Bell Atlantic Corporation, where he served as the Director for Business Development for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. He worked from 1984-90 as an agricultural economist in ERS, focusing on the 'Centrally Planned Economies' of Eurasia. From 1982-84

he was based in Arlington, VA, where he began his federal career as an economist for the Defense Intelligence Agency, focusing on the economies of Eastern Europe.

This is a position created from an FAS reorganization dated November 2006. ■

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PROFILE PLUS *More About: Beth Marik-Dinkins*



You've probably heard about the criminal case in which [then] Atlanta Falcons quarterback **Michael Vick** pleaded guilty to federal charges of conspiring to run an illegal interstate dogfighting operation. But you may not have heard of the related civil case titled "*United States of America vs. Approximately 53 Pit*

Bull Dogs."

Because of the allegations of illegal animal fighting, the Office of Inspector General was the lead federal agency for investigating both cases. In the first case, OIG agents did what OIG agents do to 'bring a perp to justice'—and that led to the fact that Vick is currently serving a 23-month federal prison term in Leavenworth, KS. But in the second case, OIG entered a whole new area of activity for its staff: it was confronted with ensuring for the care of the dogs that had done the fighting and had survived. That's where **Beth Marik-Dinkins** got involved.

Dinkins is an Assistant Special Agent-in-Charge of OIG's Sub-Office in New York City. In that capacity she not only supervised OIG's criminal investigation of Vick and his four cohorts, but she also handled the logistics for the care of the surviving pit bulls involved in the case.

"During the search of Vick's property in April 2007, Surry County and Virginia state officials found 66 dogs that were still alive," Dinkins recounted. "Typically the procedure in a case like this is that the dogs are in such bad shape that they are euthanized, and the evidence of their involvement is based on photos taken of the dogs, reflecting their condition before they were euthanized." But, in this situation, she noted, because of the presumed 'high profile' nature of this case the Assistant U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia—who was to prosecute the case in federal court—determined that he wanted to have live dogs as evidence rather than mere photographs. "So that meant," she explained, "the U.S. Attorney's Office employed the provisions of a law called the 'Animal Fighting Venture Prohibition' to seize over 50 dogs—all pit bulls—for evidence, and then OIG was faced with ensuring for the care of them."

As part of Vick's guilty plea in August 2007, he agreed to provide over \$928,000 to pay for the lifetime care of the surviving pit bulls. Dinkins advised that, while one of the dogs ultimately had to be euthanized, the remaining dogs needed care as well as placement, depending on their condition.

She said the dogs were in U.S. Government custody, in animal control facilities in southeastern Virginia, from June 20 to December 31, 2007. Her job was to arrange for their care, including veterinary care, plus feeding, plus coordinate their rehabilitation, plus work out financial reimbursement to the various animal control facilities which had agreed to take in the dogs. She said that those costs averaged \$10 per dog per day—all paid for by Vick.

"I then arranged for the dogs to go through a behavioral assessment conducted by the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals," she recounted. Each dog ultimately received a determination on the degree to which it could be rehabilitated. Based on that, a few dogs, thought to be beyond rehabilitation, went to an animal rescue organization in Kanab, Utah "to live out their remaining years with comfort," she noted. "We managed to give them a new lease on life—literally." But all of the remaining pit bulls were placed with various animal rescue organizations around the country, for several months of care and observation—in other words, 'dog foster care'—since those dogs showed the potential either to serve in such capacities as rescue dogs or therapy dogs or to be placed in family homes.

A case like this may or may not have been on Dinkins' mind when she graduated from Ohio's Bowling Green State University in 1991 with a B.S. degree in criminal justice. She joined OIG in 1992 as a Special Agent in Atlanta. From 1997-2000 she was based in Washington, DC as part of the Secretary's Protective Detail. Following an OIG assignment in Beltsville, MD, she moved to New York City in 2006 to assume her current position.

Regarding the pit bulls, Dinkins emphasized the role played by **Rebecca Huss**, a law professor who specializes in animal law who had been appointed by the federal court to serve as 'special guardian' for the dogs. "At OIG, we really don't have expertise on the care of animals in this type of situation," Dinkins acknowledged. "So we relied on her expertise."

"Some of the dogs had never been inside a building during their whole lives—so you might say they were 'amazed' by such items as stairs and doorways, and had trouble coping with them."

"To my understanding," she added, "this is the first time that an effort to save fighting dogs has ever been done on this scale by the federal government. So we're still cautiously optimistic that this'll all work out, and be a success story. We don't want to get that late night call that one of the dogs has regressed."

"So I'm still sleeping with one eye open."

Last Book Read: "I'm currently reading '*The Divide*' by **Nicholas Evans**."

Last Movie Seen: "*The Dark Knight*."

Hobbies: "Exercising, reading, and walking my dogs—two mixed breeds that I rescued from a no-kill animal shelter in Northern Virginia."

Something I Don't Want People To Know About Me: "My husband says I snore—but I don't believe him!"

Priorities In The Months Ahead: "Oh yeah, I'd told myself that I was gonna get caught up, once the 'Michael Vick case' was over with. But now I'm in the middle of a food stamp fraud case here in New York City—so I don't think I'll be catching up *anywhere*, any time soon!"

—**RON HALL**

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Joseph Spence is the Area Director of the Agricultural Research Service's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) in Beltsville, MD.

From August 2003 until his selection for this position Spence served as ARS's Deputy Administrator for Nutrition, Food Safety, and Quality. From 1993-2003 he was Director of the agency's Beltsville Human Nutrition Research Center, a part of BARC.

Spence was a Professor of

Biochemistry and, at the same time, Associate Dean for Research and Graduate Studies at the School of Medicine with the State University of New York at Buffalo, from 1980-93. During that time he also worked from 1985-88 as a Health Scientist Administrator at the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

within the National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, MD.

Phyllis Johnson, the previous Area Director of ARS's Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, retired from that position following 28 years of federal service, all of it with ARS. ■

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zations "interact on an equal footing with the Department's senior executives, and are equal contributors to the Forums." Additional Forums are scheduled quarterly in September and December 2008 and March 2009. Thir said that employees at headquarters and field locations who have ideas, suggestions, or questions about the Diversity and Inclusion Forums specifically, or about diversity at USDA in general, can write to diversity@usda.gov or call the Office of Diversity at 202-720-5680 (voice) or 202-720-6382 (TTY).

In addition, regarding USDA's seven Department-level Special Emphasis Programs—the African American Program, the Federal Women's Program, the Asian American/Pacific Islander Program, the Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council, the Hispanic Employment Program, the Disability Employment Program, and the American Indian/Alaska Native Program—Ho said that she has broadened the

scope and responsibility of the Special Emphasis Program managers.

"My staff members are now called 'Diversity Program Managers,'" she explained. "The Special Emphasis Program is still a significant component of what they do—but their scope is now much broader."

"In light of today's workplace demographics," noted Ho, "we can't focus on just one group or another." **Jean Parker**, a Diversity Program Manager who is responsible for the Department's Federal Women's Program, added that "Women, people with disabilities, and gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered individuals cut across all groups—not to mention the vast diversity that exists within a certain race or ethnic group." "So once again," affirmed Ho, "our goal is to redefine 'diversity and inclusion' as being broader than the traditionally-defined racial, ethnic group, gender, or disability categories."

For instance, she said that, when the Office of Diversity plans

the Department's Special Emphasis Program commemorations, the intent has been to make them more than just "events," and instead make them activities that might lead to "institutional change" at USDA.

"Cultural displays, dances, and food tasting have great value during these commemorations," she clarified. "But the nature of today's workplace is moving us all beyond that."

Accordingly, Ho noted, USDA's Department-level commemoration of **Martin Luther King, Jr.'s** birthday this past January portrayed the prominent civil rights leader as the "father of diversity." She added that the Department-level commemoration of Black History Month in February 2008 included a speaker who emphasized that the responsibility to change the USDA workplace rests with each individual USDA employee.

Parker noted that the theme of USDA's Department-level commemoration of Women's History Month in March was "Women's Art—Women's Vision." "Our observance not only focused on female artists of different backgrounds," she said, "but it also highlighted their originality and imagination, plus the multiple dimensions of women's lives." Scaggs said that the theme of USDA's Department-level commemoration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month in May was "Leadership, Diversity, Harmony—Gateway to Success." Scaggs, who is responsible for USDA's Gay and Lesbian Employee Advisory Council, said that USDA's Department-level commemoration of National Gay and Lesbian Pride Month in June included a speaker who delineated the "atlas"—in other

words, the geographical demographics—of the gay and lesbian population in America.

Regarding the Department-level activities in support of the remaining Special Emphasis Program commemorations for 2008—Hispanic Heritage Month from September 15 to October 15, National Disability Employment Awareness Month in October, and American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month in November—Ho advised that "the welcomed challenge will be to make sure these observances don't just narrow in on one culture or demographic, but instead help to promote diversity and inclusiveness within our workforce."

Parker added that the Department-level monthly commemoration activities during 2008 have all been recorded on a DVD, and copies have been provided to agency-level civil rights offices. "The hope and intent," she advised, "is that those agency-level civil rights offices are then making those copies available to their field employees around the country—so that these aren't merely 'Washington, DC-oriented activities.'" In addition, Parker pointed out that news release notices about those events, generally found at www.ascr.usda.gov/newsroom.html, now include a clickable link, located at the end of the notice, to the "Video on Demand."

"In the end," Ho said, "we're in the business of changing mindsets. Change is hard for many of us, but my hope is that this diversity initiative will help us see each other for *who* we are rather than just *what* we are. The success of our mission depends on it." ■

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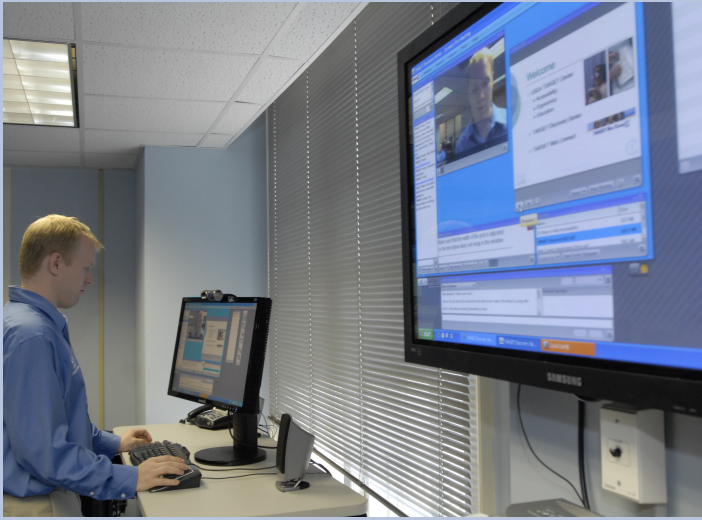
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While his live image on the screen (right) appears to gaze down upon him, **Paul Lloyd**, Educational Coordinator for USDA's TARGET Center in Washington, DC, is teaching a workshop on the subject of accessibility for persons with disabilities. His live, interactive audience is USDA employees at headquarters and field locations across the country. And that's what's new about this teaching session: through "Web Connect," a new method of delivering services, employees no longer have to be physically located in the TARGET Center to participate. Instead, they can now access the TARGET Center's live, interactive training over the Internet. Note the story on page 3.
—Photo by Ken Hammond



**HELP US FIND
Rajat Sirohi**

Missing: **8-28-2007** From: **Lexington, MA**
 D.O.B.: **8-5-2001** Sex: **Male**
 Hair: **Black** Eyes: **Brown**
 Height: **3 ft. 0 in.** Weight: **50 lbs.**
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www.medweek.gov

■ **Month of September**

National Preparedness Month
 USDA headquarters and field offices
 (202) 720-5711 or 1-800-877-8339 (TTY)

■ **September 15-October 15**

Hispanic Heritage Month
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