

# 2004 MIDWEST AREA PASTG Annual Report

Members of the 2004 Council included:

Sherry Buxton, Co-Chair and National Council Representative

Melissa Stiefel, Co-Chair

Jaci Weese, Recorder/Information Coordinator

Ginger Walker

Brittney Mernick

Debbie Bitner

Stephanie Brennan

Sandy Groneberg, Ex-Officio, Web Master

Heather Lewandowski, Ex-Officio, SOP Editor

## Accomplishments

- The PASTG planned and conducted the third MWA Professional Office Support Personnel meeting entitled, “Discover Tools to Build a Better You” that was held October 18-21, 2004, in St. Louis, Missouri. 85 individuals attended from the MWA locations as well as invited guests from NACOP. General session topics included personal safety awareness, Myers-Briggs evaluations, cross-cultural communications, documenting performance accomplishments, foreign travel, and a final motivational presentation. Breakout sessions included topics on ARMPS, correspondence, RPES, Word/Adobe instruction, retirement planning, and the new ARS website format.
- The PASTG has taken a leadership role in creating a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) manual, a compendium of approved Agency procedures with examples, to assist the Midwest Area secretarial and administrative support staff. The manual is an excellent training tool for recently hired and seasoned support staff, as well as an invaluable resource for new, revised, and current procedures. Other ARS areas regularly use the MWA SOP as a reference tool and have also used it to assist them in developing their own manuals.
- The MWA Mentoring program: The PASTG composed a guide for mentors and appointed experienced mentors for new secretaries in the Area. All new MWA secretaries are assigned a mentor for a minimum of one year although the relationships usually continue beyond that time creating lasting support networks among MWA secretaries. All new support staff are brought into Peoria for training, organized and led by the PASTG. Key Area personnel also meet with the group to provide additional specialized training.
- Temporary Assistance Program: The PASTG temporary support program was organized to provide support to units with secretarial vacancies. This program ensures that management unit offices operate smoothly when a permanent support position is vacated.
- The PASTG recruits volunteers from the secretarial team in the Area to serve in administrative assistance roles in the interim. This service has been recognized within the

Area as essential to maintaining administrative workflow and research progress. Four PASTG members assisted the Urbana, Illinois location with travel, SCAs, ARS-115s, ARS-425s, and ARS-421s.

- We continue to disseminate quarterly newsletters to all the secretaries in MWA.
- 2003 marked the seventh year of the MWA Secretary of the Year program. Marsha Ebener of the Fermentation Biotechnology Research Unit, Peoria, Illinois was selected as the 2003 MWA Secretary of the Year and was recognized at the MWA Professional Office Support Personnel in October 2004 at the MWA Professional Office Support Personnel Meeting.
- The training scholarship program is continuing to be utilized to a great extent within the Midwest Area. This program provides funding for training from the Area Office allowing employees to benefit from training that may not be possible due to financial constraints within their units. The scholarship application and information is available on the PASTG homepage.

## **Goals:**

- Continue to update the Midwest Area PASTG Home Page and SOP Manual.
- Continue quarterly newsletter.
- Continue Training Scholarship Program.
- Continue Temporary Assistance Program.