



NACOP REPRESENTATIVE

The Midwest Area Senior Management Team has asked Sandy Groneberg to serve as the next representative to the National Advisory Council for Office Professionals, and she has accepted. Sandy was one of the founding members of the PASTG and will bring a wealth of experience and knowledge to NACOP.

A special thanks to Heather Lewandowski for previously serving in this role with NACOP. Heather will continue to serve in an Ex-Officio Capacity to the PASTG heading up our Secretary Training and working with Missy Stiefel to keep the SOP Manual up to date.

CHANGING FACES

Cara Baumer (Coshocton, OH) is the new Secretary/OA at the North Appalachian Experimental Watershed. Cara grew up in Coshocton County and graduated from Mount Vernon Nazarene University (Mount Vernon, OH) in 2006 with a B.S. degree in Business



Administration. Throughout her college career, she was employed at Kroger as a banker/customer service representative. Before coming to ARS, she was employed at National City Bank as a sales specialist.

Danielle Sapp (Peoria, IL) works as a Secretary (OA) for the Plant Polymer Research Unit at the National Center for Agricultural Utilization Research. She has been a Federal employee since 2006, previously employed by the Department of Justice, Bureau of Prisons, Correctional Programs Division. She attended Bradley University and received a B.S. in Administration of Criminal Justice in May, 2006.



Sue Perrin (Ames, IA) became the Office Automation Assistant in the NCAH Facilities Engineering Unit at NADC in February 2008. Prior to starting with NADC, Sue was employed by Maximus, in Marshalltown, IA. Sue is retired from the US Air Force after 20 years.

ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN HERITAGE MONTH

By Missy Stiefel, East Lansing, MI

Background. In June of 1977, the House introduced a resolution that called upon the president to declare the first ten days of May as Asian/Pacific Heritage Week. Shortly thereafter, the Senate introduced and passed a similar resolution. On October 5, 1978, President Jimmy Carter signed a Joint Resolution designating the annual celebration.

In May of 1990, the week-long holiday was expanded to include the entire month of May by President George H.W. Bush. This particular month was chosen to commemorate the immigration of the first Japanese to the US on May 7, 1843. May also marks the anniversary of the completion of the transcontinental railroad (May 10, 1869) as the majority of the workers who laid the tracks were Chinese immigrants.

Asian Influence on the English Language. Although English borrows heavily from the European languages, a number of words we use in our everyday lexicon have been acquired from Asian languages. From Cantonese, we use *typhoon*, which means great wind. Japanese examples include *soy*, *sushi*, and *tsunami*, which means large ocean wave. Tagalog, originating in the northern Philippines, contributes the word *boondocks*, which is derived from *bundok*, meaning mountain. Hawaiian contributions include *hula*, *luau*, and *ukulele*, derived from words that mean flea jumping.

Activities. Test your knowledge of Asian American History by going to this web site and completing the crossword puzzle:

<http://www.infoplease.com/xwords/asian.html>

For those of you in the Peoria area, the Lakeview Museum of Arts and Sciences, which is affiliated with the Smithsonian, has an exhibit on loan (April 2008-June 2009) entitled, "Ten Thousand Springs

Pavilion.” This is a scale model of the celebrated Chinese pavilion located in the Forbidden City in the heart of Beijing. This model shows the ancient Chinese art of red sandalwood carving.

Source: <http://www.inforplease.com>

CREATE A STRESS-FREE OFFICE

By Jenny Moses, Peoria, IL

With the pressure of meeting multiple deadlines, creating a stress-free, office environment is vital to your success. Below are tips that can help keep you on track.

1. *Manage your daily e-mail.* Set aside 15 minutes everyday before going home to sort and delete inbox e-mails.

2. *Alleviate paper clutter.* Disregarding the control of your paper flow will cause it to grow and get unmanageable. Allot a specific time and day of the week to get catch up on filing. Learn to sort like subjects into groups so it makes it easier for you when it comes time to putting things away. People will respect you if they see that you care about your surroundings.

3. *Go offline when concentration becomes a top priority.* These days it's not uncommon to receive 50 e-mails or more in a day. If you have a large project, it's a good idea to switch your e-mail to offline for an hour of power.

4. *Work on one project at a time* and take the time to proofread the results before distributing. Checking these tasks off a list one by one is a great stress reducer.

5. *Create a computer file, index cards or a notebook* where you write down important information that *you can refer back to for directions.* The best way to learn is by writing things down and not bothering your peers with repeated questions. Ask once and write it down in a retrievable place.

IDP - THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

The following article is from the AFM Website

Article submitted by: Ann Houser, Columbus, OH

Individual development planning will lead you down the road to success.

What is an Individual Development Plan (IDP)?

An IDP is a written schedule or plan which describes your immediate and long-term goals. It is a tool to help you organize your plans for training and development in order to acquire additional

Knowledge, learn new **S**kills, or sharpen your current **A**bilities (KSAs).

As a minimum, once a year within 30 days of your annual performance evaluation, you and your supervisor must meet to discuss your goals and accomplishments and develop an IDP. This meeting gives you both the opportunity to set objectives and plan learning experiences that will support them.

What makes a goal? A goal is something pertinent to your work and your career that you see worthwhile to pursue:

- improvement or mastery of some skill that will help you in your current job;
- ability to perform a new responsibility in your current job or future assignment

A goal should be realistic, should require some work and challenge, but should not be set so high as to be unreachable.

How to identify KSAs? A good way to identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) of your present position is to look at your position description and performance plan. Write down the official duties of your current position or new assignment and select a particular duty or duties you need to develop or acquire.

The KSAs give a clear outline for planning your training and development. Once you have identified your KSAs, you will be in a position to decide on what training courses are needed and/or alternative methods necessary to acquire them.

It is important to describe your developmental objectives on the IDP form (ARS-48) in the column labeled "Performance Related Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities."

The 3 step process:

- **Preparation.** Before discussing your IDP with your supervisor, you should assess your strengths and weaknesses relative to the duties of your job. Take the opportunity to consider your goals and how you see yourself in the organization. Identify your objectives and the developmental opportunities needed to help you meet them.

We often think in terms of formal training courses. However, we learn best when training includes a variety of learning experiences. Consider the investment of time and money required for each experience and pursue other alternatives. A list of formal training opportunities and developmental work experiences are provided below.

- **Meet with your supervisor.** You should discuss every aspect of the plan thoroughly. Your supervisor may provide information on the Agency's long-and short-range plans, staffing needs, and the need for particular skills. You should also be provided feedback on your strengths, weaknesses, and goals you have identified. Your supervisor will consider your workload, availability of funds, and relevance of the training courses to your current or future duties or assignments.
- **Implementation.** After you and your supervisor have agreed on a training plan, the next step is to schedule the actual training activities. The IDP is flexible and unexpected situations can interfere with training plans. Also, events can arise that require unforeseen training.

As you complete each training activity, discuss it with your supervisor and address how it has applied to your job. The IDP is a living document not a contract. Modifications can and will be made based on assignment priorities, budget or time constraints, and your desire for personal growth.

Training options

Formal training:

- Instructor-led workshops
- Government/private sector
- Conferences/seminars

On-the-job training:

- Detail, developmental assignments
- Mentor/coach
- Shadowing a subject-matter expert
- Projects/task force/committees
- Cross-training
- Studying manuals/bulletins
- On-line training

Self-development activities:

- Independent reading
- Audio/video cassette programs
- Correspondence courses
- Community/civic activities
- Professional associations

For additional information about training and development visit our web site:
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/hrd/empdev/>

LINCPASS ID CARD

By Karen Burianek, Ames, IA

President George W. Bush issued Homeland Security Presidential Directive 12 on August 27, 2004 with the intent to eliminate wide variations in the quality and security of forms of identification issued to government employees and contractors. USDA has named their common ID card the LincPass, as it is designed to link a person's identity to an identification card and the card to a person's ability to access Federal buildings and computer systems. (The spelling of LincPass is a tribute to President Abraham Lincoln, who created the People's Department [now, USDA] in 1862.) The LincPass is based on "smart card" technology with a computer chip that stores 64KB of data embedded in the card. Information contained on the integrated circuit chip includes:

- Four Public Key Infrastructure digital certificates (Personal Identity Verification, card authentication, digital signature and encryption)
- Two interoperable fingerprint templates
- Digital photo
- Cardholder Unique Identifier (CHUID) including organization affiliation, agency affiliation, department affiliation, and expiration date.

In addition, the LincPass also has Optional Bar Codes to store key personal or other information (available in future releases), including:

- Name
- Date of birth
- Personnel category
- Benefits information
- Organizational affiliation

All employees in each department and government agency, contractors, and affiliates are required to have a valid LincPass badge by October 27, 2008. For various reasons, not all employees will be initiated at the same time, so employees should not share any enrollment e-mails with co-workers. A background investigation must be done before an employee will be notified to register for a LincPass. Employees needing a background investigation will be notified to complete the necessary paperwork to start the background investigation process.

ANNUAL REPORT TIPS

By Heather Lewandowski, Columbia, MO & Stacey Carlson, Ames, IA

Detail by Author Reports: Remember to run detail by author reports at least four times a year. It is important that the scientist keep their 115s up to date by adding submission, acceptance, publication date and citation.

Steps for running the Detail by Author Reports in ARIS:

- Research Documentation Reports
- 115 Author Reports
- Remove 36 from mode code
- Insert approval dates (e.g.: 10/01/2007:9/30/2008)
- Author's last name.
- Click on Query
- When list is created, click on Action.
- Mark all records then click on Reports
- Select Detail by Author

Deadline for 115s on 421s. All 115s that will be included in the annual report process (421s) have a cut-off date of 7/28/2008. The 115s that will be included on this year's 421s must be at the Area level by that date to allow sufficient time for processing.

Annual Reports (421s). All annual reports must be at the Area level by August 11, 2008 to allow time for review by the Area Office and any necessary revisions that may be required.

Annual reports are required annually for all projects that are active between 10/01/07 to 9/30/08 as well

as any expired projects to complete the termination process.

Following are instructions on how to print the Summary Report lists for all the projects requiring the annual report for your unit.

From the Main Screen go to:

- Research doc
- Status
- Annual 421 Reports
- Query
- In the query screen click on the ?
- Enter your modecode (e.g.: 36%XX%XX)
- Enter
- Click on Action
- Mark All Records
- Click on Print
- Summary

Why do we do annual reports?

The AD-421 informs a wide audience about the progress and accomplishments of the Agricultural Research Service (ARS). Some of the uses of the reports include, but are not limited to, input for the National Program Annual Reports (NPARs), ARS Annual Performance Reports (APR), and various other Annual and Retrospective Progress Reports, various internet web postings, sources for official speeches, Congressional information public relations material, administrative decision-making at all levels, and budgetary decisions.

115s for Performance Documentation

All 115s that will be included on performance documentation for SYs for the rating period 1/1/2008 to 9/30/2008 must be at the Area level by 9/8/2008 to allow sufficient time for processing.

SUBMITTING AN LOI FOR MWA APPROVAL

By Karen Burianek, Ames, IA

To save some steps when forwarding an approved LOI to the Area, you can send a pdf directly from the "Print" screen. IF you choose this method be sure your RL/CD has approved the LOI and include their name and what date they approved it in the subject line when sending to the Area.

Following are the steps to follow when submitting an LOI for MWA approval:

- Open “ARIS” and click on “Research Agreements.”
- Click on “Status” or “Work” and “Incoming Agreements.”
- Select the “Log Number” and click on the “Prints” button at the top.
- Choose “Incoming Agreement – LOI, Incoming – Pre Award LOI.” The LOI will appear on the screen.
- Click on “File,” click on “Send”, and click on “Page by E-mail.”
- Enter Sherri Buxton’s e-mail address in the “To” blank.
- In the “Subject” line, delete info and put in “LOI #, Name, and indicate by whom the LOI was approved and on what date. (Sample: LOI # 36323, Smith - CD Approved 3-26-08). Add “cc” names, as necessary.
- Click on “Send.”

MWA-approved LOIs with electronic approval signatures will be e-mailed back to the location. At this point, you may save the approved LOI with a file name convenient for your future reference.

SUMMER SAFETY REMINDERS

By Ginger Walker, St. Paul, MN

Sunburn. Limit sun exposure, wear protective clothing, and use sunscreen. Sunscreen should be applied 30 minutes before going outdoors and reapplied every 2 hours. Use water-resistant sunscreen with a sun protection factor (SPF) of 15 or higher. Along with regularly using sunscreen, it's smart to wear wide-brimmed hats and seek shade under a beach umbrella or a tree. Sunscreens alone may not always protect you. And don't forget sunglasses, which protect the sensitive skin around the eyes and may reduce the long-term risk of developing cataracts.

Bites from Mosquitoes and Ticks. If you're spending time in tall grass or woody areas, use insect repellent with DEET to ward off mosquitoes and ticks. Check yourself for ticks before bedtime. If you find a tick, remove it with tweezers, drop it in a plastic bag, and throw it away. You don't have to save the tick to show it to doctors. Cleanse the area of the tick bite with antiseptic. Early removal is

important because a tick generally has to be on the skin for 36 hours or more to transmit Lyme disease.

Bee Stings. To keep bees away, wear light-colored clothing and avoid scented soaps and perfumes. Don't leave food, drinks, and garbage out uncovered. Treat a bee sting by scraping the stinger away in a side-to-side motion with a credit card or fingernail, and then washing the area with soap and water. Pulling the stinger or using tweezers may push more venom into the skin. For any bug bite or sting, ice or a cold compress and pain-relieving creams or oral medications can help. Watch for signs of allergic reaction to stings, which typically happen within the first few hours.

Heat Illness. Air conditioning is the No. 1 protective factor against heat illness. If you don't have air conditioning, spend time in public facilities, such as libraries and malls that have air conditioning. Reduce strenuous activities or do them during early mornings and evenings when it's cooler. If you're outside for long stretches of time, carry a water bottle, drink fluids regularly, and don't push your limits. People who play sports should wear light, loose-fitting clothes and drink water or sports drinks before, during, and after activity. If you see someone experiencing heat illness, have the person lie down in a cool place and elevate the legs. Use water, wet towels, and fanning to help cool the person down until emergency help comes.