



SPOTLIGHT ON DIVERSITY

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force

Visit us at:

http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/BA_Diversity_Task_Force

United States Department of Agriculture

Agricultural Research Service

Welcome to "Spotlight on Diversity"

About Us

Dr. Joseph Spence, Area Director, established The Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF) in May of 2008 to identify and eliminate barriers that may restrict diversity when recruiting, training, promoting and soliciting nominations for awards [[Memo from Joseph Spence establishing the BA Diversity Task Force \(PDF\)](#)]. The Task Force seeks to ensure that BARC performs the research mission of ARS at the highest scientific level possible through the recruitment and retention of a workforce that represents the diverse surrounding community.

BADTF's web site:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=17502> lists current task force members and sets out the task force mission in greater detail, as well as highlighting diversity-related events.



2008-2009 BA Diversity Task Force Honored

In February 2010 at the ARS Annual Recognition Program, the 2008-2009 Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF) was awarded the Administrator's Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO) Award for 2009 ([see photo](#)). The citation notes that BADTF "Established a Best Hiring Practices document which will promote the hiring of a diverse workforce in the Beltsville Area, unleashing the power of diversity to higher levels."

The 2008-2009 members of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (left to right, and top to bottom): Ali Sadeghi, Eton Codling, Tom Sexton, Manan Sharma, Alvin Nowverl, Aijun Zhang, David Baer, Erin Connor, Jenny Allen, Verneta Gaskins, Talo Pastor-Corrales, Martha Tomecek, Eilyn Fabregas, Janet Novotny, Theresa Henderson, Julia Cabrera-Woscek, Edith Blackwell, Swati Mookherji, and Mary Ann Guaragna

Not pictured: Kathleen Haynes, Savi Natarajan, Xiangwu Nou, and Eunhee Park.

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Why I Joined BA Diversity Task Force

Manan Sharma (Chair), Ph.D.

Research Microbiologist
Environmental Microbial and Food Safety Laboratory,
USDA-ARS-Animal and Natural Resources Institute

Being a part of the Diversity Task Force at BARC gives me an opportunity to contribute to a place that has given me so much. I think there is so much unearthed scientific talent in this country, people who can be great scientists if we can give them the opportunity to learn about what ARS does. I want to make sure that people from all cultural backgrounds who have an interest in science have that opportunity. More diversity in our workforce at BARC leads to more diversity in our science, which will improve the already high quality of research conducted at BARC, benefiting us all.

Mary Ann Guaragna

Plant Pathologist/Support Scientist
Molecular Plant Pathology Laboratory
USDA-ARS

When I first read Dr. Spence's email last year asking for volunteers to join the BA Diversity Task Force my first inclination was to hit the delete button because I didn't have time. But after reading it a second time I decided to sign up. I have always been involved with outreach programs in the local schools so I thought the Task Force might enable me to help out. I wasn't exactly sure what my goals were or what I hoped to accomplish but I thought this was my opportunity to become involved in something that could benefit the BARC community and help **me** to better understand what diversity in the workplace is all about; and how to achieve it. I wanted to be part of the committee that worked on special emphasis programs because I felt it was important to acknowledge the accomplishments that all cultures bring to the community. I also believed there was a need at Beltsville to reach out to the underrepresented groups such as Native Americans, African Americans and the handicapped and find ways to encourage them to consider a career in the field of Agricultural Science. I

think our Task Force has accomplished much this first year with the employee survey, many special emphasis programs, and the Best Hiring Practices Policy and I am looking forward to working on the Task Force in the upcoming year.

Black History Month Day of Service Project

BA Diversity Task Force BHM Service Day of Project Photos





Service Project Nets 1,000+ Contributions

The Beltsville Area's "Day of Service" project conducted in observance of Black History Month (BHM) resulted in the collection of over 1,000 employee donated items, including over 150 books, for the benefit of local schools. The project was spearheaded by the Special Emphasis Sub-committee of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force in order to encourage reading and scholastic achievement.

This is the first time the Beltsville Area has celebrated Black History Month with a "Day of Service" project. Doing so is in keeping with the spirit of the scientist for whom USDA's Carver Center is named. Pioneer American African scientist George Washington Carver, summarized his ideal of service by saying, "It is not the style of clothes one wears, neither the kind of automobile one drives, nor the amount of money one has in the bank, that counts. These mean nothing. It is simply service that measures success."



President Obama's Service Quote

"We need your service right now, at this moment in history. I'm not going to tell you what your role should be; that's for you to discover. But I'm asking you to stand up and play your part. I'm asking you to help change history's course, put your shoulder up against the wheel. ... if you do, I promise you your life will be richer, our country will be stronger, and someday, years from now, you may remember it as the moment when your own story and the American story converged, when they came together, and we met the challenges of our new century." – *President Barack Obama on the occasion of the signing of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act, April 21, 2009 (for the full text of the President's remarks, see*

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-at-Signing-of-the-Edward-M-Kennedy-Serve-America-Act)

New Initiative to End Childhood Obesity



On February 9, President Barack Obama created a task force on child obesity. First Lady Michelle Obama is leading a campaign to raise public awareness of the issue. Her campaign is called Let's Move! The campaign has an ambitious but important goal: to solve the epidemic of childhood obesity within a generation.

Obesity has been identified as a priority area for ARS. One of ARS' Strategic Plan objectives is to promote healthier eating habits and lifestyles. Recent national data show some racial/ethnic disparities in rates of obesity.

The Let's Move site:

<http://www.letsmove.gov/index.html>

Carver: Helping Those Farthest Down



George Washington Carver is most widely known for his experimentation with peanut products. But there is much more to his story than peanuts.

Born into slavery in Missouri about 1864, Carver first studied art and music before becoming the first black student and then the first black faculty member at Iowa State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts (now Iowa State University). After earning a master's degree, Carver became the Director of Agriculture at Tuskegee Institute and the Tuskegee Agricultural Experiment Station. From 1935 until his death in 1943, Carver was a collaborator with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The George Washington Carver Center at USDA in Beltsville was dedicated in 1999.

Although he was a renowned plant breeder and pathologist, Carver remained oriented toward service throughout his career. Having developed hundreds of innovative uses for plants, Carver patented only three products and the processes for producing them.

He particularly wanted to help "the man farthest down." Much of his work focused on providing poor Southern farmers with alternatives to raising cotton and tobacco, which had depleted the soil. He encouraged them to plant nitrogen-fixing crops like soybeans and peanuts. Carver published numerous agricultural bulletins on topics such as crop rotation and improvement of the soil using natural fertilizers. He designed a "movable school" to take agricultural displays into rural areas. This idea eventually developed into the Extension Service.

Carver is also remembered for his philosophy of education, which emphasized learning by doing. As he wrote, "The thoughtful educator...understands that the most effective and lasting education is the one that makes the pupil handle, discuss and familiarize himself with the real things about him" (from *Nature Study and Gardening for Rural Schools*, 1910).

Some of Carver's agricultural bulletins focus on recipes using fruits and vegetables such as sweet potatoes, tomatoes, and – yes – peanuts. On page 5 are two examples.

Mock Chicken

Blanch and grind a sufficient number of peanuts until they are quite oily; stir in one well-beaten egg; if too thin, thicken with rolled bread crumbs or cracker dust; stir in a little salt. Boil some sweet potatoes until done; peel and cut in thin slices; spread generously with the peanut mixture; dip in white of egg; fry to a chicken brown; serve hot.

No. 59. Tomato Salad, Number Two

Use:

3 large tomatoes cut into small pieces

1 cucumber, diced

1 onion, diced

Make a dressing of:

2 tablespoons olive oil

1 tablespoon strong vinegar

1 scant teaspoon salt

Mix the dressing and pour over the salad just before serving.

The Future of Agricultural Research

2011 BARC Graduate Student Symposium **The Jewels of American Agriculture**

The Leadership Advisory Sub-committee of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force formally invites you to participate in the upcoming, "First Annual 2011 BARC Graduate Student Symposium." The event is tentatively scheduled for February 10-11, 2011.

The plan includes two full days of scientific exchange, interaction, and networking. The symposium will also provide graduate students from local colleges and universities an opportunity to present their research.

One of our goals is to expose students to the numerous career opportunities at the USDA. The agenda is currently being developed. If you have suggestions for additional agenda topics, please contact a member of Leadership Advisory Sub-committee. Currently, the scheduled agenda topics include:

- Oral Research Presentations
- Poster Presentations
- Meet and Mingle, One on One Sessions

For more detailed information, please feel free to contact any of the following members:

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Edith Blackwell, edith.blackwell@ars.usda.gov

Upcoming Events

Diversity Taskforce Meetings (second Tuesday of every month)

9:30 -10:30 AM, Bldg. 003/Rm. 238

May 11 - Asian & Pacific Islander Celebration

11:30 AM - 12:30 PM

National Agricultural Library

June 5 - Field Day to Celebrate 100 Years of Research in Beltsville

Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC)

Saturday, June 5, 2010, 10 am to 4 pm - rain or shine.

**Visit the BA Diversity Task Force booth at
The upcoming Field Day!**



Fun for the Whole Family!

Hay Rides - Petting Zoo - Farm Machinery
Research Exhibits - Hands on Demonstrations
Light Refreshments for Sale

Signing and Handicapped Access Vans Available

[Travel Directions](#) [Image Gallery of Past Field Days](#)

Helpful Websites

Cooperative Resolution

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/programs/coopres/>

Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO)

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/complaint.htm>

Outreach and Recruitment

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/recruitment.htm>

Reasonable Accommodation

<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/accomodation.htm>

Observe Diversity Throughout the Year

January – Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

February – Black History Month

March – National Women’s History Month

May – Asian American/Pacific Islander Heritage Month;
Cinco de Mayo

June – National Gay & Lesbian Pride Month

August – Women’s Equality Day

September – National Hispanic Heritage Month

October - National Disability Awareness Month

November – National American Indian Heritage Month