



SPOTLIGHT ON DIVERSITY

Beltville 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

Understanding the Impact of a Long-Awaited Monument to Native Americans

The Beltville Area Diversity Task Force celebration of National Native American Heritage Month on November 20, 2013, featured a video presentation titled “Welcome Home: The Grand Opening of the National Museum of the American Indian.”

The video documented the grand opening of the Smithsonian’s National Museum of the American Indian in Washington D.C. Over 25,000 people, including thousands of Native community members from the Americas, gathered to witness the opening of the new museum on September 21, 2004. The film showcased reactions of several Native American people present, who felt truly honored that future generations will be able to visit the museum and learn about their cultural heritage. One woman in the video summed up her excitement about the opening by saying, “We’ve been waiting for this day to happen.”

A speaker at the event acknowledged that until that time there had been no monuments to Native Americans in Washington, D.C., which is referred to as the “city of monuments.” He stated that the museum would stand forever as a monument to all Native Americans.

The museum’s opening ceremony included many traditional dances and musical performances, highlighting the rich and unique cultures that will forever be preserved through the museum. The National Museum of the American Indian possesses one of the most extensive collections of Native American arts and artifacts in the world—approximately 266,000 catalog records (825,000 items) representing over 12,000 years of history and more than

1,200 indigenous cultures throughout the Americas. The beautiful architectural design of the building (*see photo below*) was born out of a collaborative effort between the architects and Native communities across the Western Hemisphere.

I have enjoyed visiting this museum a few times, and future visits will be even more meaningful now that I understand the impact of this living memorial. An extensive calendar of events—including films, demonstrations, and activities for children and families—is on the museum’s website at <http://nmai.si.edu/calendar/>.

—Jennifer Kramer



Courtesy of the NMAI

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BADTF Year in Review

Science and Technical Education Outreach (STEO) Subcommittee:

- **Visitors to SDG** – Over 500 students and teachers toured the Student Discovery Garden during the 2013 season. Each group received a presentation tailored to grade level and purpose of visit. The Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) mobile Food Safety Discovery Zone (<http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/usda-food-safety-discovery-zone-mobile>) was present during some tours, giving visitors the opportunity to learn about safe food handling, preparation, and storage.



Hear students talk about what they learned at the Student Discovery Garden:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlydujoFByk>

- **Gleaning** – Each Friday throughout the 2013 growing season, STEO members collected ripe produce from the Student Discovery Garden. All pickings (over half a ton of ripe marketable produce) were donated to the St. Camillus Food Pantry in Silver Spring. STEO members also took part in gleaning produce from USDA research fields that was contributed to the Feds Feed Families Campaign.
- **Scientific seminars for BA staff** – STEO hosted a well-attended series of four seminars for BA employees on topics ranging from issues about pollinators to global warming.
- **Student volunteers** – Two wonderful students volunteered at the Student Discovery Garden during their summer break this year. While fulfilling their school service requirement, they helped with garden maintenance, gleaning, and routine Friday harvesting.
- **Seeds, thanks to Herman** – From the Herman's Garden Seed Donation Program (<http://www.seedsavers.org/Education/Seed-Donation-Program/>) run by Seed Savers Exchange, the Student Discovery Garden received a generous box with assorted packets of seeds.
- **Garden work days** – Many STEO members attended two major work days to weed, spread mulch, and prepare beds for spring planting and winter layover.



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Special Emphasis Subcommittee:

African American Heritage Month – Tamika Montgomery-Smith (*shown right*), program manager at the University of Maryland (College Park) Maryland Institute for Minority Achievement and Urban Education, spoke about the University-based programs that she manages. The programs help students make the connection between college majors and STEM-related careers. They also connect students to career-learning opportunities, such as those afforded through the UMD/USDA partnership. Video presentation: *Eyes on the Prize: America's Civil Rights Years, 1954-1965*.



• **Women's History Month** – Elaine F. Weiss, author of *Fruits of Victory: The Woman's Land Army of America in the Great War*, spoke about the Women's Land Army (WLA), an organization of urban women who worked on American farms during World War I. Ann Effland, a social science analyst with USDA's Economic Research Service, discussed the WLA during World War II.

• Asian American Pacific

Islander Heritage Month – Buddhist monks from Baltimore talked about the culture behind meditation and chanting and provided a demonstration and audience participation. "Taste of Culture" potluck organized by the BA Asian Community.

- **Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Pride Month** – Speaker: Pat Corbett of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays). Fitness Pride Walk and BA Community Potluck at the Student Discovery Garden.
- **Hispanic Heritage Month** – Video presentation: *A History of Hispanic Achievement in America*. "Taste of Culture" included Hispanic baked goods from local Hispanic bakery.

- **National Native American Heritage Month** – Video presentation: *Welcome Home: The Grand Opening of the National Museum of the American Indian*; highlights of the 2004 museum opening, including traditional tribal songs and dances.

Leadership Advisory Subcommittee:

- **Working with Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs)** – In May, BADTF's Leadership Advisory Subcommittee hosted a presentation by Dr. Irma Lawrence (*shown right*), national program leader for the Hispanic-Serving Institutions Education Grants Program (<http://www.nifa.usda.gov/fo/hispanicservinginstitutionseducation.cfm>) run by USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Division of Community and Education. Lawrence addressed a group of over 40 BA scientists about working with HSIs and creating opportunities for their students. Later, Lawrence asked BADTF to host the annual meeting of HSI Project Directors, and BADTF agreed. The meeting, originally scheduled for November, was delayed due to the shutdown of the Federal government and will be held early in 2014. At the meeting, HSI project directors will learn about the Beltsville Area and its research, and BA scientists will interact with the project directors during a poster presentation.



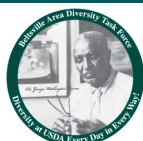
—Tasha Sprague

Anagram Corner

Can you figure out the BADTF related phrases by rearranging the letters of the following phrases?

1. "deserved ground sanctity"
2. "turned oddity scavengers"

Good Luck! (Answers on page 5)



Piscataway Indian Pow Wow

Did you know that every year you have an opportunity to attend a Native American pow wow in Maryland? The Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians, living mostly in Prince George's and Charles Counties, held their 31st Annual Pow Wow and Native American Festival on June 1-2 this year at their cultural center in Waldorf, Maryland. A pow wow is essentially a community celebration emphasizing culture, remembrance, and just catching up on news among bands, clans, and tribes, but it is also a very sacred event. The Piscataway pow wow offered a full range of activities for the entire family, including exhibition and intertribal dancing, singing (*see photo below*), hand-drum exhibitions, arts and crafts, pony rides, and of course food.



There were some powerfully emotional moments, such as the grand entry, during which the Head Veteran led the way into the arena or dance circle with the eagle staff, followed by other veterans carrying nations flags. No photography or recording was allowed during the grand entry, and all hats had to be removed unless they had an eagle feather attached. Another stirring moment that demonstrated a point of "pow wow etiquette" occurred when an eagle feather dropped during a dance. A fallen eagle feather represents the crossing over of a fallen warrior. The announcer, who provides instructions to spectators throughout the activities, stopped the pow wow. No one moved while the feather was ceremoniously recovered by a veteran.

The recorded history of the Piscataway Indians dates back hundreds of years to the territory that became colonial Maryland. The impact of the colonists and tribal warfare caused a dispersal of the Piscataway, and in the mid-

18th century indigenous people were being reclassified "by sight" using racial designations other than "Indian" for purposes of documentation and recordkeeping. Through the efforts of genealogists and linguists, the Piscataway Indians satisfied the Maryland requirement that a tribe document its existence in the state continuously since 1790. On January 9, 2012, Governor O'Malley issued an executive order recognizing the Maryland Indian Status of the Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians, as well as the Piscataway Conoy Confederacy and Sub-Tribes and the Piscataway Indian Nation.

Interestingly for the Beltsville Area, the Piscataway were noted for their advanced agricultural practices.

—Dave Prevar

Best Hiring Practices

One email is all it takes to quickly and easily disseminate your vacancy announcement for a non-SY position to the whole Best Hiring Practices (BHP) list of regional universities, colleges, and organizations. The Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force has put this system together, and you're invited to use it when your open position is ready for posting on USAJobs.

As soon as you receive your position announcement to be posted, immediately do these 4 simple steps:

Click this: jenny.allen@ars.usda.gov

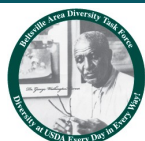
Copy and paste this into the subject line: Send to BHP group

Attach your vacancy announcement to the message.

Click "Send."

It's that easy to get the word out!

-Allison Yates



Winner of ARS Administrator's Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity Award for 2009 and 2011

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force: Diversity at USDA Every Day in Every Way!



Asian-Pacific Riches Shared With BA Staff

"Building Leadership: Embracing Cultural Values and Inclusion" was this year's theme for the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF) celebration of Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month. The event, held on May 15, 2013, brought together many BA employees with a group of Sri Lankan Buddhist monks (*shown below*). The monks in attendance were Venerable Bhante Katugastota Uparatana Thera (Head Monk), Venerable Kobeygane Siriratana Thera, and Venerable Karalliyadde Mahanama Thera.

The monks were all dressed in traditional attire. They gave those in the audience the opportunity to witness and participate in their chant and meditation. "They created a peaceful and serene environment that left me relaxed and refreshed in a matter of minutes," said one attendee.

In addition, fruit-art carver Nit Malikul (Systematic Entomology Laboratory) and origami expert Walter Stracke (formerly of the Hydrology and Remote Sensing Laboratory) were present to show their beautiful works of art. Participants were able to sample various dishes, desserts, and drinks from Korea, India, and other Asian countries. As always, the cuisine was delicious.

A special "thank you" goes to the BADTF Special Emphasis Subcommittee for arranging and hosting this event.

-Tasha Sprague



BARC Employee in the Spotlight: Martha Tomecek

Martha Tomecek (*shown below*) has been with ARS for 13 years. She is an employee of the Crop Systems & Global Change Laboratory. She works with Lew Ziska on studying the effects of elevated CO₂ and temperature on crop and weed plants. This past year she has taken on the role of chair of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force (BADTF). She has been serving on the BADTF since its revival in the Beltsville Area (BA) in 2008.

Sprague: Now that you are the chair for the BADTF, how is that different from being a member?

Tomecek: Being chair requires me to be more attuned and active in all of the various committees, as well as being more interactive with the administration.

Sprague: Are you learning many things from this experience?

Tomecek: Overall, I've learned so many things from the task force through the years that being chair is not that novel.

Sprague: Why did you join BADTF?

Tomecek: I joined to expand my awareness of my co-workers. It was/is a great opportunity to meet and interact with people from different labs and experiences and work on a common goal of increasing the diversity of our workforce.

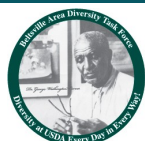
Sprague: What does diversity mean to you?

Tomecek: To me, diversity means having a workforce that
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Answers to Anagram Corner

1. "Student Discovery Garden"
2. "Student Discovery Garden"



(continued from p. 5)

reflects the composition of our country. In order to advance in science we need many creative, hardworking people to come to the table to seek to solve problematic issues. We can do this better by having a broad canvas of people that have different backgrounds and perspectives coming together and working on these issues.

Sprague: In your opinion, how is the committee improving and benefiting BA?

Tomecek: I think the taskforce is helping BA become aware of diversity issues, which is always a critical first step. It is benefiting BA by that increased awareness and, for some, the consequent action to actively address diversity issues of concern. We are strengthening the ties/relationships within our current workforce and hopefully we will expand our workforce into one that is more diverse.

Sprague: What direction would you like to see the BADTF go in the near future?

Tomecek: I would like to have more of our current workforce join the BADTF. The experience of being involved in one of our committees is quite rewarding and can offer people areas to develop skills they didn't know they had or hone skills they don't normally get to use. I would like to see the BADTF develop into a sort of rite of passage for all BARC employees. There is always something to learn from one another, and by working on programs/issues/concepts in the BADTF committees you expand your current awareness and knowledge of people and issues.

Sprague: Any other thoughts or ideas regarding BADTF that you would like to share?

Tomecek: I am grateful to our administration for embracing the BADTF as well as it has. It is encouraging to have such support. Without their commitment to diversity, we would not be able to be as effective as we have been. I also believe that we have made inroads into increasing FAR-B's presence at BARC. Their support and guidance has been critical for many of our events and symposia. And lastly, I want to share that I've made more friends at BA than I ever would have had without the experience of working with the BADTF.

—Tasha Sprague

Support is Available for Families and Allies of Transgender, Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual People

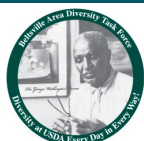
The Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force hosted a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Pride event on June 19. Kate White, a soil scientist in the Environmental Microbial and Food Safety and the Sustainable Agricultural Systems Laboratories, introduced speaker Patricia Corbett of the Metro DC chapter of Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG; www.pflagdc.org). Ms. Corbett provided a history of the PFLAG organization and its role in the community.

According to Corbett, PFLAG was the first national organization to provide support to families of transgender people. PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons, and their families and friends in several ways. It provides support to help them cope with an adverse society, education to enlighten an ill-informed public, and advocacy to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

Corbett speaks to various groups in the community. She also visits schools to speak against bullying, and she challenges all to be more supportive of the gay and lesbian members of our communities. Her role is to encourage communities to create a society in which all lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender persons may openly and safely pursue the career paths they have chosen to allow them to grow to their full potential in the workplace.

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In November, the U.S. Senate passed a bill prohibiting employment discrimination on the basis of an individual's actual or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity (<http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/815>). A similar bill introduced in the House of Representatives had not come to a vote at the time of publication of this issue of *Spotlight on Diversity* (<http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th/house-bill/1755>).



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Corbett welcomed everyone to participate in PFLAG and support its vision and mission. She emphasized the importance of inclusion within our communities of faith and encouraged everyone to “embrace all you love, regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.”



White (shown left) then told her own personal story, enlightening attendees on the various terms used to describe the different identities on the transgender spectrum. She recounted what happened to her during her transition as a transgender woman and identified the steps in that transition. She explained that she had to come to

the realization of who she was, and then seek counseling and the appropriate medical treatment. “I was fortunate in that I found acceptance from the people around me,” she said.

White further discussed some of the issues transgender people face in society and in the workforce, such as the lack of gender identity non-discrimination protections in the various jurisdictions, housing and employment discrimination, and the need for more public accommodations. White again emphasized that support from the community and family members is important. She remarked, “Being able to express yourself relieves stress.” Her message to others who may know of and work with gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender individuals was to accept them for who they are and treat them appropriately.

For more information on PFLAG, send an email to info@pflagdc.org or visit their website at www.pflagdc.org. For more information about transgender individuals in the Federal workplace, see the article “Transgender Matters” on page 8 in the January 2012 issue of *Spotlight on Diversity* (https://www.ars.usda.gov/sp2UserFiles/ad_hoc/12000000BADiversityTaskforce/spotlight/Jan2012.pdf).

— Linda Reynolds

Missed an issue of *Spotlight*?

See previous issues of *Spotlight on Diversity* and other interesting articles at:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=20124>.

2013 Calendar of Events

February – Black History Month

March – National Women’s History Month

May - Asian/ Pacific Islander Heritage Month

June - Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Pride Month

September - National Hispanic Heritage Month

October - National Disability Employment Awareness Month

November - Native American/Alaskan Native Heritage Month

Did you know that the Student Discovery Garden is open to all BA employees all the time?

Enjoy your lunch at the picnic tables or take a stroll through the garden and check out the new additions. We welcome plot ideas that relate to your area of expertise. To design your own plot for future seasons or to simply volunteer to help, contact us at

BARC.Diversity@ars.usda.gov .



Winner of ARS Administrator's Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity Award for 2009 and 2011

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force: Diversity at USDA Every Day in Every Way!



BADTF Meetings (General and Subcommittee) Winter-Spring 2014

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force - Second Wednesday of each month, alternating between BARC-W Building 003, Room 020 and BARC-E Building 307-C Room 117, 10:00-11:00am (To confirm location, email BARC.Diversity@ars.usda.gov)

Communications Subcommittee - First Thursday of each month, Building 003, Room 238, 1:00-2:00pm

Leadership Advisory Subcommittee - First Wednesday of each month, Building 173, Conference Room, 9:30-10:30am

Science and Technical Education Outreach Subcommittee - Third Tuesday of each month, Building 001, Room 324-5, 1:00-2:00pm

Special Emphasis Subcommittee - Second Tuesday of each month, Building 003, Room 020, 11:00-12:00pm

Thank you for reading *Spotlight on Diversity*. Your comments and contributions for future stories are welcome. Please e-mail us at BARC.Diversity@ars.usda.gov.

***Spotlight on Diversity* is produced by the Communications Subcommittee of the Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force. Members of the Communications Subcommittee are Kamal Chauhan, Sharrell Davis, Dawn Harrison, Jennifer Kramer, Rose McIntosh, Linda Reynolds, Jim Plaskowitz, Dave Prevar, Cecilia Wilkinson Enns, Frances Truth, Catherine Parsons (*Spotlight* formatting and production), and Tasha Sprague (chair).**

Helpful Websites

BARC:

Beltsville Area Diversity Task Force
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=17502>

Spotlight on Diversity – diversity news for the Beltsville Area
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/Aboutus/docs.htm?docid=20124>

ARS:

ARS & You – news about ARS
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/is/services/Introduction/ARS%20and%20You.htm>

Your Two Cents – cultural transformation in ARS
<http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents/>

Outreach, Diversity, and Equal Opportunity (ODEO):

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

EEO Complaint Process
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/complaintprocess.htm>

Outreach and Recruitment
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/outreach.htm>

Reasonable Accommodation
<http://www.afm.ars.usda.gov/ODEO/reasonableaccommodation.htm>

USDA:

USDA news and information
<http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome>

USDA's Roadmap to Diversity
https://www.ars.usda.gov/sp2UserFiles/ad_hoc/12000000OutreachDiversityandEO/DiversityRdmp.pdf
(link opens 5.46 MB PDF file)

Other:

Smithsonian diversity information and events
http://www.smithsonianeducation.org/heritage_month/index.html

Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities
<http://www.wrp.gov>

AsKEARN.org - Resources to Help Employers Hire and Retain People with Disabilities
<http://www.askearn.org/>

Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities Annual Conference
http://www.hacu.net/hacu/Annual_Conference1.asp

