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Did You Know?

During last year's [Feds Feed Families](#) campaign, Research Plant Geneticist **Jane Marita**, ARS U.S. Dairy Forage Research Center (DFRC), Madison, WI, came up with a good way to add some fun and fellowship to the campaign while increasing donations. She fired up her grill and offered a free "brat"—bratwurst, a German sausage popular in Wisconsin—to coworkers who brought in a food pantry donation. Her plan worked! During last year's campaign, DFRC employees donated 2,800 pounds of food, including cash donations converted to food-pound basis. The idea was so popular that the cookouts continued on a monthly basis even after the campaign ended, and the "off-season" cookouts generated nearly another ton of food donations! Now that the [Feds Feed Families](#) campaign is on again, Marita is firing up her grill every other week. Chicken breasts, hamburgers and veggie burgers are new on the menu this year to add variety.

What is your location doing to help with this initiative? Send us your story! ❁

Please submit story ideas and national award items to Sean Adams, [sean.adams@ars.usda.gov](mailto:sean.adams@ars.usda.gov), or call 301-504-1617.



Jane Marita fires up her grill for the Feds Feed Families campaign.

## Let's Welcome Our New "PALS"!

Effective August 6, the newly reorganized Employee Relations Branch (ERB) is now known as the Personnel and Labor Solutions Branch (PALS). To better service its customers, PALS has a three-section structure: Labor Relations, Legal Case Management, and Investigations. As part of the reorganization, a new central phone number and email address have been established for all new cases: 301-504-1349 and [PALS-REE@ars.usda.gov](mailto:PALS-REE@ars.usda.gov). The target response time to calls and email messages is 24 hours. The new organizational structure will provide more consistent guidance and solutions and better workload distribution among the specialists, while minimizing service gaps due to retirements or other staffing changes. ❀

## We're Looking for the Next ARS Star!



[www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents](http://www.ars.usda.gov/yourtwocents)

Thank you for your continued support of the [Your Two Cents \(Y2C\)](#) site, now into its third year! Stay tuned for news about an upcoming LIVE Y2C summit this fall—another opportunity for ARS voices to be heard. The [ARS Cultural Transformation](#) site still needs your videos! Our “[ARS Starring You](#)” feature has been woefully underutilized, and we need your help to change it! You can take the videos on your video camera, smart phone, etc., and we will take care of the editing here. Visit the site to see some examples that your colleagues submitted and send yours today! ❀

## Around ARS

ARS employees in Stoneville, MS, hosted two interns from area colleges from May 31 to August 10 under the Go Greenville Summer Internship Program, organized and sponsored by the City of Greenville, MS. Marcus Bradley, a student majoring in biology from Rust College, worked with Research Leader **Brian Scheffler** in the ARS Genomics and Bioinformatics Research Unit. Administrative Officer **Carlean Horton** worked with Dava Griffin, an Alcorn State University student majoring in math education, at the Location Support Office. The internship program's goal is to connect local college students with local organizations for a 10-week paid internship. The 30 interns who were selected this inaugural year of the program also participated in leadership and professional development opportunities through workshops, seminars and a group project. ❀



Intern Dava Griffin (left) with Administrative Officer Carlean Horton.



Intern Marcus Bradley (left) with Biological Science Technician Sheron Simpson.

On July 19, 2012, about 600 visitors were on hand to help the **ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory (NGPRL)** in Mandan, ND, celebrate 100 years of research during its award-winning annual Friends & Neighbors Day. The program featured remarks by Catherine Woteki, USDA Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics, and Area Director **Larry Chandler**, ARS Northern Plains Area. Research Leader **Matt Sanderson** accepted on NGPRL's behalf the Centennial Farm designation and proclamation from North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring. Activities for the day included a diverse array of presentations and tours that offered a little something for everyone. Despite the blistering heat and humidity, a good time was had by all. (See [Photo Corner](#) for images.) ❀

The ARS Beltsville Area and the Office of National Programs hosted about 40 members and student interns from the [USDA Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food \(KYF\) Task Force](#) for a tour of the ARS Henry A. Wallace Beltsville Agricultural Research Center (BARC) on August 7. The event was hosted by Associate Area Director **Allison Yates** and ARS National Program Leaders **Mark Boggess**, Animal Production and Protection, and **Matt Smith**, Natural Resources and Sustainable Agricultural Systems. The visitors watched demonstrations of organic cropping systems, plant physiology and crop modeling, dairy production and waste management, human nutrition, and environmental monitoring. The KYF Task Force members are drawn from across the Department, and, for many, it was their first opportunity to observe some of the research conducted by ARS. [Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food](#) is a USDA-wide effort to carry out President Obama's commitment to strengthening local and regional food systems. ❀

The **SNAP-Ed Connection** team, part of the National Agricultural Library's Food and Nutrition Information Center, exhibited at the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior Annual Meeting, July 14-17, 2012, in Washington, DC. The conference was attended by around 500 nutrition educators, many of whom support Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) nutrition education. The exhibit featured products such as the Recipe Finder Database, the Build a Cookbook feature and the Resource Finder. ❀

The Web and Reference Team of the National Agricultural Library's Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC) recently developed and launched a [video and supporting](#)

[Web page](#) to educate consumers about the benefits of shopping at farmers' markets. The video was featured on the [USDA Blog](#) and cross-posted to the [Let's Move Blog](#). It is also available on the [USDA](#) and [NAL](#) YouTube channels. The video was produced in conjunction with the USDA Office of Communications and is narrated by **Sara Wilson**, Nutrition Information Specialist, FNIC. ❀

## Notable Awards

Research Microbiologist **Christina L. Swaggerty**, ARS Food and Food Safety Research Unit, College Station, TX, has been selected one of three Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers (PECASE) recipients from USDA. On July 23, 2012, President Obama named 96 recipients of the award, the highest honor bestowed by the U.S. Government on science and engineering professionals in the early stages of their independent research careers. Established by President Clinton in 1996, the awards are coordinated by the Office of Science and Technology Policy in the Executive Office of the President. Swaggerty was ARS' nominee for the award by virtue of her being named the 2011 Herbert L. Rothbart Outstanding Early Career Research Scientist. ❀



Christina L. Swaggerty.

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has awarded the Foot and Mouth Disease Vaccine Team, including ARS team members Research Leader **Luis Rodriguez** and Supervisory Research Chemist **Marvin Grubman**, Plum Island Animal Disease Center, Orient Point, NY, the Under Secretary's Award for Science and Technology. The honor recognizes the significance of contributions in homeland security-related research, development, testing and evaluation. The foot and mouth disease (FMD) vaccine was originally developed by Grubman around 7 years ago, but it required a team effort and new scientific discoveries to develop a vaccine that will work properly. The FMD vaccine has recently been granted a conditional license for use in cattle by APHIS. The Foot and Mouth Disease Vaccine Team included researchers from DHS and GenVec, Inc., a biopharmaceutical company based in Gaithersburg, MD. ❀



Jeff Arnold.

Supervisory Agricultural Engineer **Jeff Arnold**, ARS Grassland Soil and Water Research Laboratory, Temple, TX, and Raghavan Srinivasan, Department of Ecosystem Science and Management, Texas A&M University, College Station, TX, received the 2012 Norman Hudson Memorial Award from the World Association of Soil and Water Conservation (WASWC) for the development and worldwide application of the Soil and Water

Assessment Tool (SWAT). The award was presented at the International SWAT Conference, July 16-20, 2012, in New Delhi, India. The highest honor bestowed by WASWC, the Norman Hudson Memorial Award recognizes international achievements in soil and water conservation. ❀



Raghavan Srinivasan.

Supervisory Research Chemist **Steven Lehotay**, ARS Eastern Regional Research Center, Wyndmoor, PA, has been honored with the American Chemical Society's Division of Agrochemicals 2012 Award for Innovation in Chemistry of Agriculture, as the first recipient of this new award. The award recognizes Lehotay for his co-development and technology transfer of the QuEChERS method for analysis of pesticide residues in foods. Formal award presentation will take place during the ACS National Meeting and Exposition, August 19-23, in Philadelphia, PA. ❀

Research Plant Physiologist **Daniel Cook**, ARS Poisonous Plant Research Laboratory, Logan, UT, has been awarded the Arthur Neish Young Investigator Award by the Phytochemical Society of North America (PSNA) for his contributions to the field of phytochemistry. He was recognized at PSNA's Annual Meeting, August 11-15, in London, Ontario, Canada. ❀

Research Entomologist **Lilia De Guzman**, ARS Honey Bee Breeding, Genetics and Physiology Research Laboratory, Baton Rouge, LA, is the 2012 Eastern Apicultural Society's (EAS) James I. Hambleton Award winner. The Hambleton Award is the premier award from the beekeeping industry for apicultural science. The award was presented at the EAS annual conference, August 15-17, in Burlington, VT. ❀

Research Geneticist **Mike Gore**, ARS Arid-Land Agricultural Research Center, Maricopa, AZ, was honored with the 2012 National Association of Plant Breeders (NAPB) Early Career Award. The award recognizes an individual active in the plant breeding field who has shown exceptional accomplishments in research, teaching and collaborations with others. The award was presented at the NAPB Annual Meeting, August 6-8, in Indianapolis, IN. Gore also will make an invited presentation at the 2013 NAPB meeting. ❀



Mike Gore.

Research Animal Geneticist **Curt Van Tassell**, ARS Bovine Functional Genomics Laboratory, Beltsville, MD, was presented the Jay L. Lush Award at the American Society of Animal Science (ASAS) / American Dairy Science Association (ADSA) National Meeting, July 15-19, 2012, in Phoenix, AZ. The award recognizes outstanding research in animal breeding and is one of the most prestigious awards presented by ASAS/ADSA.

At the same meeting, Research Animal Geneticist **George Wiggins**, ARS Animal Improvement Programs Laboratory (AIPL), Beltsville, MD, was inducted as an ADSA Fellow; and Research Animal Geneticist **Paul VanRaden**, also at AIPL, received the *Journal of Dairy Science's* Most Cited Paper Award for the Journal's Genetics and Breeding section.



From left: George Wiggins, Paul VanRaden and Curt Van Tassell.



From left: Curt Van Tassell and Duane Norman.

Also, **Van Tassell**, along with Research Leader **Duane Norman**, who recently retired from AIPL, was awarded the American Jersey Cattle Association (AJCA)-National All-Jersey Inc. (NAJ) Award for Meritorious

Service for their contributions to the advancement of the Jersey breed and the livelihood of Jersey owners in the United States through research, education, development and marketing. The award was presented at the AJCA-NAJ Annual Meeting, June 27-30, 2012, in North Conway, NH. ❀



REE Under Secretary Catherine Woteki addresses staff and visitors.



## Photo Corner

See related [story](#) in *Around ARS*.



Area Director Larry Chandler, ARS Northern Plains Area, addresses staff and visitors during Friends & Neighbors Day in Mandan, ND.



Research Leader Matt Sanderson (left) accepts the Centennial Farm designation and proclamation on behalf of the ARS Northern Great Plains Research Laboratory, Mandan, ND, from North Dakota Agriculture Commissioner Doug Goehring.

## Did You Know?



If you are hoping for a tender piece of meat to grill on the outdoor barbecue this summer, your task could be a bit easier, thanks to ARS research.

ARS conducts extensive research on meat safety and quality, and as part of that work, ARS researchers have developed technology that predicts beef and pork tenderness.

In 2001, scientists at the ARS Roman L. Hruska U.S. Meat Animal Research Center at Clay Center, NE, devised a system to determine meat tenderness—without cutting it, cooking it, or tasting it. The scientists have worked cooperatively with the beef and pork industries to make sure the technology works on a commercial scale, not just in the laboratory.

The technology will make it easier for the industry to market beef and pork for their best end-use. One commercial company has implemented the technology to ensure the tenderness of its branded line of beef products.

The discovery is part of ongoing work at Clay Center on meat tenderness. In the 1990s, several scientists helped pinpoint a major gene in cattle responsible for boosting muscle size and leanness. Since then, ARS researchers have added to their understanding of this gene and are working to find optimal ways to use it alongside other genes to make beef more healthful, without sacrificing taste and tenderness.

Predicting meat tenderness and exploring the genetics behind it are just some of the ways ARS scientists are working to help put the best piece of meat on your summer grill.

### ***Did you know that...***

- Total U.S. beef consumption in 2010 was 26.4 billion pounds? [Source](#)
- Average U.S. per capita consumption of red meat (retail weight) in 2009 was 112.3 pounds? [Source](#)

*Written by Sean Adams, ARS Information Staff.*

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