



United States Department of Agriculture

USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach...

Staying Connected

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

OCTOBER / NOVEMBER

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Carolyn Parker
Director, Office of Advocacy and Outreach

Message From the Director

The theme of this edition is **“Working together”**. Working together involves buying into a common mission. This edition presents the results of buy-in to achieve our common mission of serving people.

One of Secretary Vilsack’s core goals is the Transformation Initiative which seeks to recruit, hire, retain and promote a diverse workforce that reflects the American public. The article “USDA-HSI Student Turned Professional” is a reflection of USDA’s commitment to create a more diverse workforce.

Secretary Vilsack’s participation during the 1890 Task Force Meeting in July reaffirmed the Department’s commitment to support minority serving institutions. The “Summer Meals in Farm Worker Communities” and “Technical Assistance Work with United Tribes Technical College” illustrate the results of OAO’s effort to integrate agency outreach activities to ensure that maximum information and assistance is provided to minorities and underserved communities. For more information on the Transformation Initiative go to <http://www.dm.usda.gov/employ/index.htm>.

One person seeking glory doesn’t accomplish much. Success is the result of people pulling together to meet common goals.... By John C. Maxwell

Celebrating the Tribal College and Land-Grant Development Movement



This year the United States Department of Agriculture has been celebrating the American Indian Higher Education Consortium (AIHEC) 40th anniversary. Since 1972, AIHEC has served its member institutions through public policy, advocacy, research, and program initiatives to ensure strong tribal sovereignty through excellence in American Indian higher education. AIHEC is the collective spirit and unifying voice of our nation’s 37 [Tribal Colleges and Universities](#). In August, the USDA and AIHEC Leadership Group met in Santa Fe, New Mexico. To maximize the opportunities in New Mexico to engage in outreach, the 1994 Program coordinated visits to 1994 Tribal Land-Grant Institutions and USDA funded programs in rural New Mexico to the Navajo Nation on August 8, 2013.

USDA FARMWORKER PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

Summer Meals in Farmworker Communities

Start 2 Farm

If you are considering farming or just getting started, take a minute to think about your next steps using our new to farming tutorial.

<http://start2farm-prod.nal.usda.gov/new-to-farming>

In Mecca, California, the community of Our Lady of Guadalupe Sanctuary recently celebrated the annual *Festival de la Uva* (Grape Festival). But for the grape harvesters' children, the summer bounty fails to translate into nourishment. Across the United States, a majority of the children who qualify for free and reduced price meals during the school year are unable to access federally funded meals during the summer. Children in farmworker communities face significant challenges to participate in summer nutrition programs.

To address this challenge, USDA's Office of Advocacy and Outreach Farmworker Office, in collaboration with the Center for Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships and the Office of Food and Nutrition Services, hosted a [webinar](#) offering information and resources for faith and community-based nonprofits interested in partnering with USDA's [Summer Food Service Program](#) (SFSP). The

organizations learned how SFSP, which provides free, nutritious meals to children age 18 and younger, can help them to meet the needs in their communities.

For children in farmworker communities, SFSP has a great deal to offer. The program offsets transportation

farmer's field.

Alianza Nacional de Campesinas was one of the key collaborators in this effort. This organization was among fifty that hosted watch sessions for its members. This allowed stakeholders across the country to take steps towards creating new sites. It also benefited USDA, as the Department received invaluable feedback from groups like *promotores de salud* (community health workers) who have the trust of farmworker families and can help promote awareness of this program.

To learn more about how to engage in efforts to feed children a healthy meal during the summer, visit www.summerfood.usda.gov. You can find feeding sites in your area by calling 1-866-3-HUNGRY or visiting <http://www.whyhunger.org/findfood>.



costs by allowing higher reimbursement rates for rural communities. There is flexibility for organizations wishing to serve meals at a site; the category of "open site" allows all children to eat for free without the need for additional paperwork, while children at a "migrant site" can receive one additional snack or meal. In addition, "mobile sites" can bring meals to children in a park or at a

1890 PROGRAM PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

On July 25, 2013, members of the USDA and 1890's Task Force met in Washington, D.C. to discuss the future of their partnership and how to expand opportunities for USDA and the 1890's Colleges and Universities to work together. The meeting was standing room only with representation from across the Department and most of the 1890's Universities. The meeting included three very special guests, USDA Secretary Thomas Vilsack, Congressman Bennie Thompson and Congresswoman Joyce Beatty. During Secretary Vilsack's speech, he reconfirmed USDA's commitment to the 1890's Land-Grant institutions. The Secretary's visit also included a 25 minute question and answer session in which he discussed the budgetary issues facing the Department.



Emerging Leaders in Public Service

The USDA Public Service Leaders Scholarship (PSLS) Program recently converted Lucero Hernandez to a permanent position with the U.S. Forest Service (USFS). Lucero competed and was selected as a Scholar in 2011 by USFS while pursuing a Master's degree from the University of Texas at San Antonio.

As a student, Lucero interned with the Forest Service and participated in Leadership Training for two summers. The training and experience received allowed her to easily transition to her new role as a Public Affairs Specialist upon her graduation this past December and provided her with the tools necessary for a successful career in public service. According to Lucero, "being a part of PSLS has broadened my horizons



considerably...Not only did PSLS connect me with permanent employment upon graduation, it provided me the tools necessary to be successful at my job."

This program is designed to assist USDA managers in attracting talented and diverse students to critical positions by providing a combined scholarship and internship opportunity to undergraduate and graduate students. Selected student commits to serve as a public servant and effective leader and to completing their academic program while interning at USDA. After graduation, scholars commit to providing one year of service to USDA for each year of financial support received.

Featured Funding Opportunities

USDA is soliciting applications for:

The Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI)

Applications are due November 12, 2013. For more information about how to apply go to the August 14, 2013 *Federal Register* at www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2013-08-14/pdf/2013-19773.pdf

Community Forest and Open Space Program—

Applications are due January 15, 2014. For more information about how to apply go to <http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/programs/loa/cfp.shtml>

E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship

This summer the United States Department of Agriculture hosted the 16th class of the E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship program. The program offers faculty and staff from Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) the opportunity to work collaboratively with USDA in order to build greater engagement and enhance the academic experience at HSIs. HSIs are accredited and degree-granting institutions of higher education with a full-time Hispanic student enrollment of 25 percent or more.

Through the fellowship program, USDA and HSIs are better prepared to address educational challenges faced by the Hispanic community and to promote services and employment opportunities offered by USDA agencies while diversifying the Department's workforce. This year's class of the E. Kika De La Garza

Fellowship was divided into two categories, Education and Science. All Fellows learned first-hand the mission and leadership and staff from agencies. In addition to meeting with other federal agencies. In addition to meeting with leading Agricultural Research Service--one of the world's premier scientific organizations--and learned about state-of-the-art



Participants enriched the USDA with their diverse experiences allowing for an on-going dialogue regarding the educational challenges facing the Hispanic community. Fellows then shared the details of their experience with students at their respective HSIs, motivating students to pursue careers in agriculture, science, research, and technology.

The fellowship greatly increases participants understanding of USDA and creates a network of educated professionals. The contacts and expertise gained by fellows through the program potentially expands the student and funding opportunities available to their institutions. Furthermore, the program provides fellows with an opportunity to develop lasting relationships with national and regional USDA offices that benefit their institutions, students, and community.

Applications for the 2014 E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship program will be available in October 2013.

Did You Know...

The 1890's Land-Grant Act (also known as the Agricultural Colleges Act) is actually the second piece of legislation aimed at creating public Land-Grant Colleges and Universities?

The first Morrill act was signed in 1862 creating the Land-Grant colleges and university system to educate all citizens in the field of agriculture. However, because some of the southern states refused to comply by admitting students of color, the second Morrill Act was passed in 1890 to specifically support the establishment of Land-Grant systems to bring Blacks into agricultural programs. Therefore, the "black" Land-Grant Universities are referred to as the 1890 Universities.

USDA PROGRAM SUCCESS STORY

USDA-HSI Student Turned Professional

Edgar Ortega participated as an undergraduate student from San Diego State University (SDSU) – Imperial Valley (IV) Campus in HACU's 23rd Annual Conference in Orlando, FL through the USDA-HSI Student Scholar Program and also attended USDA's 87th Annual Agricultural Outlook Forum in Arlington, VA through its Student Diversity Program. These motivational, leadership development experiences and professional networking opportunities inspired Edgar to pursue a career in public service with USDA.

Edgar Ortega graduated Spring 2013 with a Master's of Public Administration (M.P.A.) and has transitioned within the USDA Service Center in the rural area of the Imperial Valley located in El Centro, CA to serve as an Area Specialist for the Multi-Family Housing Programs, to provide affordable multi-family rental housing for very low, low, and moderate-income families. Edgar initially applied, interviewed, and obtained a temporary position as an Area Assistant and continued through an experiential learning experience as a Student Trainee (Loan Specialist). He also previously served as the Assistant Energy Coordinator for the USDA-RD / California

State Office (Business & Cooperative Programs) promoting the Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) – Renewable Energy System (RES) and Energy Efficiency Improvement (EEI), to strengthen rural communities by providing assistance for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects that build on renewable energy systems and reduce energy usage.



SDSU and SDSU-IV Campus are Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) and HACU member institutions. SDSU-IV Campus is the host campus for the Southern California and Arizona Regional USDA Hispanic Serving Institutions National Program Office.

Employee Spotlight



Ramiro Porras serves as the Associate Director of the USDA Hispanic-Serving Institutions National Program (HSINP). Ramiro began his relationship with the USDA when he was selected as a 2004 HSINP Fellow (now the E. Kika De La Garza Fellowship Program). A year after his participation, he accepted the position to serve as the USDA HSINP Regional Director for Southern California (now Greater Los Angeles & Inland Empire region) and was charged with creating strategic partnerships between USDA and 50+ Hispanic-Serving Institutions in the region.

A native of the Coachella Valley, Ramiro has degrees from College of the Desert and California State University, San Bernardino where he received his BA in Liberal Studies and MA in Education. Although Ramiro lives in VA he stays connected to his roots in CA by continuing to work with various community groups like the Inland Empire Future Leaders Program which has provided leadership training and development to Hispanic middle school students for over 28 years. He is a product of the program and has volunteered in the organization for over 13 years and has held various positions including Director of the program.

Ramiro is the oldest of three and was the first of his family to graduate from college. Ramiro and his wife are the proud parents of a terri-poo named Dulce that they rescued 4 years ago.

PARTNER SUCCESS STORY

Farm to Table

Through the Outreach and Assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers (OASDFR) the Farm to Table Program has successfully supported farmers and ranchers. Three successful programs are highlighted here.

Farm to School Value Chain Development Provided six tours. 167 farmers and 43 buyers participated. Reached out to all 89 school districts in NM to introduce purchasing NM grown fruits and vegetables. 56 school districts purchased more than \$130,000 (up from 10 districts in 2012).

Southwest Marketing Network Conferences and the NM Organic Growers Conference

Hosted a Organic Farming Conference in Albuquerque, NM, where 800 participants of which approximately 640 were farmers/producers. Program staff provided an EQIP and USDA Programs session and quality management systems training to 66 farmers. In Colorado, they hosted a SW Marketing Network Conference in Alamosa, CO in July where 85 participants, majority Native American and Hispanic farmers and ranchers, focused on Farm to School and Institution marketing opportunities

Southwest Marketing Network Newsletter and web based resources: Developed and disseminated 3,800 newsletters focused on production marketing and shared stories in the four corner states and Tribal communities. Developed and disseminated a special newsletter and DVD tool kit with marketing and food safety trainings that was sent to 1,500 SW Marketing Network producers and participants.

UPCOMING EVENTS

- Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI) Public Policy Conference, Wash DC, September 30-October 1, 2013
- 1890 Task Force Meeting, Baton rouge, LA, October 22, 2013
- USDA-HACU Leadership Group, Chicago, IL, October 25, 2013
- Hispanic Assoc. of Colleges and Universities (HACU) Annual Conference, Chicago, IL, October 26-28, 2013
- USDA and the American Indian Higher Education Consortium Leadership Group Mtg., Rapid City, SD, October 30, 2013
- American Indian Science and Engineering Society Annual Meeting, Denver, CO, Oct. 31, November 2, 2013
- First American Colleges and Land Grant Consortium Network, Washington, DC, November 2-4 2013
- OAO/USDA Partners Teleconference, Washington, DC, November 25, 2013 at 2:00 pm.
- Inter-Tribal Agricultural Council Annual Meeting, Las Vegas, NV, December 9-13 2013.

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