

THE ORGANIZATION OF PROFESSIONAL EMPLOYEES OF THE US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE



November 2016

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Important Dates

OPEDA CFC Silent Auction December 6



OPEDA Member, Monshi Ramdass Command Sergeant Major (Ret), U.S. Army, Veterans Employment Manager, Departmental Management (DM) welcomed employees and guests at the 2016 Veterans Observation.

Message From: President, Ed Dickerhoof



This month USDA has again recognized our veteran employees, and the opportunities to hire more of these talented men and women. Among the qualities and skills the Veterans Administration cites as reasons to hire veterans are: Mission Focus, Perseverance, Discipline, Strong Work Ethic, Personal Integrity, and Self-confidence.

The USDA Office of Human Resources has reported that in 2015, approximately 30 percent of all permanent new hires have been veterans. This is a significant improvement from the estimated 5 percent USDA veteran hiring in 2010.

Honoring All Who Served



The USDA recognized the hard work and dedication of veterans at this year's Veterans Day Ceremony on October 27, 2016 in the Jefferson Auditorium, Washington D.C.

Keynote Speaker, Barbara Van Dahlen, Ph.D provided insight into Give an Hour (GAH) a nonprofit she organized and presides over supporting U.S. troops, veterans, and their loved ones through free mental health services. You can read more about services and opportunities to support GAH at www.giveanhour.org.

We stand proudly alongside those who have served including the USDA's [more than 11,000 veteran staff across the country](#). The USDA not only proud to employ veterans, the USDA supports military veterans and their families through a wide variety of loans, grants, training and technical assistance.

At this year's ceremony Dr. Gregory Parham, Assistant Secretary for Administration (DM) and Lieutenant General James McConville, Deputy Chief of Staff,



U.S. Army, G-1 signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MOU) between the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the U.S. Army's "Partnership for Youth Success (PaYS) Program." The PaYS program is a strategic partnership between the U. S. Army and a cross section of companies, corporations and public sector agencies. "PaYS" partners guarantee soldiers an interview and possible employment after the Army. This unique program is part of the Army's effort to partner with America's business community and reconnect America with its Army. USDA photos by: Bob Nichols

Secretary Vilsack Encourages Employees to Support Administration Transition

The Secretary recently sent a message thanking every USDA employee for their dedicated work over the last eight years. He also thanked the individuals who have been working beyond their daily duties to ensure USDA's transition is successful.

Earlier this year, Congress passed and President Obama signed amendments which codify best practices from the Bush-Obama transition. The amendments require that USDA appoint senior level career official to serve as transition directors and temporarily fill politically-appointed positions beginning Jan. 20, 2017, until successors are in place. USDA must also prepare briefing materials ready to hand over to the President-elect's transition team on Nov. 9. USDA works with the President-elect's incoming team. The Secretary anticipates creating briefing materials based on their requests and needs which will be coordinated through our internal transition leaders. The Secretary expressed his confidence that the transition team will gain a full appreciation for the talents and skills of those at USDA.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) Administrator Kevin Shea and Office of Budget and Program Analysis (OBPA) Associate Director Don Bice have been leading a team of career senior executives from USDA's agencies and offices to do the important work of preparing for this transition. If you have questions, contact Administrator Shea, Kevin.A.Shea@aphis.usda.gov or Associate Director Bice, Don.Bice@obpa.usda.gov or visit transition effort websites: <https://presidentialtransition.usa.gov>, www.greatagain.gov, presidentialtransition.org

Legislative Activity Dora K. "Holly" Hayes

OPEDA continues to follow legislation related to health care, long term care, offsets of Social Security benefits for retired federal workers and their spouses and low cost of living adjustments.

Legislation that has been proposed and legislation that may still be considered include the following:

Health care: Health care premiums are set to rise again after the Election on November 8.

Long term care: Premiums in the Federal Long Term Care Insurance Program (FLTCIP) may increase by over 80 percent.

Cost of living allowances: Consideration is being given to using the Chained CPI. In particular, the CPI assumes consumers will substitute what they usually buy – e.g., a steak – with a similar but lower priced item – such as hamburger – when steak prices rise a great deal

Fair Pay Raise for Federal Employees: Legislation was proposed to update the Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act; the Act provides a 3.9 percent across the board pay increase in 2017 and a 1.4 percent increase for adjusting for locality pay.

Credit Monitoring and Identity Protection. Most active USDA employees have probably received notification from the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) that there will be service provider changes that may affect those individuals impacted by the personnel records and background investigation cyber incidents. The Department suggested that employees visit the Cybersecurity Resource Center for further information.

Did you know that @USOPM has one rep for every 27,000 annuitants?

(Quoted from NARFE magazine, November, 2016)



OPEDA encourages you to reach out to your regional council members!

OPEDA encourages all USDA employees to contact the organization directly or through your regional council member. This communication will allow OPEDA to stay connected to what is important to our members and ensure that we are serving the USDA employees in the best way we can. We offer tools and resources to employees at all stages of their career. Employees nearing retirement or in the process of retiring should contact OPEDA to ensure ongoing member benefits.

Meet your Regional Council Members

Region 1 Ray Grow, raymond.grow@ut.usda.gov

Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, and the Pacific Trust Territories

Region 2 (Taking nominations for Council Member)

Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming

Region 3 (Taking nominations for Council Member)

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, Wisconsin

Region 4 Tony Baeza, tony.baeza@tx.usda.gov, cell 325-762-4453 home at 254-559-6778

Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, Texas

Region 5 Debra Arnold Debra.Arnold@dm.usda.gov

Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee

Region 6 Kathleen Rajkowski, ktrajkowski@verizon.net Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia

Region 7 Teresa Pickett-Wade, tpickett@oce.usda.gov

Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia

2016 Combined Federal Campaign



The Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) began September 1st for the National Capital Area. The U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) planned activities are underway to support CFC. President John F. Kennedy began the campaign in the early 1960s and since then it has raised nearly \$8 billion dollars for more than 18,000 organizations.

This year's theme is "Show Some Love". We encourage federal employees to give back to their community through pledging charitable donations, volunteering or noble actions. USDA employees who wish to donate to a specific cause(s) can search charities and contribute on the CFC website at www.cfcna.org.

We would like to thank the Coordinators and Keyworkers who reach out to USDA employees and plan the exciting CFC events. Every little bit helps someone in need and our goal of \$1.5 million this year. Check with your agency's coordinator to learn about all the events and Show Some Love.

USDA photo by: Bob Nichols Michael Scuse, Undersecretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services, U.S. Department of Agriculture, speaks to USDA employees at the Combine Federal Campaign kickoff September 27 in the Jefferson Auditorium.

Please visit www.OPEDA.org for regular updates and additional OPEDA and USDA event information.

OPEDA members are encouraged to invite their colleagues to join!

Refer 5 new members before January 1st and OPEDA will waive your 2017 member dues.



Choose your cause and show some love today.





OPEDA
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 3762

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*The Organization of Professional Employees
 of the US Department of Agriculture*

Thank you for reading the OPEDA
 Newsletter. Your comments and
 contributions are welcome.

Please contact us: phone-202.720.4898
 email- OPEDA@dm.usda.gov
 web-www.opeda.org

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 South Building, 1400 Independence Ave.,
 S.W. Washington DC 20250



**Opportunity for Retirees,
 Stay Active Within the
 USDA**

Join OPEDA’s mission to enhance the effectiveness of
 USDA’s employees in the performance of their duties. OPEDA
 is looking for part time volunteers to assist in pursuing the leg-
 islative, member services, and professional development needs
 of the Organization. Duties may include: preparing documenta-
 tion to support the needs of the organization, helping to recruit
 new members, and developing and implementing new plans
 and programs to support members. This is an opportunity for
 retirees to stay active within the USDA, and to support the
 Organization and its employees.

Location: OPEDA National Office, Room 1212, USDA South
 Building, 14th and Independence Ave., Washington DC These
 are not paid positions. Volunteers enjoy flexible schedules and
 choose their area of service. OPEDA will reimburse commut-
 ing costs to/from Washington, DC, and for local travel to at-
 tend meetings. If you are interested, please contact Dana Man-
 ning, Director of Communications, at OPEDA@dm.usda.gov

Federal Benefits Open Season Nov. 14 – Dec. 12, 2016

During the Federal Benefits Open Season, you may elect cover-
 age, or make changes to your health, dental, or vision insurance
 benefits. You may also elect to participate in the Federal Flexi-
 ble Spending Accounts Program (FSAFEDS) for 2017. The fol-
 lowing resource will provide guidance concerning what coverage
 and premiums best suits your needs for the upcoming

year:: [https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/
 plan-information/compare-plans/](https://www.opm.gov/healthcare-insurance/healthcare/plan-information/compare-plans/)

Credit Monitoring and Identity Protection

The U.S. Office of Personnel Management offers
 credit monitoring and identity protection services to
 individuals impacted by the personnel records and
 background investigations cyber incidents. Due to an
 upcoming service provider change some will need to
 enroll with a new provider if they want to continue to
 use credit monitoring services. This change is the first
 step in OPM’s efforts to extend coverage to all im-
 pacted individuals to 10 years

For more information about this provider change, and
 about the 2015 OPM cybersecurity incidents, please
 visit <https://www.opm.gov/cybersecurity>.