



OPEDA NEWSLETTER

Organization of Professional Employees of the
US Department of Agriculture
www.opeda.org

In This Issue	
OPEDA President Message	1
Legislative Activities Update	2
Spotlight OPEDA Intern	2
Unsung Hero Award Nomination	3-5
OPEDA Scholarship 2015	6-7
Opportunity for Retirees	8

VOLUME I

April 2019

OPEDA President Message



Greetings Organization of Professional Employees of the US Department of Agriculture:

It is an honor to perform my first official duty and it is with great pleasure and respect for your participation in this great organization, I greet you as the newly-elected Organization of Professional Employees of the US Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) President. As your new President, let me say to you that it is my vision, and my commitment to make this organization the most prestigious, most relevant, most influential and most recognized organization not only in Washington, DC but in every city, state, county, and in every corner of United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Federal government. OPEDA takes its commitment to members seriously. However, this can only be achieved when we each have a shared vision, a shared commitment; and share in the responsibility of fulfilling this auspicious goal. As I have said and will say from time to time, we are all in this together.

In this Organization there are no big I's there is only we, and us, together. While I have assumed the leadership role for the next three years, I see each member as a leader who shares with me the goal to OPEDA the best organization that we can be in order to fulfill our mission. I am confident that TOGETHER we will continue to build upon the great successes of our past leaders. I thank each and every one of them for their commitment to our Organization and also to members. We are in a great place, and it is my desire to continue the path forward as we remember OPEDA's Purpose, Mission and Vision. I am assured of my success as OPEDA President only by your dedicated commitment to the success of this great organization and most importantly our members. You are the reason I accepted this position. Alone, I can do nothing, with your support, advice, backing, and your pledge; we can do great things.

It is my hope to meet each member, to sit and have a conversation with you, to learn about you and have you learn all about me. You are not only members, you are family and my customers, and I am here to serve YOU! My promise: to Model the Way to Success, to Inspire a Shared Vision and Values, to Challenge the Process, And to Enable Others to Act.

In 1929, OPEDA was organized to promote professionalism in the Department of Agriculture. Over the years, OPEDA has not wavered from that position. Chapters are the principal units in OPEDA to help advance the acceptance of professionalism among USDA employees and OPEDA members. To start this year, I am aligning my 2019 Presidential Priorities to developing a dialogue on professional ethics in government.

- Ensure members are equipped with the necessary professional development tools for "Investment in Excellence."
- Expand on the core fundamental guiding principle, as established by our founders (Using the Basics to Enhance Our Future).
- Provide members with tools to develop and foster working relationships with Agency Heads in order to establish a level of trust and open communication.
- Re-establish "Winning Ways".

Respectfully,
Ali Muhammad, Esquire
President

Legislative Activities Update - Fed/Postal Coalition

In the middle of February 2019, legislators and the President enacted omnibus appropriations legislation, H.J. Res. 31, to provide full year funding for departments and agencies that could otherwise have shut down February 15, 2019. The bill included provision for a long-awaited federal pay raise of 1.9%. This pay raise is retroactive to the first pay period of 2019.

Legislation (The Equal COLA ACT) has been introduced in order to provide FERS retirees the same annual Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) that is provided for CSRS and Social Security retirees.

New legislation, The Federal Adjustment of Income Rates (FAIR) Act of 2019 (H.R. 1073 and S. 426) was introduced by Gerry Connolly (D-VA) in the House and Sen Brian Schatz (D-HI) in the Senate. This legislation would increase the pay of federal employees by 3.6 percent in 2020.

As U. S. citizens and in regard to issues of interest to them, OPEDA members can contact their U.S. Senators and Representative on their own time, using their own equipment and supplies and on property not owned, rented or managed by the federal government. There may be special circumstances regarding the propriety of this contact; individual federal employees may contact their ethics officers regarding such circumstances. Provisions of the Hatch Act apply.

Relocations, Buyouts Tucked Into Trump's Budget

The Agriculture Department requested \$25 million to relocate two of its offices outside of Washington: the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. The budget also suggested overall cuts to both offices to accompany the controversial relocations.

USDA plans to reduce its workforce by 2,000 employees in fiscal 2020, with many of the cuts focusing on its Rural Development office.

Spotlight OPEDA Intern



Ms. “Luna” Chae is OPEDA’s intern since November 2018. We want to congratulate her on this assignment. OPEDA selects its Interns based on education level achieved and low- to no cost fees to the organization. Ms. Chae has finished her Undergraduate Studies and experiencing working in a fast paced office environment before she departs. “Luna” Chae holds a Bachelor of Science in Statistics and Business Administration from Sejong University, Seoul, South Korea.

Ms. “Luna” Chae has a pleasant and cheerful demeanor working in any team configuration. Ms. Kim has made possible contributions from the OPEDA staff that far exceeded what would be expected from a small group. She helped support the 2019 Annual “Agricultural Outlook Forum” outreach of the Agriculture Industry, Agricultural Professors from various US Universities, and diplomatic. Every project that Luna has taken on for OPEDA, it has been done correctly, timely, and with little need for coaching or supervision. She asks

questions when needed, communicates effectively, and gets the job done efficiently and effectively. She has never failed to accomplish any task or objective, even though it may have required a sacrifice such as the use of his personal time, or working under extreme time pressure to get a job done quickly.

Ms. “Luna” Chae was asked to host an OPEDA membership drive, which she help plan and organize. Her organizational skills and abilities are impressive and will serve her well in his future career endeavors. I observed that Ms. “Luna” Chae consistently demonstrates good work ethic, interpersonal communication skills, analytical skills, attention to detail, and is able to solve complex problems and data and prepare accurate reports. Her keen insight to problem solving allows him to improve work processes, make recommendations and provide alternatives to management. Ms. “Luna” Chae has grown in his research, marketing and management skills while volunteering at OPEDA and has demonstrated the talent and attitude needed to succeed in higher-level management positions, in the future.



Unsung Hero Award Nominations

OPEDA partnering with the USDA has established a tradition of hosting a special celebration, The Unsung Hero Awards Ceremony to honor and recognize the many and varied public service contributions of our USDA employees.

USDA employees (managers, supervisors, or peers) are requested to submit nominations no later than Friday, April 05, 2019, for individuals who have demonstrated a high level of service to the public directly related to the employee's duties. These nominations are reviewed by an independent committee established by OPEDA and USDA and final selections are made. All USDA mission areas and agencies have been active partners in this annual award program in the past, and we invite you to do the same this year.

For more information or to submit completed nominations please e- mail [**Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov**](mailto:Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov)

Completed nominations may also be hand-delivered to Room 1212, USDA South Building or mailed to OPEDA, P.O. Box 23762, Washington, D.C. 20026-3762, to reach the OPEDA Office ***no later than Friday, April 05, 2019. (202) 720-4898***

If you would like to become an OPEDA member, please complete the following Membership Application with your submission or sign up at [Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov**](mailto:Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov)**

Full Name:

USDA Agency Employed By:

Mailing Address:

Telephone Number:

E-mail Address:

Payroll Manager contact info:

- Employee Member - \$ 52.00
- Payroll Deduction - \$ 2.00 (per pay period)
- Retired Member - \$ 25.00
- Retired Life Membership - \$200.00

Please mail your check or money order (payable to OPEDA) or a copy completed payroll deduction form AD-1054 6/89 (available at www.OPEDA.org) to OPEDA, P.O. Box 23762, Washington, D.C., 20026

Teresa Pickett Wade, Vice-President of Membership-[**Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov**](mailto:Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov)



2019 Unsung Hero Nomination Contact Information

This document must be completed in its entirety and received no later than April 05, 2019 for the nomination to be acknowledged as complete.

Please save this file as the nominee's name (Last, First)

Nominator Contact Information

Name (Last, First): _____

Agency/Organization/Title: _____

Physical Work Location: _____

Region: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Home Mailing Address: _____

Nominee Contact Information

Name (Last, First): _____

Agency/Organization/Title: _____

Supervisor's name (Last, First): _____

Supervisor's Email/Phone: _____

Physical Work Location: _____

Region: _____

Email Address: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Home Mailing Address: _____

Additional contact information:

I am a current OPEDA member. If you are not currently an OPEDA member and would like to become one, please complete the following membership application or sign up at www.OPEDA.org.

Name (First, Last): _____

USDA Agency Employer: _____

Mailing Address: _____

E-mail: _____

Telephone Number: _____

- Employee Member \$ 52.00
- Payroll Deduction \$ 2.00 (per pay period)
- Retired Member \$ 25.00
- Retired Life Membership \$ 200.00

Unsung Hero Award Nomination Form

I _____ do hereby nominate the following USDA employee:

_____ for the 2018 Unsung Hero Award. The nomination should be in recognition of **demonstrated high level of service to the public** and the **service should normally be directly related to the USDA employee's job duties.**

Please provide a statement in the space below identifying the work performed by the employee (any USDA federal employee at any level of the Agency or Department) that you believe deserves special recognition.

Nominee: Last, First

Submit completed nominations to Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov **no later than April 05, 2019** Nominations and membership applications with completed payroll deduction form AD-1054 6/89 (available at www.OPEDA.org) may also be mailed to OPEDA, P.O. Box 23762, Washington, D.C. (202) 720-4898

Dora K. (Holly) Hayes, Executive President
Teresa Pickett Wade, Vice-President of Membership
Richard Fierroz, Vice-President of Public Service
Opeda.UnsungHero@dm.usda.gov



2019-2020 OPEDA Scholarship Program

OPEDA will accept scholarship applications for the 2019-2020 School Year. This year OPEDA will be awarding two scholarships of \$1,500 each. OPEDA places a high premium on education and believes that its scholarships will provide valuable academic and professional opportunities in the future. The two scholarships awarded are in honor of exemplary service to OPEDA, the USDA, and our country. In 1989, the Organization of Professional Employees of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (OPEDA) established the John W. Peterson Scholarship in recognition of Mr. Peterson's dedicated service as the 24th President of OPEDA. In 2009, OPEDA also started the Steven "Tom" Stefani Scholarship to honor Mr. Stefani's heroic service and ultimate sacrifice in Afghanistan. Tom Stefani, a Forest Service Range Conservationist, was serving on a voluntary assignment in Afghanistan when he was killed in an explosion that impacted his convoy.

Important Note: OPEDA members in good standing and their family members (broadly defined) are eligible to apply. Applicants must be at least a college freshman or equivalent by fall term 2018. To be considered, completed applications must be postmarked or delivered to the OPEDA Office no later than **July 31, 2018**.

If you are not currently an OPEDA Member, but would like to become a member, please complete and e-mail the following Membership Application to opeda@dm.usda.gov or mail it to OPEDA at P.O. Box 23762, Washington, DC 20026-3762:

Full Name:

USDA Agency Employed By:

Mailing Address:

Telephone Number:

E-Mail Address:

- Employee Member - \$ 52.00
 Payroll Deduction - \$ 2.00 (per pay period) Retired Member - \$ 25.00
 Retired Life Member- \$200.00

Please mail your check or money order (payable to OPEDA) or a copy completed payroll deduction form (AD-1054 6/89) to OPEDA, P.O. Box 23762, Washington, D.C., 20026-3762

OPEDA Scholarship Application Form 2019-2020

To be considered, Scholarship Applications must include the following:

- A completed OPEDA Scholarship Application Form for the 2019-2020 School Year
- A typed, double spaced essay, not to exceed two pages, on the topic: “Public Service is a Unique Challenge with Many Rewards.”
- One character reference. This should be a letter (no more than 2 paragraphs contained on one page) from a non-related adult e.g., teacher, coach...etc., describing how the writer has come to know the applicant and what the strengths of the applicant are.
- A sealed original of most recent high school or college transcript showing a cumulative GPA of 2.8 or higher.
- A list and brief description of awards and extracurricular and community service accomplishments.

OPEDA Membership Status: ____Current Member ____New Member ____Family of Member

1. Full Name:
2. Complete Mailing Address:
3. Telephone Number:
4. E-mail Address:
5. Sponsoring OPEDA Member’s Full Name: *(self or sponsoring family member’s full name)*
6. Sponsor’s Relationship to applicant:
7. Sponsor’s Work Telephone Number:
8. Applicant’s Most Recent Cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) *(must be equal to or higher than 2.8 on a 4.0 scale)*
9. Full Name and Address of the College that the applicant attends or plans to attend during the 2018/2019 school year
10. Admission status and class schedule as of fall 2018 if known *(can also be satisfied with current transcript if applicable).*

Please mail application and documents to: Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, P.O. Box 23762, Washington, DC 20026-3762

For further information on the OPEDA Scholarship Program, please contact OPEDA at 202-720- 4898, visit www.OPEDA.org, or e-mail opedam@dm.usda.gov.



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Washington, DC 20026-3762

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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

OPEDA National Office, Room 1212, USDA
South Building, 1400 Independence Ave.,
S.W. Washington DC 20250



The Organization of Professional Employees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Membership

For over 85 years, since it was established in April 8, 1929, **OPEDA** has represented professional employees and retirees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Unlike unions, this representation is extended to both managers and employees. **OPEDA** has worked to enhance the effectiveness of members in the performance of their public service as well as to protect and advance USDA employee interests through organized and concerted effort. **OPEDA** promotes and conducts public service activities through meetings, seminars, workshops and training, and award programs designed to improve the economic and professional advancement of **OPEDA** members. **OPEDA** also works in affiliation with several other professional organizations representing local, state, and national public employee issues in order to promote the efficient and effective operation of agencies of the USDA.

OPEDA invites you to join our organization and help us: (1) to cooperate with other professional groups in government to gain a more effective voice on behalf of professionals; (2) to secure credit towards retirement for all prior Federal-State service of USDA employees; and (3) to assure fair treatment of all USDA employees. Membership is open to all USDA employees and retirees re- gardless of age, sex, race, religion, nationality, or political affiliation.



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 legislative, member services, and professional development needs of the Organization.

Duties may include: preparing documentation 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. If you are interested in membership or volunteering, please contact Dana Manning, Director of Communications, at OPEDA@dm.usda.gov