



The Diversity Daily

Thursday, March 18, 2010

Training Conference Newsletter

Daily Schedule

- SEPM Training Sessions
8:00 AM - 5:00 PM
- Joint General Session
8:00-10:00 AM
- Concurrent Workshops
10:15 AM - 12:00 PM
- Lunch (on your own)
12:15 - 1:15 PM
- Concurrent Workshops
1:15 - 2:45 PM
- National Leadership Meeting
1:15 - 5:00 PM
- Concurrent Workshops
3:00 - 4:30 PM
- Joint Banquet
7:00 PM
- Hospitality Suites
9:00 - 11:00 PM

JOINT GENERAL SESSION RECAP

Submitted by: Lori Valadez, PAS, Texas

In this country, when people talk about Hispanics in agriculture, they think of migrant farm workers, said USDA Under Secretary of Marketing and Regulatory Programs Edward Avalos, speaking at the Joint Training Conference general session on Wednesday morning. While contributions of farm workers to American agriculture have been significant, Avalos said more and more Hispanics are making professional careers in agriculture.

Avalos illustrated the different ways Hispanics have impacted agriculture – from vaqueros (cowboys) to Fabian Garcia, a horticulturist at an agricultural

experiment station in New Mexico who developed the No. 9 green chile, the foundation of the chile industry.

Avalos said the employees at USDA are working hard to address issues affecting agriculture today – revitalizing rural communities, securing energy for the future, fighting hunger, improving the safety and health of the food supply, increasing production, and conserving forest and private agricultural lands.

Doug McKalip, a former NRCS employee who is now an assistant to Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, was also on hand. He said in his new job at USDA, he had the



Edward Avalos



Doug McKalip

privilege of being part of Secretary Vilsack's Rural Tour. McKalip said the Secretary sees farmers as the true heroes of the country. "You are the individuals from USDA who help them everyday," McKalip said.

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MANAGING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE

Submitted by: Jolene Lau, PAS, Hawaii

Did you know that in 2000, more than one billion people were deemed overweight? That number of people is equivalent to the number of starving people. Another tidbit that speaker Shelly Summar shared, was that triple-wide coffins sales increased from one per year to four-five per month. Her suggestions for managing a healthy lifestyle included counting calories, watching food portion sizes, and balancing energy by increasing physical activity to 30 minutes per day. Visit MyPyramid.gov to learn about the interactive pyramid plan on line

that will help you to monitor your activity, personalize your food intake, serving size proportions, variety of food groups, and track your improvement. These are all "steps to a healthier you."

Seth Mullis added to the presentation by talking about fitness. He suggests setting realistic goals to be physically fit. To do this, a person might start by doing activities that you enjoy. Then, add variety to your routine that involves cardio vascular and strength training. Besides being a



Shelly Summar

stress reliever, this physical activity will help to reduce blood pressure, reduce bad cholesterol, and reduce body fat. So, set a goal, bring a friend, involve your family, and try jump roping during television commercials. You might want to reconsider those cheese fries with ranch dressing-they're over 3,000 calories!

NOPHNRCSE FARMER OF THE YEAR LUNCHEON

Submitted by: Astrid Martinez, State Soil Scientist, Wyoming



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The NOPHNRCSE awards for members went to the following:

Leadership: Febe Ortiz, NHQ

Visionary Award: Bertha Venegas, TX

Natural Resources Conservation: Roney Skala, TX

Outstanding Member: Luis Gamboa, CO

Hispanic Community Outreach: Bruni Velez, WI

Amigo Award: Humberto Hernandez, retired employee

NOPHNRCSE awards their outstanding members and farmers during their "Ray T Margo Luncheon". This year Armando Arellano from Covert, MI was named Farmer of the Year. Mr. Arellano has become one of the most notable and influential growers in southwest Michigan. His operation consists of a polyculture 52-

Mexican restaurant, and a fresh fruit/grocery market. He has built a market that has a network of farmers, distributors and various companies from Michigan, Indiana and Illinois. Mr. Arellano has been marketing products while providing a retail outlet for locally grown produce in his store.

The guest speaker was Judith A. Canales, Administrator for Rural Business and Cooperative Programs, USDA Rural Development. Canales emphasized that to understand and value rural America we need to work closely with the community. She said we need to be part of the future that our grandparents and parents dreamed off. They dreamed about attending colleges to earn a degree. We have these opportunities right now; we can be the dream. She challenged us to take a look at what you are doing right now and move to the next step: be mobile, take the risk, seek those opportunities--our values are the ones that will take us there.

NOPBNRCSE FARMER OF THE YEAR

Submitted by: Sylvia Rainford, PAS, NHQ

Inspiration and recognition were the hallmark of The Organization's Lloyd Wright Small Farmer of the Year luncheon Wednesday. The African-American farmers who were honored inspired the audience because these farmers have survived tremendous obstacles to do what they love--farming. Speakers Lloyd Wright and John Boyd, Jr. inspired their audience even further by reminding them that they should never give up. Both Wright and Boyd have remained steadfast in their conviction that it is critical for them to fight to improve conditions for minority farmers.

What motivates them is an unwavering belief that minority farmers should be treated fairly and respectfully by USDA employees when they seek loans or programs and services.

Andrew Stephens of Florida was named the NOPBNRCSE Small Farmer of the Year. Stephens, a vegetable farmer from Madison County, farms about 250 acres. He uses cutting-edge technology to ensure his food is grown sustainably. His large garden provides food for his family and for low-income citizens in his community. Stephens said he tries to make sure he does not pollute the natural resources when he farms. *"I make sure*

there is no pollution and that there is a good environment for the farm and the whole community."

The other two finalists were Johnny Larry, a vegetable farmer from Florida and Ben Johnson, a vegetable and livestock farmer from South Carolina.

The Pearl S. Reed Excellence in Conservation Award was given to two Organization pioneers—James Tatum of Maryland and Lannie Smith of Arkansas.



The HBCU Committee awarded its 2010 scholarships to the following college students:

- Brian Mixon
- Kamilyah Miller
- Travis Eastern
- Corina Collins
- Marvin Lewis
- Ryan Moore
- Terronica Blackmon
- Christopher Conner
- La'Joya Wilburn
- Tony Tillman

APIO FARMER OF THE YEAR

Submitted by: Yuri Plowden, Pennsylvania

Attendees of the Asian Pacific Islander Organization's luncheon learned how one farmer in Guam manages a profitable fruit and vegetable operation on the island's thin, low fertility soils. The winner of the new APIO Farmer/Rancher Conservation Award was Bernard Watson of Yigo, Guam in recognition of his exceptional efforts and commitment to conserving, enhancing, maintaining, and protecting our natural resources. Mr. Watson is Chamorro-one of the indigenous people of Guam. He is a full-time commercial

farmer who grows bitter melon, tomatoes, eggplant, bananas and sweet sop. Mr. Watson's success is due in large part to diverse conservation practices such as use of mulch cover, no-till and strip till, green manure, crop rotation, drip irrigation, and windbreaks. He utilizes Integrated Pest Management and has actively improved wildlife habitat by planting native or culturally significant plants beneficial to the Marianas Fruit Bat, Guam's only native mammal. Congratulations to Mr. Watson!

During the luncheon APIO also recognized a few NRCS employees and APIO members whose dedication has contributed significantly to the organization's success. Awards for leadership, conservation, outreach, outstanding member, and special achievement went to Kent Matsutani of Colorado, Shiraz Vira of Washington, Pooh Vongkhamdy of Rhode



Island, Oliver Miranda of Maryland, and Lisa Hockholt of California, respectively. Three undergraduate scholarships were also awarded. The APIO website will post the names of the winners.

The luncheon concluded with beautiful traditional folk music performed by the Kansas City

DISHEARTENED & DISCONNECTED

Submitted by: Dastina Johnson, PAS, Delaware

In a room packed with approximately 75 participants, instructor Donna T. Williams, asked, "Is Your Heart in It?" If not, she said you are likely in a stage of disengagement with your job. Williams defined disengaged employees as those who do not care about their job, are no longer focused and who want another job. She said the problem comes when they don't get another job and their 'disengagement' continues to attack, spread throughout organization.

She gave participants the '8 Fateful Reasons for Disengagement.' Some reasons included the following: job/employee mismatch, overworked or under appreciated employees, politics and control and the 'Bad' boss.

Williams explained that there are 'Five Phrases From Engagement to Disengagement.' The first phase is the Honeymoon phrase- typically the first 3-6 months on a job. Employees are excited, eager to learn, produce results and look

forward to building new relationships and accepting challenges. The three phrases in-between identify subtle clues that show increasing disengagement over time. The last phase-is the Critical phase. Employees in this phase degrade management, infect others and try to prevent others from doing what's right.

She encouraged managers to take steps to defuse the



disengagement process by continually coaching employees to improve job performance, recognize and reward your top performers and adapt and adjust your behaviors to suit each individual you manage. She left participants with the platinum rule: 'Do unto others as they would have you do unto them,' or as they wish to be treated.

MANAGING PERSONAL FINANCES

Submitted by: Lori Valadez, PAS, Texas

John Ekeanyanwu, financial advisor with Ameriprise Financial from Little Rock, Ark., told participants in a personal finance concurrent session that the current volatility in the stock market is nothing new. "History repeats itself," Ekeanyanwu said. "Stocks go up and come back down. The average return is about 11 percent."

The downturn in the stock market that occurred in 2008 was created by an oversupply of lending which drove up home

values and the eventual collapse of the housing market, repercussions from the subprime mortgage crisis which spread to global capital markets, and the residual impact of the current credit crisis and the follow-on effect it has had on the global economy.

Ekeanyanwu also said emotions have a lot to do with what happens in the market. "Panic causes people to make poor choices," he said.

He provided long-term

investing strategies: **Diversify** to manage business, market, and interest rate risk; **Rebalance** your portfolio if it is appropriate; **Consider** the current and future tax ramifications of your actions; **Manage** your emotions by following a disciplined plan based on solid fundamentals, not emotion

Ekeanyanwu also recommended steps to consider taking now:

Diversify, diversify, diversify; **Rebalance** or review your asset allocation; **Avoid** market timing, but prepare for opportunities; **Don't** let your emotions affect your financial future; **Get** or review your financial plan.

JOINT AUCTION UPDATE

The atmosphere of the joint auction social was filled with laughter, camaraderie and frequent 'oohs' and 'aahhs' as attendees placed bids on everything from an autographed football by a New Orleans Saints player to a Hershey's bar of Kansas City. At the end of the night,

the auction proved to be a success in raising scholarship money for the three professional organizations.

Thanks to the collective efforts of all participants, the APIO, NOPBNRCSE and NOPHNRCS raised thousands of dollars that will be distributed to deserving students as part of

their respective scholarship fund.

Pooh Vongkhamdy, STC, Rhode Island, places a bid at the Joint Auction Social.



CANDID CAMERA SHOTS

Candid shots of conference participants throughout the week.

