

## A Message from the Administrator

As many of you know, USDA suffered a great loss this month. Steven Thomas (Tom) Stefani was a Forest Service employee on voluntary assignment with the Foreign Agricultural Service in Afghanistan. He was serving on a Provincial Reconstruction Team as an Agricultural Advisor when he lost his life on Oct. 4, 2007, in an explosion that impacted his convoy near the Ghazni Province.

In Afghanistan, Tom was developing and implementing projects to help the people of the Ghazni Province. He worked directly with Ghazni's Director of Agriculture to create a reconstruction plan that included a poultry rearing facility and other agricultural advancements. Last month, Tom proudly reported that construction had begun on a cold storage facility for farmers to store their commodities, which would enable them to preserve and sell the products. He had also worked on a project to improve grape production and management practices. Tom's contributions will have a real and lasting impact on the people and agricultural economy of Afghanistan.

Tom was very active with his projects, going on over 70 missions with the approval of his base commander during his tour. (The average soldier goes on 50 missions during a tour.) It was important to Tom that he got out from "behind the wire." He was constantly asking the base commander if he could accompany an outbound mission in order to visit his project sites. Tom's father shared that Tom requested numerous boxes of books be shipped to him; he wanted to be sure he could answer any agricultural question and, if not, at least be able to look up an answer. Tom's father shared many other stories, but one of the most touching was of Tom's longing to provide an orphanage with proper playground equipment. Tom had told his parents that the orphanage only had a piece of sheet metal for a slide. Tom's family hopes to be able to provide the orphanage with playground equipment.

Tom was a respected Rangeland Management Specialist on the Humboldt-Toiyabe National Forest in Nevada. He worked with permit applicants to balance livestock needs with those of rangelands.

The fact that Tom recently requested an extension of his service time in Afghanistan speaks volumes about his courage and commitment to create a better life for a deserving people.

I have great respect for those individuals who volunteer to serve as a member of USDA's Provincial Reconstruction Teams in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Right now it is, without a doubt, one of the most dangerous regions of the world for U.S. government employees to work in, but also one of the most important areas for us to have an impact. As seen through Tom's projects, our presence is vital to improving conditions and, most importantly, reconstructing and stabilizing war-torn areas around the world. With our assistance, we enable these citizens with the tools and the knowledge to have a better life and to ultimately improve the economic conditions in their countries.

To echo Acting Secretary Conner, I ask you to join me in keeping Tom and his family in your thoughts and prayers, just as we do all of the brave men and women who are making sacrifices to protect our freedom, including all USDA volunteer Agricultural Advisors serving overseas.

Many have asked about donations in Tom's memory. Two of the family's ideas are contributions toward rebuilding the orphanage playground in Ghazni, Afghanistan, and a fellowship in his name at University of Nevada-Reno. Please send contributions to Steve, Barbara, Dan and Jon Stefani, 995 Arrowhead Lane, Auburn, California, 95602.



Michael W. Yost, Administrator



Tom Stefani with an unknown Afghan man.  
Photo contributed by Stefani family



Tom Stefani with his dog.  
Photo by Paul Flanagan



## OCRA Unveils "Country Pages" on FASTnet

FAS' Office of Country and Regional Affairs (OCRA) recently unveiled the FAS Country Pages, a central point for headquarters' and overseas' staff to post and share information and essential documents about various countries and regions. Developed by FAS staff and summer interns, the 114-country- and regional-page database on FASTnet contains Washington and FAS Post contacts, local calendars, country strategy statements, briefing papers, links to important country references, as well as other important documents for everyday use.

The Country Pages database is a work in progress and is updated and improved regularly. The migration of documents to SharePoint software will ensure that overseas staff have the same access to Country Pages" as Washington staff. This

software will also enable limited public access to the database. Discussions continue on what information to make available to the public. Please send your comments and program area documents for posting on the Country Pages to the OCRA country desk officer listed on the country page of interest.

The regional pages contain information on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), EU -27, NAFTA, APEC, ASEAN and CAFTA-DR, and links to related Country Pages. Development continues on more regional pages.

To access FAS' Country Pages, log on to the FASTnet and click on "Country, Regional and Strategic Information." Then click on "Country Pages" (on far right-hand side) and use the drop-down bar to select the country of choice.

## Team-Building Sessions Build Trust Among FAS Employees

Get energized, network with colleagues, and learn about your communication styles and their strengths by participating in FAS' team-building sessions.

Because trust is a key component in fostering team development, this team-building course can lay the groundwork for increasing trust. Participants will complete the "Insight Inventory Assessment" to gain an understanding of their communication styles, the strengths of those styles, and how to adapt to colleagues with differing styles.

Each session involves various team-building activities, including games—with prizes—to help foster camaraderie among colleagues.

Knowledge gained in the all-employee sessions can help lessen conflicts and pave the way for future program-area sessions.

Registrations and cancellations for each session close one week prior to the start of the session.

For more information, contact Lisa Twedt at (202) 720-1126.



Ross Kreamer shares business needs identified at last month's team-building session.

### Available Team-Building Sessions 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m. or 1:00 p.m.-5:00 p.m.

Dates	Location
Nov. 1	Riverdale, Md.
Nov. 6	Tunisia*
Nov. 13	Riverdale, Md.
Nov. 28	Riverdale, Md.
Nov. 30	Riverdale, Md.
Dec. 11	Tunisia*



Teambuilding -- working together to achieve results.



Joceyln Brown discusses the outcomes of the needs identified of OCRA by other program areas.

## FAS' Diversity Highlighted

Maintaining a diverse workplace is critical to the success of the Foreign Agricultural Service, an agency with a global and diverse network of employees stationed in over 90 countries around the world. Diversity enables FAS to tap into the talents of people of different backgrounds, experiences and perspectives as a means of improving the workplace environment and productivity.

Several USDA/FAS programs work to provide opportunities to those with diverse backgrounds. The following stories are examples:

### USDA 1890 National Scholars Program

During the 2006-07 academic years, FAS supported two scholars: Kendra Arrington, a senior at North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University; and Michael James, a graduate from Virginia State University. James will convert to a full-time employee this fall and work, temporarily, at the American Embassy in Nairobi. Additionally, FAS selected two new 2007 1890 scholars: Essence Hale is attending the University of Maryland-Eastern Shore and majoring in Agribusiness; and LaPortia Collins is attending Southern University and majoring in Agricultural Economics.

### Public Service Leaders Scholars

FAS selected Bryan Norrington as the Public Service Leaders' Scholar for 2007. He entered the Master of Science program at Johns Hopkins University beginning this fall.

### Summer Intern Program

The FAS Summer Intern Class of 2007 was an outstanding group of students with

diverse backgrounds. The class included students from agricultural land-grant universities, historically black colleges and universities, Hispanic-serving institutions, and students under the 'Work Force Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities' program. During the Summer Intern Award Ceremony, several interns received special recognition for their exceptional performance. Aysha Kassim, who interned in OCRA, was selected as an International Agricultural Intern, and has been assigned to work at the FAS Embassy in Paris, France, this fall.

### HACU National Internship Anniversary Gala

On July 26, 2007, Jorge Sanchez, Assistant Attaché in Beijing China, spoke at the 15th anniversary gala of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities' (HACU) National Internship Program in Washington, DC. The event commemorated 15 years of providing internships to the federal government and the private sector. Former interns and HACU alumni, who transitioned into permanent careers as a result of HACU's internship program, also attended the event. Commerce Secretary Carlos Gutierrez was the keynote speaker at the gala, and members of Congress presented remarks.

Sanchez spoke about his exciting career with FAS and about the important career opportunities offered by USDA. He also discussed the value of diversity in the U.S. Foreign Service, particularly in the field of agriculture. Sanchez reminded the audience of the important role HACU alumni play in promoting civil rights and diversity in federal agencies.

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## Budget Update

FAS is currently operating under a continuing resolution (CR), which is a temporary spending authority that allows operations to continue through Nov. 16, 2007. Program area allocations for travel, training and awards will not be developed and distributed until FAS receives full-year FY 2008 funding. Although the CR limits funding to FY 2007 levels, FAS is currently

able to fund mission-critical activities, travel and training.

The FY 2009 budget process is moving forward. The USDA budget, which includes the FAS portion, has been submitted to the Office of Management and Budget. Details will be released when the President's budget is announced in February 2008.

## Promotions, Position Changes and New Hires

### Promotions

Brenda Lawson	Branch Chief	Information Technology Division	OAO
Susan Sadocha	International Relations Advisor	Multilateral Negotiations and Agreements Division	ONA

### Lateral Moves Within FAS

Sandra Arbuthnot	From Vienna to Detail	Planning and Global Resources Staff	OFSO
Chuck Bertsch	Within ONA to Division Director	Monitoring and Evaluation Division	ONA
Jonathan Doster	Within OTP to Branch Chief	Credit Programs Division	OTP
Bob Green	Within OAO to Branch Chief	Program Management Division	OAO
Brian Grunenfelder	Within ONA to Assist. Dep. Admin.	Office of the Deputy Administrator	ONA
Jameika Henderson	Within OAO to Compliance Review Spec.	Compliance, Security & Emer. Plan. Div.	OAO
Ed Porter	From Warsaw to Detail	Office of the U.S. Trade Representative	USTR
Roger Wentzel	From the Hague to Detail	Office of the U.S. Trade Representative	USTR

### Hires from Outside FAS and Conversions from Schedule-B Appointments

Laquita Abbey	Administrative Assistant	Credit Programs Division	OTP
William Baker	Crop Assessment Analyst	Impact Analysis Division	OGA
Jared Jones, CIP*	Agricultural Economist	Industry and Sector Analysis Division	OGA
Denise McWilliams	Crop Assessment Analyst	Impact Analysis Division	OGA
Paul Trupo	International Trade Specialist	International Regulations and Standards Division	OSTA
Michael Ward, CIP*	Agricultural Economist	Industry and Sector Analysis Division	OGA
Denyse Watson	Administrative Assistant	Office of the Deputy Administrator	OSTA
Andrea Woolverton	International Economist	Multilateral Negotiations and Agreements Division	ONA

### Schedule-Bs: New Hires

Adam Branson	International Trade Spec.	Asia Division	OCRA
Kora Buettner	Program Specialist	Office Dep. Admin; Policy Coordin./Plan Staff	OCBD
Iram Garcia	Project Finance Specialist	Contracts and Agreements Division	OAO
Laura Geller	Program Assistant	Dev. Resources and Disaster Assistance Division	OCBD
Genie Glymph	Program Assistant	Dev. Resources and Disaster Assistance Division	OCBD
Christopher Jacqueline	Program Assistant	Dev. Resources and Disaster Assistance Division	OCBD
Amber Kenny	Program Assistant	Dev. Resources and Disaster Assistance Division	OCBD
Deborah Koomsa	Resource Mngt. Spec.	Contracts and Agreements Division	OAO
Matthew Murphy	Program Assistant	Dev. Resources and Disaster Assistance Division	OCBD
Peter Northrop	Financial Mngt. Analyst	Credit Programs Division	OTP
Susan Waage	Program Assistant	Dev. Resources and Disaster Assistance Division	OCBD

\*Career Internship Program

## Meet Our Newly Elected JPAC!

At the end of last month, 14 employees were elected to new positions for the Junior Professional Advisory Committee (JPAC), an organization that helps FAS' junior-level employees develop leadership skills and increase their knowledge and understanding of American agriculture through educational, social- and service-oriented activities. The organization also gives employees a chance to discuss issues and ideas that will help advance their careers and increase the caliber of FAS' work force. Congratulations to our newly elected leaders!

**PRESIDENT:** Bill Verzani is a Career Intern with the OCBP's Food Assistance Division. Before coming to FAS, Bill was a summer intern with the U.S. Department of State in the Philippines, participated in the Japanese exchange/teaching program in Japan for three years, and served as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Honduras. Verzani has an M.A. in International Economics from Fordham University and a B.A. in Spanish from the University of Nebraska.

**VICE PRESIDENT:** Michael Ward is an Agricultural Economist in OGA and handles oilseeds' issues in the Middle East, former Soviet Union and Asia. Prior to becoming a career intern, Ward served as a summer intern and international intern detailed to the Foreign Agricultural Service's Mission to the European Union in Brussels, Belgium.

**SEMINAR COORDINATOR:** Candice Bruce is a career intern with the OCBP's Policy Coordination and Planning Division. She has been with FAS full time for a year and recently completed a job rotation with ONA. Bruce is a graduate of the University of Georgia and the Florida State University. Her previous experience with FAS includes summer internships in FAS's commodity and marketing programs and in international trade policy. She previously held the position of Communications Co-Coordinator with JPAC.

**SEMINAR COORDINATOR:** Caleb O'Kray is presently working in the Program Management Division of the OAO. His past FAS experiences include internships in Washington and Beijing. He recently returned with his family to Washington, DC, after spending two years in Honolulu, Hawaii.

**SOCIAL COORDINATOR:** Evan Mangino is with OAO's Strategic Planning and Resource Development Branch. Before coming to FAS as a career intern, Mangino served as a summer intern with FAS' Grain and Feed Division and worked with subsistence farmers as a U.S. Peace Corps Volunteer in the Kingdom of Tonga. Mangino has an M.A. in International Relations from Johns Hopkins SAIS and a B.A. in International Politics and Economics from Middlebury College.

**SOCIAL COORDINATOR:** Denise N. Johnson has worked for FAS for the past seven years, and is currently working in the OAO's Contracts and Agreements Division as a Management Analyst. Johnson is pursuing an M.A. degree in Human Resources Management with an anticipated graduation date of May 2008.

**TRIP COORDINATOR:** Nicolas Rubio is an International Economist on ONA's free trade agreement country coverage team. He is a recent graduate of the University of Florida. Rubio's experience within FAS includes a summer internship in 2005 with OCBP and an internship in spring 2006 in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

**TRIP COORDINATOR:** Linston Terry is an International Economist on the WTO accessions team in ONA. Terry's portfolio includes Montenegro, Iraq, Ethiopia and EU expansion. Terry is a recent graduate of Cornell University and his experience includes work at CARE and the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE COORDINATOR:** Susan Wentzy currently works in OTP as an Agricultural Marketing Specialist. She assists cooperator groups in improving their marketing programs. Before coming to FAS, Wentzy completed an M.A. in International Studies at East Carolina University and served at U.S. embassies in Paris and Ottawa.

**COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR:** Emily Scott was born and raised in Cheyenne, Wyo. Scott attended Colorado State University and completed her undergraduate degrees in Animal Science and International Studies and her M.A. in Agricultural Economics. Washington is Emily's first experience living outside of the western part of the country, although she has prior study and work-study experiences abroad in Italy, Belgium and, most recently, Australia.

**COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR:** Jonn Slette currently works as an Agricultural Economist in OCBP's Food Assistance Division. Raised on a family farm in southern Minnesota, Slette is a veteran of the U.S. Marine Corps, and served as a Marine Security Guard in Brussels and Addis Ababa. He was also a Peace Corps Volunteer in Ecuador, where he worked in the sustainable agriculture program. Slette is an alumnus of the University of Minnesota and the Monterey Institute of International Studies.

**CO-COMMUNITY SERVICE COORDINATOR:** Helen E. Varouhas currently works for the OCBP. Varouhas received an M.S. in Conflict Analysis and Resolution. Her work experience includes interning with Consular Affairs at the American embassy in Athens, Greece; the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs at the U.S. Department of State; and the Community Mediation Program with Bellaire-Puritas Development Corporation in Cleveland, Ohio.

**TREASURER:** Jarrod Jones currently works for OGA's Industry and Sector Analysis Division. Prior to becoming a Career Intern, Jones graduated from Brigham Young University's economics program, with minors in Finance and Japanese, as well as a certificate of International Business. Jones served as an intern in 2005 with FAS' ATO in Japan.

**WEB COORDINATOR:** Tim Sheehan joined USDA as a Program Assistant for OCBP's Post Conflict and Disaster Assistance Branch in January 2007. Prior to coming to USDA, he worked in the nonprofit sector as a corporate fundraiser, grant writer and special event producer for the past eight years. He is finishing his B.S. in Organizational Leadership through Penn State's World Campus, and spends his weekends playing rugby with the Washington Renegades.

## “Change a Light, Change the World” Energy Star Campaign

As part of National Energy Awareness Month, Boyd K. Rutherford, Assistant Secretary for Administration, announced on Oct. 10 that USDA is partnering with other federal agencies in the National Energy Star’s “Change a Light, Change the World” campaign to encourage every American to replace at least one conventional light fixture or light bulb with an Energy Star qualified light.

Employees are encouraged to join him and Acting Secretary Chuck Conner in celebrating this worthwhile campaign with a pledge to change at least one light at home. You can personally take the on-line pledge at [www.energystar.gov/changealight](http://www.energystar.gov/changealight) to change lights in your home to Energy Star-qualified lights. These types of fixtures and bulbs use 75 percent less

energy than conventional bulbs, last up to ten times longer, averaging seven years, and produce about 75 percent less heat than traditional incandescent models.

Recently, more than 40 incandescent light bulbs, in and around the Secretary’s reception area, were replaced with energy efficient bulbs, saving more than 900 kilowatt hours per month, equivalent to the monthly electric consumption of a single-family home.

Switching to energy-efficient lighting is an easy step, one that each one of us can take to conserve energy resources while saving on energy bills. Saving energy and reducing the cost of energy is beneficial to all of us. Participate in Energy Star’s “Change a Light, Change the World” campaign today!

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## GovTrip Training Being Offered to FAS Employees

Training on GovTrip, the new government travel system that replaces FedTraveler, will be offered to all employees from Oct. 30 to Nov.15. The one-day classes are intended for all employees who currently use the FedTraveler system, travel for FAS, prepare travel for others or are involved with the travel approval process.

Users will learn how to create travel authorizations, make trip arrangements, estimate expenses, review accounting procedures, prepare vouchers, approve documents, and set up a delegating authority.

Registration for the class is paperless and requires electronic approval by supervisors. Classes will be held in two different training facilities simultaneously. Be sure to register for the appropriate location. Spaces are limited. If you need to cancel, you must withdraw as soon as possible using AgLearn. The

system will maintain a waiting list and refill as necessary. (To withdraw, go to your “learning plan” in AgLearn, locate the course and click the “view registration” tab. Then click the “withdraw” button and confirm. Supervisors will be notified of all no-shows.)

Questions regarding the registration process may be directed to Jackie Wilkes at (202) 720-1037 or Joyce Hernandez at (202) 720-0869. Obtain supervisory approval before registering via AgLearn.

Persons with disabilities who require accommodations to attend or participate in this training should contact Human Resources, Training and Development Branch at (202) 401-0347 (v) or (202) 205-9057 (tdd) two weeks in advance, when possible.

To register or get directions, view the official announcement on the FASTnet.

## October Benefits Day

The Human Resource Division's "Benefits Day" will be held on Tuesday, Oct. 30 from 9:30 a.m.—1:30 p.m. in room 0082-South. A representative from HRD's Employee Programs Branch will discuss civil- and foreign-service retirement benefits, the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program, flexible spending accounts, and group life, long-term care, dental and vision insurance programs.

All FFAS employees are welcome to stop by with questions. New employees are encouraged to visit with the benefits representative to discuss any questions they may have regard-

ing their new benefits or benefit entitlements. Appointments are not necessary.

Further questions may be directed to Susan Brown (202) 401-0066, Darla Hensley (202) 401-0681 or Maria Ruiz (202) 401-0685.

Employees with disabilities who require accommodations should contact Susan Brown.

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## Required Employee Training Soon Due

The following training sessions are required for all FAS employees, and can be completed through AgLearn:

**Computer Security** training is due Nov. 30, 2007.

**Ethics** training is due Dec. 3, 2007.

**Privacy Basics** training is due Dec. 31, 2007.

### Have Questions about AgLearn?

Frequently asked questions, including how to complete an SF-182 and how to verify external training, are located on the FASTnet in the AgLearn section under "get some training."

Our newsletter is only as good as the contributions we receive. Take advantage of this valuable opportunity to publicize your program area's accomplishments and newsworthy events by submitting a story for the newsletter.

Questions? Contact John Rice, FAS Public Affairs, (202) 720-9445.