



MSAOP News Notes

August 2012 Issue

Editor: Kelli Adkins

Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals (MSACOP) Annual Meeting, Starkville, MS

The Mid South Area Council for Office Professionals held its Annual Meeting, May 23 & 24, 2012 at the Mississippi State Location. The ARS Location campus is home to 3 Research Units, the Corn Host Plant Resistance, Genetics and Precision Agriculture and the Poultry Research Units.



The Council had the pleasure of Dr. Knipling's secretary, Ms. Cathy Lonaberger, joining via video conference. During the video conference she made several statements, "in order to excel you must love what you are doing," and "secretaries are an important part of the team and represent the Agency in everything that we do." When asked for her suggestions on areas that Office Professionals could improve or do differently, she answered in one word - **CORRESPONDENCE**. More emphasis needs to be placed on the Office Professional's role (and scientists) in making sure that everything leaves the office in accordance with the Correspondence Manual. Correspondence is the window to

the Agency. This form of communication is an introduction to the mission of our Agency and we want to convey a positive image. The take-home message is that we as Office Professionals must try to excel in what we do and work as a team.



Dr. Johnie Jenkins, Location Coordinator for the Mississippi State Location, was able to break away from his research for a few moments and welcomed the Council to Mississippi State. During his welcome, he stated that Office Professionals are the backbone of the agency. He also reiterated the importance of proper correspondence. He believes that if it goes out wrong it causes a negative reflection on the Agency. He believes that most people fail at not what they do but how they do it. "From an agriculture farmer standpoint – successful farmers do the same things as those not so successful, but at the right time."

Mr. Archie Tucker, MSACOP Sponsor, attended the meeting via conference call. Mr. Tucker stated

that he and Dr. King are supportive of what the office professionals do. Some of the items discussed were the Charter, committees, and new goals for 2012 - 2013.

The facility was a great setting for a productive meeting. The MSACOP would like to thank Dr. Johnie Jenkins, Linda Fulton, Gay McCain, Wendell Ladner, Stephanie Pitts, and Lisa Wiggins for their assistance and hospitality.



We were able to accomplish our goals and press forward with plans for the coming year.



Submitted by: Virginia Harmon and Brenda Aysenne

ESSENTIAL MICROSOFT EXCEL TIPS

Submitted by: Brenda Aysenne

Add these Excel tips and shortcuts to your Microsoft Excel toolbox to customize the display of your workbooks.

Display Formulas Instead of Results

An easy shortcut lets you toggle between Excel's normal display, which shows the results of the formulas in the spreadsheet, and a display mode which shows the actual formulas. The keyboard shortcut is **[Ctrl] + ~** (also called a tilde); press it once, and Excel displays formulas instead of results. Press it again, and the results appear again. Another way to display formulas is to choose the **Formulas** tab and then pick **Show Formulas** (near the right end of the Ribbon).

Bonus Tip: when you use this shortcut to display formulas in cells, select a cell with a formula, and Excel outlines the cells that are referenced in the formula.

Customize Excel's Default Workbook

If you like to keep your Excel work area clean and efficient, you've probably noticed that Excel always creates new workbooks with three sheets, when you probably only need one. Change Excel's default settings in Excel 2010 by going to the File menu and then pick Options. Choose the General category in Excel 2007, click the Office button, pick Excel Options, and choose the Popular category. For both versions, adjust the settings under "When creating new workbooks." You can specify the default font and size, whether to open in normal or print-layout view, and the number of sheets to create.

Quickly See a Sum or Average

Want to see a quick total or other calculation? Just highlight some numbers in a worksheet. Next, look at the status bar at the bottom of the window. As part of a feature sometimes called AutoCalculate, Excel displays the average of the numbers, a count of the cells, and the sum. The average, count, and sum in the status bar get updated each time you click another cell. By the way, when you use this tip, Excel ignores any cells you click that contain text or graphics instead of numbers. Although you can't automatically create fixed results from these calculations, this is an easy way to audit or review your Excel worksheets. You can also use this trick with non-adjacent cells. Just click on one cell, then hold down the **[Ctrl]** key while you click on additional cells that you want to add to the other selected values.

Get More Information from the Status Bar

Beginning with Microsoft Excel 2007, you can customize the information displayed on the status bar at the bottom of workbook window. By default, Excel's status bar displays, among other things, the Average, Count, and Sum of the selected cells (as covered in the earlier tip). Want to see more? Just right-click on the status bar for a pop-up menu to customize the display. You can add, for example, the Minimum and Maximum of the currently selected items. Also turn on or off other key modes in Excel such as **Caps Lock** and **Num Lock**.

Use these tips to start customizing your Excel workbook environment today!

by Dawn Bjork Buzbee, MCT

ARE YOU WILLING TO SHARE HELPFUL TOOLS YOU HAVE CREATED?

Submitted by: Wendy Smith

The Mid South Area Office Professionals needs your help!

As you work, have you created:

- Step-by-step instructions?
- Check-off lists?
- Templates?
- Cheat sheets?
- Flow charts?
- Spreadsheets?
- Fillable forms?



If so, are you willing to share them with other Office Professionals in the Mid South Area?

Many office professionals create "cheat sheets" so they can be sure they are accurate, neat, and ensure they are following the

correct order. They have created cheat sheets for themselves, especially when they are first learning, for GovTrip, Annual Reports, 115's, Agreements, etc.

The MSACOP is asking those who create and use any of the above helpful tools if they would be willing to share with others. Please email Virginia Harmon at Virginia.Harmon@ars.usda.gov anything you are willing to share, and she will collect them and post them on the MSACOP website and give you credit (or you may share anonymously). These cheat sheets will be available for anyone to view, use, or recreate to adapt to the needs of their unit. Please don't think your helpful hints have to be "perfect" before you share.

Why "reinvent the wheel" by creating a cheat sheet, when someone in the Mid South Area has already done it? Let's share!

OFFICE PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHT PROGRAM

This is the MSACOPs way of getting to know each other and recognizing each other! Each month a different OP will be "TAGGED" by the previous month's Highlighted OP!

Also, visit our new website - <http://www.ars.usda.gov/msa/msacop> - to get current information and to access our SOP with tons of information that will make your job easier.



F
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B

Valerie Reed began working as the Program Support Assistant with ARS 3 years ago in the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit. That research unit is part of the Southern Regional Research Center (SRRC) in New Orleans. Her supervisor is Dr. Deepak Bhatnagar. Prior to coming to ARS, Valerie served in the military. She retired with 28 years of service having been based at Headquarters at Jackson Barracks in New Orleans for the last 18 years.

Valerie enjoys white water rafting, reading, martial arts, exercising and hiking. The white water rafting has been done in North Carolina. Valerie holds a Green Belt in Karate!



M
A
R

Patricia (Pat) Hodnett began working as the Program Support Assistant with ARS in April 1997, in the Aquatic Animal Health Research Unit and her supervisor is Dr. Phillip Klesius. This Research Unit is in Auburn, AL. She attended West Georgia College in Carrollton, GA receiving a BS in Early Childhood Education & Auburn University obtaining a MS in Special Education. Pat served on the MSACOP from 1998 to 2001.

Pat is married to Bobby and they have 6 children & 8 grandchildren. The 9th grandchild arrives in August! Pat is very active in her church serving on several boards & providing assistance to the Sunday School Superintendent. Pat enjoys reading, cross stitch, ceramics and working crossword puzzles.



A
P
R

Peggy Tubertini began working in the Application and Production Technology Research Unit in Stoneville. She spent about 6 months at the Cotton Ginning Research Lab before transferring to Oxford in 2001. She is a Program Support Assistant in the Natural Products Utilization Research Unit, Oxford, MS under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Duke. She graduated from Delta State University in Cleveland, MS with a BS in Management. She has also completed coursework in supervision and HR and has received a certificate for completion of USDA Financial Management.

She enjoys spending time with her fiancé Donnie Case, 3 nieces and one nephew. Her favorite hobbies and activities include singing in the Oxford Civic Chorus and church groups, crocheting, baking specialty cakes for weddings and birthdays, reading, travelling, getting together with friends and family and attending Ole Miss and Delta State football games along with other sporting events.



M
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Y

Cathy Warren began her employment with ARS 6 years ago. She is the Program Support Assistant in the Southern Insect Research Management Unit under the supervision of Dr. Randall Luttrell. She graduated from Mississippi Delta Community College in Moorhead, MS with an AA in Business Administration. She is pursuing coursework for a BS in Business Administration with the University of Phoenix.

Cathy is married to Jimmie and they have 5 children and 2 dogs. She reports not really having a hobby; however enjoys spending time with her family. Her favorite book is "Who Moved My Cheese". Cathy makes a point to read this book at least once a year because it helps her in dealing with change. She has come to a better understanding and acceptance of a simple truth... "The race was not given to the swift or the strong, but it was given unto those that could endure it until the end". Cathy says to think of the simple truth this way; Rome was not built in day, BUT it was built!

Go to the next page for June and July's OP.

OFFICE PROFESSIONAL HIGHLIGHT PROGRAM continued



Alice Redditt began her employment with ARS 22 years ago! She is the Program Support Assistant in the Crop Production Systems Research Unit under the supervision of Dr. Krishna Reddy. Alice graduated from Leland High School and Memphis School of Commerce with a certificate in Office Automation. She also holds a certificate in MACE Seasonal Farmworker Program.

Alice has one daughter, Albane' Fachon. She loves reading her Bible, singing uplifting songs of praise and is quite the shopper claiming to shop 'til she drops, especially for shoes! She is involved in ministering to youth and volunteers to work with the elderly. She is certified in CPR and has a Certificate in Christian Education. She has been named Woman of the Year at Greater St. Matthew Church & has been twice named Parent of the Year at Leland School District, 2003 and 2010!

Who knew Alice's nickname is "Faye", not me but now I do 😊



Janice Boyd began her secretarial career at Delgado Community College as the secretary for the Dean of Community Projects. After being at the college for 14 years, Janice began her employment with the Federal Government and has been with here for 25 years! She started as a Stenographer with the Treasury Department, U.S. Savings Bonds Division, and then moved to USDA as an Accounting Technician in the Fresh Products Branch. Janice is currently the Program Support Assistant in the Commodity Utilization Research Unit at the Southern Regional Research Center in New Orleans, LA. She works under the supervision of Dr. Thomas Klason. Janice graduated from Delgado Community College with an Associate of Science Degree in Secretarial Studies.

Janice has been married to Alvarez for 41 years! They have two sons, Courteney and Alvarez, III. She also has a granddaughter, Ariel. Janice says her hobby is reading. She also enjoys going to the local festivals in the New Orleans area and spending time at the local farmer's market getting homegrown produce. In addition, Janice spends time at the park with her granddaughter and enjoying good times with family and friends!

Tag...you're it!

TIPS FOR REDUCING STRESS

Submitted by: Tammy Dorman

We may not be able to control stress, but we can manage it. Here are some stress-management tips that may help you feel better - and less stressed - every day.

- Accept that there are events that you cannot control.
- Keep a positive attitude; rather than defaulting to negatives ("Nothing goes right for me," or "Bad things always happen to me"), give yourself positive messages ("I'm doing my best," or "I'll ask for help").
- Halt stress in its tracks; if you feel overwhelmed, take a walk or drive in the slow lane to avoid getting angry at other drivers.
- Manage your time. Give yourself time to get things done; set your watch so you have more time to prepare for an event.
- Do things that are pleasurable, like reading or gardening.
- Take 15-20 minutes every day to sit quietly and reflect. Learn and practice relaxation techniques like yoga or deep breathing.
- [Exercise](#) regularly by bicycling, walking, hiking, jogging, or working out at the gym. Your body can fight stress better when it is fit.
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs. And don't smoke.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Get enough rest and [sleep](#). Your body needs time to recover from stressful events.
- Seek out social support.

Source: American Heart Association



MID SOUTH AREA COUNCIL OF OFFICE PROFESSIONALS

The **Mission** of the MSACOP is to provide a resource for the Area Director's Office and all levels of management for matters relating to office professionals.

The **Goal** of the Council is to enhance office professions through training, networking, mentoring, and recognition of office support employees. It is the desire of the Council to work with all levels of management to assure that office support staff are highly skilled and motivated professionals and to assure that the clerical and administrative needs of the Mid South Area and ARS are met.



Back Row (L) : Virginia Harmon, Ann McGee, Kelli Adkins, Drusilla Fratesi, Donna Signa, Wendy Smith
Front row (L) : Brenda Aysenne, Linda Fulton, Valerie Reed, Tammy Dorman

*Have you been to the website lately??
Below are the SOP's that are available to use as a resource.*

Agreements **Correspondence**

Files, Retention and Disposition **ARMPS**

US Bank **CATS** **Personnel** **Property** **RPES** **Travel**

We're on the web:

<http://www.ars.usda.gov/msa/msacop>

SIMPLIFIED CATS SOP NOW AVAILABLE ON MSACOP WEBSITE

Is the 388 page online CATS User Manual too lengthy for you? Do you prefer a condensed version with screen shots? If so, look at the MSACOP website under CATS Standard Operating Procedure > Financial – Cats II (Desk Reference) for the condensed manual.

http://www.ars.usda.gov/SP2UserFiles/ad_hoc/64000000MidSouthAreaOfficeProfessionals/CATS%20manual%20-%20FINAL%20Mar%202012.pdf

The SOP will be updated periodically, so if you wish to make changes or requests, please email Drusilla.Fratesi@ars.usda.gov with your comments.

“Power Phrases: The Perfect Words to Say it Right & Get the Results You Want”

From the book by Meryl Runion

Submitted by: Wendy Smith

PowerPhrases Avoid Being Mean

Are you being mean in your choice of words? Don't be so sure that you're not. Here are some communication tactics to watch out for. PowerPhrases (1) avoid sarcasm, (2) overkill, (3) assumption of guilt and (4) an attempt to overpower the other person with wit.

1. PowerPhrases Avoid Sarcasm.

Look who decided to show up...

Is NOT a PowerPhrase.

When you come late it throws my schedule off for the rest of the day. How can I help you get here on time?

Is a PowerPhrase.

Sarcasm is indirect. PowerPhrases are direct. Sarcasm mocks the listener. PowerPhrases honor the listener. One definition of sarcasm is “the tearing of flesh.” Is that what you really want to do?

2. PowerPhrases Avoid Overkill.

A PowerPhrase is as strong as it needs to be and no stronger. A PowerPhrase does not shoot a cannon when a BB would work. For example:

Absolutely not!

Can be a PowerPhrase, but only when a gentler version such as:

Not this time. Thanks for asking.

Does not work.

I recently had a conversation with a woman who blasted a coworker for speaking too loudly on a personal conversation. It didn't occur to her to simply ask her to speak more softly. Use the appropriate amount of power.

3. PowerPhrases Avoid Assumption of Guilt.

PowerPhrases assume positive intentions unless it is proven otherwise. Don't be too quick to judge! The woman whose coworker was speaking loudly assumed her coworker was aware of how disturbing it was, and simply didn't care. She was incorrect in her assumption.

Avoid the accusative voice of “you” language.

Say:

I am getting angry.

Rather than:

You make me so mad!

Say:

I was promised a commission structure six months ago and I still do not have one. If this is not resolved I will...

Rather than:

You lied!

4. PowerPhrases Avoid Attempts to Outsmart the Other Person With Wit.

This can be hard! If the other person is behaving in an offensive way, it is tempting to attempt to outsmart them. Avoid temptation.

If the boss asks “What kind of idiot are you?” you might be tempted to say:

The same kind of idiot as the person who hired me.

You tell me. You are the obvious expert.

Are they clever responses? Yes.

Are they PowerPhrases? No.

People who use PowerPhrases speak to obtain powerful results. Instead, use the PowerPhrase:

When you ask, “What kind of idiot are you?” I find it insulting. I prefer you offer solutions when I make mistakes.

Power Tip- Speak up EARLY!

When you express yourself as soon as things become a problem, you minimize the likelihood that you will overreact.

Kris and Carol were on a team in a job that required them to set up displays. Kris thought Carol always undid any display she arranged and she resented it. Carol didn't know there was a problem until the end of a week of working together when she overheard an indirect remark Kris made to someone else. She was surprised to discover what a villain she had become!

Because Kris hadn't spoken up, what began as a few rearranged display items became an issue of power and control. We have all done this. Speak up early!

“What is a friend? A single soul, dwelling in two bodies” - Aristotle

Submitted by: Valerie Reed



True friendship is perhaps the only relation that survives the trials and tribulations of time and remains unconditional. A unique blend of affection, loyalty, love, respect, trust and loads of fun is perhaps what describes the true meaning of friendship. Similar interests, mutual respect and strong attachment with each other are what friends share between each other. These are just the general traits of a friendship. To experience what is friendship, one must have true friends, who are indeed rare treasure.

Friendship is a feeling of comfort and emotional safety with a person. It is when you do not have to weigh your thoughts and measure words, before keeping it forth before your friend. It is when someone knows you better than yourself and assures to be on your side in every emotional crisis. Friendship is much beyond roaming together and sharing good moments, it is when someone comes to rescue you from

the worst time of life. Friendship is eternal.

Different people have different definitions of friendship. For some, it is the trust in an individual that he/ she won't hurt you. For others, it is unconditional love. There are some who feel that friendship is companionship. People form definitions based on the kind of experiences they have had. This is one relation that has been nurtured since time immemorial. There are famous stories about friends in mythologies of different religions all over the world. They say a person who has found a faithful friend has found a priceless treasure.

Psychologically speaking, friendship may be defined as 'a dynamic, mutual relationship between two individuals. As children become friends, they negotiate boundaries within which both partners function'. This helps them to function like healthy individuals in life as they learn to draw a line as and when needed in a relation. This greatly helps in the emotional development of an individual. How-

ever, any relation needs constant nurturing and development from all the people that are involved in one. Friendship cannot survive if one person makes all the effort to sustain it without any mutual recognition from others.

Since friendship starts the moment a child starts socializing, the kind of friends that the child chooses should be taken care of till the time he/she learns to differentiate between right and wrong. Wrong peers or lack of socializing can lead to severe psychological traumas and disorders, finally leading to social maladjustment. The correct peer group is essential for the development of the personality of a child. Both positive and negative experiences refine the personality of the individual. Thus it is essential that you find friends who are compatible with you on an emotional and psychological basis.

<http://festivals.iloveindia.com>

From the desk of Dr. Edgar King:

Congratulations!



I am pleased to announce the winner of the 2012 Mid South Area Office Professional of the Year Award is Tammy Dorman, Program Support Assistant for the Soil Dynamics Research Unit, Auburn, AL.

Ms. Dorman was nominated for her exemplary support of the unit members, her efforts to implement new procedures to make the office efficient and effective, and her accommodating and helpful manner. Ms. Dorman was cited as having a real commitment to providing administrative services in a manner that is conducive to accomplishing research goals; her efforts and actions increase the productivity and success of the National Soil Dynamics Laboratory.

Please join me in congratulating Ms. Dorman.





Recipe Corner

Do you have a great dish you would like to share?
This is your corner...
your recipe will be printed in the next News Notes.

Submit your recipe(s) to
kelli.adkins@ars.usda.gov



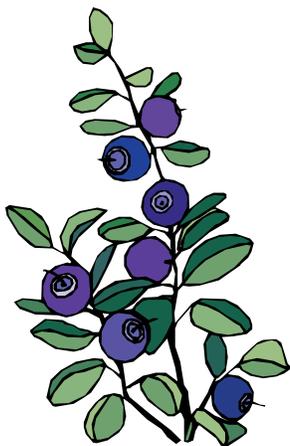
HONEY ICE CREAM (From Southern Living)

- 2 quarts half-and-half (I use fat-free half-and-half)
- 1 ½ cups honey
- 2 Tablespoons vanilla extract



Stir together ingredients, and pour into freezer container of a 1-gallon electric freezer. Freeze according to manufacturer's instructions.

BLUEBERRY CREAM CHEESE POUND CAKE



- 8-ounce cream cheese, softened
- 1 ½ cups butter, softened
- 3 cups sugar
- 6 eggs
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 cup fresh or frozen blueberries

Cream together the cream cheese, butter, and sugar. Add the eggs, one at a time, beating well after each egg. Add the flour, one cup at a time, beating well after each cup. Add vanilla, beat well. Fold in blueberries. Pour into a greased and floured Bundt cake pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 30 minutes, and then turn the temperature down to 325 degrees and bake for another 55 minutes.

STRAWBERRY GOOEY CAKE

- 1 (18.5 ounce) package strawberry cake mix
- ½ cup butter, softened
- 4 large eggs, divided
- 1 (8-ounce) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 (16-ounce) box confectioners' sugar (I only use ¾ of the box)
- ¾ cup chopped fresh strawberries



Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease a 13x9-inch baking pan. In a large bowl, combine cake mix, butter and 1 egg. Press mixture into bottom of prepared pan. In a separate bowl, beat cream cheese and 3 eggs with an electric mixer until smooth. Gradually beat in confectioners' sugar. Stir in strawberries. Spoon mixture over cake mixture and bake for 35 to 40 minutes, or until the center is set. Cool completely and cut into squares.