



On the Bayou

MARCH 2019



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Message from the Director

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Spring Forward

March has certainly come “in like a lion” with cold and rainy days. And as the proverb goes, it should go “out like a lamb”, good and calm, and by the end of the month, spring has begun.

In keeping with the delight of spring, we finally have the budget for the rest of this fiscal year, with our final allocations coming soon. These numbers should be pretty much like last year, with neither an increase nor a decrease. However, we will get a 1.4% pay raise, given retroactively to the beginning of the year. It should be appearing in pay checks as soon as OPM can put together the new pay tables.

Mid-year evaluations will soon be upon us, and need to be completed around mid-April, requiring from each one of us a one-page document, in bullet form, of our accomplishments so far. Some adjustments to performance standards are a possibility due to the shutdown; but those issues are still under discussion at the HQ level.

Spring represents new life, when the weather becomes warmer, leaves and plants start to grow again and flowers appear. Let us use nature’s example to move forward with our research programs and become more energetic and active in our work. As with Earth Day, we will renew our commitment to preserve and sustain nature, through agricultural research.



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Events and Observances

African American History Month Celebration

Theme: Black Migration

Submitted by: Chair: Mia Schexnayder, Co-Chair: Dawn Reed

Thursday, February 2st— featured Brunch catered by Neyow’s Creole Café with **Guest Speaker Austin Badon** – First City Clerk of New Orleans Parish Civil District Court.

In keeping with the theme of this year’s celebration, Mr. Badon talked about the six million African Americans that migrated from the rural Southern United States to the urban Northeast, Midwest, and West from about 1916 to 1970. They were seeking a better life with improved economic opportunities, and escape from Jim Crow racial indignities. A reversal of the migration began in the 1970’s, with blacks moving back to the south, having a direct positive affect on New Orleans. Each year the population of African Americans in N.O. is increasing.

Thursday, February 28th— Luncheon was catered by Neyow’s Creole Café with the showing of the film entitled *Making a Way Out of No Way (1897-1940)*. Taking its inspiration from a popular African American expression, Making a Way Out of No Way, the film explores themes of creativity, and resilience through stories of African Americans who challenged racial oppression and discrimination and created ways out of “no way.” The film portrayed the Jim Crow era, when African Americans struggled to build their own worlds within the harsh, narrow confines of segregation. At the turn of the 20th century, a steady stream of African Americans left the South, fleeing the threat of racial violence and searching for opportunities in the North and West. Leaders like Ida B. Wells, W.E.B. Du Bois, Booker T. Washington and Marcus Garvey organized, offering different strategies to further black empowerment and equality. The ascendance of black arts and culture showed that a community with a strong identity and sense of pride was taking hold in spite of Jim Crow. "The Harlem Renaissance" redefined how America saw African Americans - and how African Americans saw themselves.



Events and Observances (cont.)

Greater New Orleans Science & Engineering Fair

Submitted by: **Thomas Klasson**

The 2019 Greater New Orleans Science & Engineering Fair was held on February 18-21 at Tulane University. SRRC staff, **H.N. Cheng** (CU), **Jade Smith** (CCU), **Michael Easson** (CCU), and **David Fang** (CFB), participated as volunteer judges to help select ARS award recipients.

The SRRC judges scoured 151 project posters in the Junior Division (6th-8th grade) and 126 project posters in the Senior Division (9th-12th grade) for the best project in each of these categories. ARS sponsors two awards, one in the Junior Division and one in the Senior Division. A plaque and VIP visit to SRRC was awarded to the best project demonstrating improvement in utilization or safety of agricultural products in each of the Senior and Junior Divisions.

SRRC Visitors

Submitted by: **Deepak Bhatnagar**

It will be SRRC's pleasure to host the following for a visit on **March 11th**:

- **Jeffrey Silverstein**
Deputy Administrator
Animal Production and Protection
- **Caird E Rexroad III**
National Program Leader
Animal Production and Protection

They will be discussing program issues all day at SRRC. We will also have an All Staff Meeting at 10:30 am that day to hear from them about happenings in ARS.



Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

Submitted by: **Darlene Downey**

Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day will be held on **Monday, April 22nd** this year for children that are 9 - 15 years old. Although the national day is Thursday, April 25th, there is a good possibility many students may be taking tests at that time. The 25th also happens to be the first day of Jazz Fest, which some SRRC employees attend. Many, if not all of the schools in the area are on Easter/Spring break on the 22nd, the day after Easter Sunday which should allow many students who wish to attend to have that opportunity.

Participation and lunch forms should be returned as soon as possible so the committee has the time to plan for the event. We hope to have some new and fun demonstrations this year, as well as some that the kids always enjoy. Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day is always a favorite event for staff, parents, and children.

Scientific Presentations and Meetings

Submitted by: Terri von Hoven

Mar 7 to 11	World Aquaculture Conference	New Orleans, LA
Mar 13 to 16	International Conference on Materials Science and Engineering	Brasov, Romania
Mar 11 to 13	Plant Biology and Biotechnology Conference	Singapore
Mar 24 to 26	3 rd Agriculture and Climate Change Conference	Budapest, Hungary
Mar 31 to Apr 4	American Chemical Society National Meeting & Expo	Orlando, FL

ARS Research Chemist **Dr. Matthew Gilbert** of the Food and Feed Safety Research Unit will present a poster entitled “The impact of environmental stresses on aflatoxin production by *Aspergillus flavus* during maize colonization” at the 3rd Agriculture and Climate Change Conference to be held in Budapest, Hungary on March 24-26.

Dr. Casey Grimm gave a practice talk on March 7th entitled:

A Pass/Fail Test for Determining Off-Flavor in Catfish

To be presented at the World Aquaculture Society Meeting here in New Orleans (March 7-11).

Recognition

Dr. Judson V. Edwards received the *2019 ARS Technology Transfer Award* for “Development of a cotton-based wound dressing resulting in a commercial product used for battlefield and emergency response applications to trauma.”



Submitted by: Shelia Parker



According to the latest flu surveillance data, some states are experiencing its highest flu rate this season.

While flu affects all age groups, most cases of flu-like illness are currently being reported in those under 24 years old.

Nationally, the number of deaths from flu in children under 18 has risen to 28 as of February 2, including one Mississippi pediatric flu death in December.

Help Prevent the Spread of the Flu by:

- Getting Vaccinated: It's not too late to get vaccinated. Vaccination is the best way to decrease the risk of influenza infection and the best way to reduce the risk of complications from influenza.
- Staying home when sick.
- Washing hands frequently with soap and water, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- Covering the nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (a shirt sleeve or elbow if no tissue is available) and throw tissue in the trash after use.
- Routinely cleaning surfaces touched with disinfectant. (e.g. phone, door knobs, etc.)

A representative from Walgreens typically comes to the Center in September to administer flu shots. And local pharmacies offer up to 11 different types of vaccines including the flu shot.

Biosafety Training

Submitted by: Matthew Gilbert

SRRC staff who work with biological material (microorganisms, recombinant DNA, biological toxins and blood products) were asked to attend a demonstration of spill clean-up principles and procedures as part of ARS Biosafety and Safety Awareness Month. Two sessions were offered on Feb. 28 and March 8 with over 35 employees attending.

The demonstration covered:

- how to assess risk and determine the proper elevation of response
- how to remove broken glassware
- effective decontamination of the affected area
- the use of proper protective equipment

Finally, the demonstration emphasized that each staff member needs to be trained by their supervisor in the procedures and protocols that are specific for their laboratory, which are detailed and posted in each lab's Biological SOP's.

Shannon Beltz selected as the SRRC Safety and Occupational Health Specialist

Submitted by: Dr. Deepak Bhatnagar

I am pleased to announce that someone well known to us, Shannon Beltz has been selected as the SRRC Safety and Occupational Health Specialist. She has accepted the position and will assume her duties beginning March 17th, 2019.



Shannon Beltz is a graduate of LSU, with a degree in Environmental Management Systems. She began her career with ARS Southern Regional Research Center in 1997, as a Biological Science Technician in the Food & Feed Safety Research Unit. She has co-authored 16 manuscripts from her work on the Control of Aflatoxin Contamination, and from collaborating with colleagues in other Research Units. She is the Curator of the SRRC Fungal Culture Collection.

Over the years, Shannon has been involved with location safety by being a Work Zone Safety Inspector and a member of the PERT team for the last 12 years. She is also the primary point of contact for the organization and management of all gas cylinders at SRRC. This past year, Shannon performed a SET detail in the SRRC Safety Office in order to help prepare our facility for our first BISHOP Assessment. She has continued most roles related to the Safety Office since the BISHOP inspection, including all required reporting (OSH, EMS, hazardous waste, energy, budget, projects), employee training, and managing all Safety-related policy and programs.

Shannon is the Chair of the Women's History Month Committee and the Public Relations & Outreach Committee that offers tours to visitors of SRRC. She has also performed administrative duties such as being a Purchase Card holder, SRRC Combined Federal Campaign Chairperson, and appointed to deliver the mandatory Workplace Violence Prevention Training to the entire facility.

She routinely volunteers to help with many aspects of Location Support by serving on the following committees: Recycling, Cultural Diversity Day Committee, Employee Engagement and the Take Your Sons and Daughters to Work Day.

Shannon is committed to the mission of ARS and the success of its research projects. She believes that maintaining a strong, positive culture of safety is in line with the Agency's mission and can help all of its employees reach their career and research goals.

Please join me in welcoming Shannon to her new assignment. She will definitely need everyone's cooperation and support as she embarks on making SRRC the safest it can be for our staff. We have full confidence that she will achieve that goal based on her excellent work during the BISHOP review.

Human Resources Corner (cont.)

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Recognize this parade reveler? It's our own Deepak Bhatnagar, riding in Orpheus!



New Employees

Submitted by: Janell Becker

Please welcome two new employees to SRRC:

Ms. Jamie Howell is the new Program Support Assistant working with Dr. Thomas Klasson in the Commodity Utilization Research Unit. Jamie grew up in El Paso, Texas, is a Navy veteran, and received her Bachelor of Fine Arts from Texas Tech.



Mr. James Trout is a Physical Science Technician in the Commodity Utilization Research Unit. James is from San Luis Obispo, California, served as a diver in the Navy, and will soon graduate from Tulane University. James will be working with Dr. Isabel Lima.



Death of Former Employee

On February 7, 2019, **John V. Beninate**, 94, died peacefully at home surrounded by his children and family. Born on January 17, 1925, John was a lifelong resident of New Orleans. He earned a BS in Chemistry at LSU, played trumpet with LSU band and retired from the US Department of Agriculture Southern Research Lab as a research Chemist where he received accolades for numerous patents. He is remembered by those who loved him as a man who was devoted to his family, loyal, caring and very giving. His honesty, moral standards and values were a shining example to all the lives he touched. He will be greatly missed by his family and friends.



Human Resources Corner (cont.)

SRRC Human Relations Committee

Submitted by: H.N. Cheng

SRRC has an excellent tradition of organizing monthly special emphasis events for many years. These are enjoyable, educational, and often inspirational.

The list of observances (and committee chairs/co-chairs) is listed below:

January – Dr. M.L. King and Day of Service, Janell Becker/Melissa Santos

February—African-American Heritage, Dawn Reed/Mia Schexnayder

March—Women’s History, Shannon Beltz/Crista Madison

April—Take our sons/daughters to work, Chris Mattison/Darlene Downey

May—Asian/Pacific Heritage, H.N. Cheng/Hsiaopo Cheng

June—Caribbean Heritage, Michael A. Watson/Jeanne Lea

July—LGBTQA, Geromy Moore/Stephanie Gross

August—Cultural Diversity Day, Elena Graves/Jeannine Moraitis

September—Hispanic Heritage, David Ambrogio/Isabel Lima

October—Disability Awareness, Vince Edwards/Shawndrika Reed

November—Native American Heritage, Kelley Williams/Mary Lovisa



Please volunteer for the committees you would like to participate in by contacting H. N. Cheng.

March Events in New Orleans/Louisiana

Submitted by: Terri von Hoven

Independence Sicilian Heritage Festival	Independence, Louisiana	March 8-10, 2019
Black Heritage Festival	Lake Charles, Louisiana	March 8-10, 2019
Agave Week	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 10-17, 2019
Sun Belt Basketball	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 13-17, 2019
Top Taco Festival	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 14, 2019
Celtic Bayou Festival	Lafayette, Louisiana	March 15-16, 2019
Amite Oyster Festival	Amite, Louisiana	March 15-17, 2019
Louisiana Redbud Festival	Vivian, Louisiana	March 16, 2019
Irish Channel Parade	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 16, 2019
Mardi Gras Indians Super Sunday	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 17, 2019
New Orleans Bourbon Festival	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 20, 2019
Wednesdays at the Square Concerts	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 20, 2019
Louisiana Crawfish Festival	Chalmette, Louisiana	March 21-24, 2019
BUKU Music and Arts Festival	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 22-23, 2019
Louisiana Derby	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 23, 2019
Lafitte Greenway Hike Fest	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 23, 2019
New Orleans Entrepreneur Week	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 25-29, 2019
Tennessee Williams Literary Festival	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 27-31, 2019
Hogs for the Cause	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 29-30, 2019
Congo Square New World Rhythms Festival	New Orleans, Louisiana	March 30-31, 2019

Parade Throws

Submitted by: David Ambrogio

Do you have any excess Mardi Gras throws? Wondering how to get rid of all the stuff you get from parades? Donate! SRRC employees are a generous bunch! A box has been set up in the cafeteria to collect your bounty for recycling or reuse.



It's good for the environment, good for SRRC, and good for you. It is also good for ArcGNO, an organization that provides various services for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. ArcGNO has created wage-earning jobs for individuals with intellectual disabilities by collecting, sorting, & repackaging Mardi Gras throws.

If someone has a large heavy bag of beads/etc., contact David (x 401) for help picking them up from their office/car.

Recycle dates: March 14 and 21



Do Not Toss Registry

In cooperation with local publishers, Orleans Parish now regulates the unwanted tossing of unsolicited printed matter, which often arrives as a “free” newspaper in red, white, or clear bags tossed on residential lawns.

To stop delivery of unwanted newspapers, please see <https://nola.gov/do-not-toss/>

Earth Day 2019

Submitted by: Cathy Mason

SRRC will celebrate Earth Day on Tuesday, **April 30**.

We will have our traditional Plant and Book Swap on that day, so please start preparing to bring in items to share!

Submitted by: Suhad Wojkowski

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