

# MINNESOTA FWP NEWS

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## Area Federal Women's Program (FWP) Reps

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## Federal Women's Program Mission:

*The mission of the Minnesota Federal Women's Program is to provide information on NRCS employment and career advancement opportunities to professional series, discuss issues and barriers women/men are facing and to devise solutions to these barriers.*

## Goals:

- ❖ Increase women numbers in the professional series of employment in MN NRCS through recruitment and retention.
- ❖ Work toward increasing concentrations of women in multiple-interval occupations by promoting cross training, employee development, and other opportunities.
- ❖ Promote and encourage the participation of NRCS-sponsored civil rights and special emphasis programs and activities. FWP is responsible for Women's History Month, Diversity Day, and Women's Equality Day. All programs and activities are available to both women and men.

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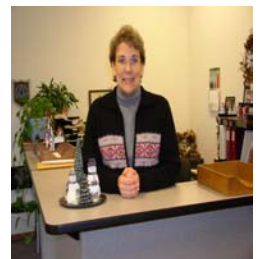
## DID YOU KNOW ...

In FY2003, approximately 30% (98 females out of 320 employees) of MN NRCS workforce is comprised of women. Only 36 females out of 193 employees (18%) are in the professional series 457-Soil Conservationist (GS 9 or above) category.

*FY2004 Affirmative Employment Program Report*

## Federal Women's Program Manager: Sandra Jerzak, Area 5 Administrative Coordinator - Marshall

In 1987, began with SCS as a Soil Conservationist student trainee and worked in the following field offices: Dodge Center and Twin Valley. I graduated in December 1988 with a Soil Science major from UW-Stevens Point and was stationed in Ivanhoe as a Soil Conservationist. I made the jump to District Conservationist in 1991 at the Glencoe field office. I was there for 9 years. The demands from work and home with four small children were starting to take a toll and something had to give. I transferred to the AAC position in the Marshall AO that would allow a manageable and flexible work environment for me. The technical field experience was a great asset to my current position knowing the terminology and what the field offices needs are.



## Alternate and Area 6 Representative: Kamara Holmes, Soil Scientist - St. Peter

Even though coming from a farm family in Eastern Arkansas, I had strong ambitions of taking a career path away from Agriculture. But when I was notified being a recipient of the USDA-Soil Science Scholarship, I knew my life and career path would take a few interesting twist and turns. The scholarship was aimed toward recruiting women and minorities into the soil science area. I worked as a soil scientist student trainee in Camden, Arkansas in 2000 and in several locations throughout Missouri in 2001, and in St. Peter, Minnesota in 2002. I received my BS degree in Agronomy from the University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff in May 2003. After graduation, I was offered a Soil Scientist position in Marshall, Minnesota in 2003. In 2004, I transferred across to the St. Peter Area Office. Even though I was very fond of traveling and visiting new places, I knew the transition of moving from Arkansas to Minnesota would take just a little bit of adjusting.





**State Office Representative: Leah Duzy** (formerly Moore), Agricultural Economist & CSP Coordinator – St. Paul  
I am originally from Resaca, Georgia and have been with NRCS in Minnesota since August, 2002. I attended the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee, where I received a Bachelor's Degree in Economics. After graduating from the University of the South, I received my Master's Degree in Agricultural Economics from Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana.



**Area 1 Representative: Cari Rebischke**, District Conservationist – Red Lake Falls  
Since June 2003 I have been the District Conservationist in the Red Lake Falls field office. I started with NRCS in the Summer of 1999 working in the Litchfield field office as a Soil Conservationist Trainee. After graduation from the University of Minnesota with a degree in Natural Resources, I've worked in the Worthington field office and the Crookston field office.



**Area 2 Representative: Stanley Musielewicz**, District Conservationist – Little Falls  
I have been working in the field of conservation for almost 29 years, 27 of those years have been with SCS/NRCS. My career started in 1976 when I became the SWCD Conservation Technician in the Breckenridge Field Office. In 1978, I was hired by SCS and became the Soil Conservation Technician in Zumbrota, Goodhue County for 10 years. I then converted to a Soil Conservationist and worked in Wabasha County and Winona County before becoming the DC in Morris, MN. I transferred to Little Falls just over a year ago. I really enjoy working in Morrison County as it is where I grew up and graduated from high school. I attended a two year Natural Resources Technology program at Brainerd Area Vocational School before being hired by the Wilkin SWCD. Since that time, while continuing to work fulltime, I have earned nearly enough college credits from River Falls Wisconsin and the U of M for a degree. I was converted to a Soil Conservationist when I had enough college credits and experience to meet the qualifications.



**Area 3 Representative: Mary Monte**, District Conservationist – Cambridge  
I graduated from college in 1993 from Arizona State University. I worked as an Earth Team Volunteer for NRCS while attending college. After graduation, my family moved back to MN after spending 17 years in the desert. I started my career with NRCS as a WAE working on the Anoka Sand Plain Project for almost three years. This position was mainly field work such as soil sampling, pest scouting, measuring soil moisture, doing manure calibrations, tissue analysis, and irrigation management. I did learn a lot about crop growth stages, pest management, and nutrients. There was nothing like spending my days outside. My first location as a Soil Conservationist was in 1997 in Morrison County. I survived my first CRP General Signup just months after I started with over 350 applications. My second location was in Wright County. I have been a District Conservationist in Mille Lacs and Isanti County.



**Area 4 Representative: Michele Wohlers**, District Conservationist - Farmington  
Soils have been on my list of interests since 1982 when I worked on a farm tiling crew. My interest in soils came from looking at most beautiful hydric soils profiles while running a backhoe, digging T's off the main line to set in the ditching machine. Yes, I drained wetlands pre-1985! I spoke with numerous SCS and SWCD staff about where they went to school and why. I chose UW Stevens Point, I graduated with a Resource Management major and a Soil Science minor. I was hired as a student trainee in May 1987 by the SCS. My first training location was in my home County of Wabasha. My second training location was in Warren, MN. Since then, I have worked as a Soil Conservationist in Olmstead and Douglas counties. I was then promoted to a District Conservationist position in Chisago County where I served 13 years. I am now the DC in Dakota County since May '04. I previously served as FWP rep for Area 3.



**Area 5 Representative: Janine Milbradt**, Soil Scientist - Marshall  
I am a soil scientist in the Area 5 Field Support Office. I am a recent graduate of the University of Minnesota: College of Agriculture, Food, and Environmental Science. I have dual major from the University of Minnesota in Crops, Soils, and Pest Management along with Agricultural Industries and Marketing with a minor in Technical Communication. I also have a dual Associates degree from Southwest Minnesota State University in Accounting and Business Administration. In addition, I am a part-time graduate student at Southwest Minnesota State University working on a Masters of Science in Management. I was introduced to NRCS in a way that is pretty unique. At the age of 17, I was enrolled in a program for high school students of low-income families to work for minimum wage. I remember looking at the list of places to work and I choose the Natural Resources Conservation Service. Little did I know that this agency would shape my life in such a drastic way. After a summer working for \$5.15 per hour, I was able to continue my job part-time during the academic year as a WAE. I was also able to get an internship under the SCEP program and after graduating from the University of Minnesota, I was able to get my current position as a soil scientist.



**Area 7 Representative: Sue Glende**- District Conservationist – Preston  
I grew up on a small farm near Morris, MN. My career with the NRCS agency has brought me too many different locations. I started as a student Soil Conservationist trainee in Ortonville, MN. I then graduated from NDSU and became a permanent Soil Conservationist in Winona County. I then changed series and was a Technician in Wabasha County. That change gave me more experience in application of conservation practices. I was then accepted for the District Conservationist position in Mower County. I then applied for the Preston District Conservationist position that I currently have. I have been with the agency for 17 years.

## Battling Breast Cancer

by Chris Papenfuss



Hi, my name is Chris Papenfuss and this is the story of my journey through cancer.

I was 31 years old when I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I found the lump myself. I wasn't one to do the self checks that all women are suppose to do; I just happened upon it. In March of 2004, I went to my gynecologist to have it checked out. She told me that it felt like it was a part of my breast and it was nothing to worry about. I was relieved but in the back of my mind I still was concerned. By July, I decided to get a second opinion. I went to get the second opinion on a Monday. By Tuesday, I was scheduled for an ultrasound, mammogram, and biopsy. By Thursday, I was told it was cancer. Friday, I was sent to the Mayo clinic for an MRI.

*In five days my life had made a huge turn around.*

Next I met with a surgeon, radial oncologist, and a medical oncologist, all of which was overwhelming. There were so many options thrown at me as to what I could do. I didn't realize that there were options about what treatment you want to do. The first decision I had to make was what kind of surgery to have: lumpectomy, mastectomy, or double mastectomy. Then there was whether or not to do chemotherapy or radiation or both. I was told that if I chose both, my chances of survival would increase. All of these decisions needed to be made in about a week. There's no time to waste when you have cancer.

I decided to have a lumpectomy with chemotherapy and radiation. On August 9<sup>th</sup>, I had surgery to remove the lump and also had a sentinel node biopsy. This is when a few lymph nodes under my arm were removed to see if they contained cancer. Surgery went well. I was able to go home the next day.

The results of the sentinel nodes came back within a week and I found out that one node was positive with cancer as well. That meant that chemotherapy was strongly recommended. With the cancer being in the lymph nodes, it could have spread to other parts of my body. Chemotherapy is a way to try to kill those cells that are in other parts of the body.

My first round of chemotherapy started in September. I was given two different kinds of medicine. All of these are given to me intravenously through a port that was inserted under my skin in my chest during surgery. It is safer to administer chemo through a port than it is to have an IV started every time. The chemo drugs are so powerful that they will eat away flesh if it were to leak into the skin. Adriamycin and Cyclophosphamide were the first chemo drugs I was given. I went in every three weeks to have these given to me. I needed 4 treatments. Each treatment seemed to make me more nauseated and tired each time. I was nauseated for 6 days after each treatment. I also needed to be careful not to be around people that were sick since the chemotherapy killed most of my white blood cells. Those cells are the ones that affect your immune system. If I were to get sick, I could end up in the hospital because my body wouldn't be able to fight off the sickness. I had my last of the AC chemo the first part of December. By the end of December, I started on the next chemotherapy treatment, Taxol. This is given to me once a week. I have 12 of these treatments. So far I have had three. I don't get as sick with these treatments but I am more tired and fatigued. After all of the chemo, I will undergo radiation every day for six weeks. The symptoms associated with that, I am told, are a bad sunburn and fatigue.

Not only has this whole ordeal affected me physically but it has affected my family. The loss of my hair affected me as well as my family. My little boy has a hard time looking at me when I don't have a wig or hat on my head. It is hard to see him turn away. It is also hard to be a wife when you don't feel very pretty and you don't want your husband to look you. Being tired a lot of the time makes it hard to keep up on normal household chores. My husband wonders why I can't take care of the things I used to take care of. I still try to go to work as much as I can but by the time I get home I am too tired to do anything else. I have also suffered from "chemo brain". This is short-term memory and concentration problems. This makes it hard to do the things I need to do at work and at home.

My advice to females as well as males is it to listen to your body. Your body is always telling you things. If something doesn't seem right, it may not be. My instinct was that the lump was something that needed to be checked out. And the weird thing was that my mammogram results turned out negative; had I not had an ultrasound, it would have been missed again.

I try to keep a positive attitude but sometimes I find it really hard. My faith in God, my family and my friends are what keep me going through the tough times. I know that I will beat this thing because I have to be around for my children and my family.

### Breast Cancer Facts

- For 2005, it is estimated the new cancer cases in Minnesota will be about 22,800 cases and all of US will be approximately 1.3 million cases.
- Of those total US cases, it is estimated 211,000 will be identified as breast cancer (in which about 99% will affect women).
- It is anticipated in 2005, that about 20% of the breast cancer cases will result in death. This percentage is slowly declining due to the increased awareness, earlier detection through screening, and improved treatment.
- Breast cancer is ranked second among cancer deaths after lung cancer deaths in women.

### Recommended Screening Guidelines

- Yearly mammograms are recommended starting at age 40.
- Clinical breast exam should be part of a periodic health exam; every 3 years for women in their 20's and 30's and every year for women 40 and older.
- Women at increased risk (family history, genetic tendency, past breast cancer) should be screening earlier and having additional tests (breast ultrasound and MRI) and more frequent exams.

**TIDBIT: Instead of saying "I'm too busy/ I don't have time/ I'm just swamped" try saying "Let me reserve a time to take care of that for you. I can complete it ..." You want to come across as someone who can control their time.**



## “Women Who Make a Difference in Farming”

Submitted by: Mary Monte



I find meeting and getting to know producers in my county one of the rewards of my job. Interviewing Kathy Skiba, a producer in Isanti County, allowed me to get better acquainted with her. Kathy did not grow up on a farm. However, she and her father did have a horse stable in the cities. This is where she acquired her love for animals and her work ethics. On the other hand, her husband David did grow up on one of the last farms in Ramsey County. The couple married in 1968 with a herd of 25 Black Angus cows. They bought their current farm in 1973; included in the sale were Jersey cows. They now have a dairy operation exclusively with an excellent herd of Jersey dairy cows.

Kathy has a degree in Education. It is apparent that her love for education and farming has been the fundamental backbone of her family and community life. Kathy and David have raised 4 children who also share their love for farming. Their 3 sons and 1 daughter all contribute to the farming operation. Even though some of them have married and have families of their own, they all assist with farming. Their eldest son is an electrician and shares farming equipment. The second oldest son is a project manager for a construction company and helps by providing relief milking. Their only daughter and her husband live in Wisconsin and have a cattle partnership in the operation. They assist with herd analysis and genetics of the operation. The youngest son recently married and continues to help on the farm. The Skibas are proactive in the dairy industry. They are members of the American Jersey Association, Project Equality Association, and Quality Assurance Team. Prior to Kathy's retirement, she had a dual career working on the farm and for Charter Schools. Kathy finds that she now has more free time.

Kathy's advice to new farmers is to become involved in various livestock associations. She feels strongly that education is the key to a successful operation. Education and research has resulted in an improved herd. The most recent classification of their herd was very good to excellent with the above average breed of greater than 80%. Kathy did indicate that there has been an increase in women holding positions in various agricultural associations since she began farming. Kathy is also an advocate for education and speaks to the public, dairy associations and churches on farming.

Since the Skiba's farm is located on Highway 95 in Isanti County, they are visible to the public. Kathy said that public image is very important. They notify neighbors when they are agitating and spreading their manure. They also incorporate the manure immediately to reduce odor and get the most nutrient from the manure. Water quality is also important to their farming operation.

Some of Kathy's duties on the farm include: tending to calves from birth to breeding, handles the bookkeeping, and does all of the Artificial Insemination breeding.

Family is also very important to Kathy. The family spends time together working on the farm, exhibiting at the MN State fair, and they all share a family vacation each year. It was apparent that the State fair brought enormous pride and joy to Kathy. Her daughter was the 44<sup>th</sup> "Princess Kay", they received a "Silver Tray" last year, and outreach opportunities with the general public are some of the highlights of the State fair.

Kathy indicated that the rewards of farming include being self employed, motivation from having an interest in the operation, observing the accomplishment of an improved herd, evolution of their business, and the opportunity to work with family and employees. The challenges of farming are that some times you are too close to the situation and fresh eyes are needed, the long hours, desire to be a good employer to part time help, time management & organization, bio-security, and to keep up with new research. To confront the challenges Kathy said that sometimes she needs to "step back and take time off, have fun, and spend time with family". She also stated that a person cannot work 24/7. Sundays are spent doing only the necessity farming.

I enjoyed getting to know Kathy Skiba and found her to be a very positive, caring, and well educated female farmer.

## How to Secure Your Job Application Packet to be Considered -

Late applications or failure to submit all the required documents and information as requested will result in your application not being considered.

- ✓ **Complete Application Packet must include:**
  - Form OF-612 or Resume with original signature on the cover letter.
  - Narrative responses to the knowledge, skills and abilities (KSA's)
  - Copy of your latest SF- 50 (Notification of Personnel Action)
  - Performance Appraisal (dated within the last 15 months)
  - Unofficial College or Official Transcripts
- ✓ **Be sure to include name, contact information, job vacancy number and social security number.**
  - If the job vacancy has multiple locations, send in a complete application packet for each location you are interested in.
- ✓ **KSA supplemental statements may not be more than 2 single-spaced pages per KSA.**
- ✓ **Original application packet must be received at the MN NRCS State Office by the close of business (4:30 p.m.) on the closing date of the vacancy announcement.**
  - *Faxed/Email applications are not acceptable.*
- ✓ **Be sure to note your organizations involvement, community services/ volunteer activities, awards that have contributed to learning leadership skills, communications skills, financial management, task building skills, training or coursework /self development specific to the KSA etc.** This is one area that is often overlooked by the applicant.

KSA narratives should highlight "key verb" skills along with accomplishment to it. Such as, I created a spreadsheet tracking each employees direct charge hours by program in a manner that the Assistant Conservationist can easily tabulate the hours for his quarterly summary report.

**Federal Executive Board Diversity Day event on Wednesday, May 25 at the St. Thomas University.**

More information will be coming out in April.

## MASWCD Leadership Training

Article submitted by Mary Monte








"Leadership for this Century" is training session that is hosted by Minnesota Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts, the University of Minnesota, and Natural Resources Conservation Service.

What is unique about this training is that the sessions are held throughout Minnesota and that the two-day training is broken down into eight sessions over a two year period. It allows participants time to learn new concepts of leadership, share in a variety of challenges that counties confront, and to develop strong resource relationships.

Communication, conflict, ethics, economics, civic leadership, and the environment are some of the topics that are discussed.

The session that I am attending has twenty-nine participants. Currently, I have completed half of the training sessions and have had the opportunity to learn from fellow NRCS employees, BWSR, and SWCD employees, SWCD supervisors, and Minnesota Extension employees. I look forward to the future sessions and I would highly recommend MASWCD Leadership Training to all employees and SWCD supervisors who want to improve their leadership skills.

## Seven Traits of Successful People

-  **PASSION** - Choose a career doing what you love.
-  **RESPECT** - Treat others with dignity and courtesy.
-  **VISION** - Develop clear goals that cause you to stretch.
-  **HUMANITY** - Seek to give back and help others.
-  **CURIOSITY** - Seek new ideas and look for both formal and informal learning opportunities.
-  **INTEGRITY** - Be honest and adhere to high ethical standards.
-  **PRAGMATISM** - Remain down to earth and humble enough to laugh at yourself.

*Taken from Administrative Professional newsletter*

*As women today, you do face tough choices. You know, the rules are basically as follows: 1) If you don't get married, you're abnormal, 2) If you get married but don't have children, you're a selfish yuppie, 3) If you get married and have children, but then go outside the home to work, you're a bad mother, 4) If you get married and have children, but then stay home, you've wasted your education.*

*Hillary Rodham Clinton*

## Are your Designation of Beneficiary Forms Up-to-Date?



In order to maintain up-to-date information, it is imperative to periodically review your Official Personnel Folder (OPF) for Designation of Beneficiary forms (if applicable) and make changes if necessary. Keeping your designations up-to-date helps avoid disputes and reduces the burden on loved ones at a difficult time. These forms govern the disposition of life insurance, retirement contributions, Thrift Saving accounts, unpaid compensation such as paychecks, and annual leave.

Designation of Beneficiary forms are advisable but are not mandatory. In the event of an employee's death, absent a designation form, Federal law provides that payments are disbursed in the following order of precedence: to the widow or widower, child or children, parents, duly appointed executor or administrator, or next of kin. If an employee wishes any other arrangement or order of distribution, he or she must complete a separate Designation of Beneficiary form for each type of payment. You may change your designations at any time. We urge employees to keep their designations current. If your family status changes, such as through marriage, divorce, birth or death of a family member, or if you make or change a will, you may want to change your designation forms. The forms are placed in your OPF and are used as official documents in the event of your death.

## A Small Step Toward a Leaner America

Submitted by Leah Duzy and shortened by Sandy Jerzak

New Dietary Guidelines were released in January which place greater emphasis on weight-loss and exercise and caution against trans fats and added sugar. However, the agricultural policies that keep highly processed, nutrient-poor foods cheap and accessible may contribute too many Americans not following the recommendations.

The article discusses a concern that low-income families not having the financial means of preparing well balanced meals when they have to choose between rent, utilities, and food. The Food stamp program provides assistance but the family monthly allotment often runs short 1-2 weeks. Having accessibility to supermarkets, restaurants, and fast food chains that offer a variety of nutrient-dense foods poses another problem for most Americans.

The 2005 Dietary Guidelines is a small step toward a leaner America. But realizing this goal will take more than personal choice. It depends on policies that shape our food supply, environment, and lives.

*This article was written by Jennifer Wilkins and Melinda Hemmelgarn. The entire article can be found in the Routes of Change newsletter Issue 26, January 2005. This can be access through this website:[http:// www.wkkf.org/Programming/NewsList.aspx?CID=4](http://www.wkkf.org/Programming/NewsList.aspx?CID=4)*

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