



# Asian Pacific Islander Organization

Sept.-Dec. 2011

## APIO ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING TO BE HELD BY VTC IN SEPTEMBER

We are attempting to hold our Annual Membership Business Meeting during September using the agency's Video Teleconferencing System (VTC). Jay and I are currently working with the Chief's office on the VTC authorization and a date on September. The Chief hopes to participate.

Please watch the APIO Web site for more details and an agenda. We hope to have that posted by the end of August. *Pete B.*

## President's Message

Greetings and Hafa Adai APIO members,

I hope that your summer is filled with nice weather, quality time with family, as well as a productive season in your states with your jobs.

This is my final president's message, as my term ends this August after 2 years serving as the APIO president. I want to first say that it has been a privilege and honor serving as your president and thank you all for your support. My term has gone by relatively fast and furious, and I hope that I had made a positive difference for the organization. I have really grown personally and professionally, and consequently learned about our agency and APIO organizationally and operationally. I am profoundly appreciative for the opportunity. I hope that the same success for the incoming president, Jay Mar, State Conservationist from Connecticut, and will do what I can to support Jay and the council as an advisor.

During these past two years, our organization has seen unprecedented changes including the Joint Diversity Conference in 2010, and the cancellation of 2011 APIO Conference due to federal budget travel restrictions. These two



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## GEORGIA FARMER SELECTED AS FARMER OF THE YEAR

— by Manila, Georgia

Mr. Adam Nguyen, a poultry farmer in Georgia, has been awarded the 2011 Farmer/Rancher Conservation Award. He has participated in CNMP and EQIP to help identify and address environmental concerns in his operation. Some of these concerns address air, water, and soil quality. In addition to environmental conservation, Mr. Nguyen also does his best with energy savings.

For the CNMP conservation plan, he has sold poultry litter to local farmers and cattle producers. For the EQIP 2008 conservation plan, with cost-sharing, he has installed a dry litter stack house. Furthermore, he has received cost-share assistance from the RC&D TAP program for an incinerator installment. As a result, the poultry business is now an eco-friendly operation.

We would like to thank Mr. Nguyen and his family for their conservation engagement and dedication. We hope that they continue to be active participants in NRCS programs. We wish them the fullest success in their work.

## 2011 APIO AWARD RECIPIENTS

Congratulations to everyone who received APIO awards this year. We appreciate your dedication and support.

### MEMBER AWARD:

- Leadership/visionary—Yuri Plowden, Penn.
- API community—Bob Rohde, California
- Outstanding Member—Phuong Ly, California
- Natural Resources—Jean Foster, New Mexico
- Special Achievement—Michelle Moore

### LIFETIME MEMBER AWARDS:

- Astor Boozer, Washington, DC
- Dan Wright, New Hampshire
- Diane Gelburd, Washington, DC
- Phuong Ly, California
- Oliver Miranda, Maryland
- Ha Troung, California
- Yi Kum, Tennessee
- Peter Bautista, Washington

*Congratulations,  
everyone!*

events directly affected how our organization will deal with our annual training conferences in future years, which will profoundly affect how we generate funds for our operation and mission objectives regarding scholarships, annual business meetings, networking, and training for our members. Consequently, new and innovative alternatives will need to be considered and pursued to be able to accomplish these objectives, in light of these recent political and fiscal realities. The five NRCS employee organizations are currently working collaboratively to address this with leadership.

One major accomplishment I would like to share of these past two years, though, that I think will sustain and move us further along in the future, is in regards to the NRCS Asian American / Pacific Islander (AAPI) Action Plan that the APIO helped draft with the NRCS, under the purview of the Deputy Chief for Management. The plan this plan was a direct result of the Executive Order #13515. It is currently still draft, awaiting review and approval of Chief White. As a co-author of this plan, I am confident that, once approved, major barriers and opportunities affecting our community regarding EEO and Program Participation will be integrated into an NRCS plan to address them strategically and comprehensively. I want to formally go on record that the APIO organization appreciates the leadership NRCS has taken with making the AAPI Action Plan one of its priorities in its development and eventual implementation.

The APIO Council will hold an all member annual meeting via Teleconference and Video Teleconference venues during September. We will post details on our Web site as soon as possible. I want to encourage everyone to attend this first-ever all membership teleconference/videoconference. Our newly elected council members will transition during this meeting. In light of this meeting, the council has initiated the election process and Charter/By-Laws review for vote, which be concluded and in force by our meeting. Please review the proposed changes to the bylaws and constitution by **Aug. 12** and let Gary Parks know if you have any suggestions for changes.

Finally, I would like to announce that the APIO scholarships and awards for FY 2011 have been decided and announced as of our July Council meeting; details of these developments are contained in the newsletter. I want to recognize and congratulate the APIO membership awardees for their accomplishments for their categories. Your commitment, contributions, and leadership to the APIO have resulted with this recognition of your accomplishments, Thank you!

In addition, we have awarded the Farmer of the Year AAPI Farmer to Mr. Adam Nguyen, a poultry farmer from Georgia with a passion to manage his operations sustainably and with NRCS conservation assistance. Great work and congratulations everyone!

In closing, I hope that you enjoy our Fall Newsletter and thanks to those who contributed with these great articles. Congratulations to Jay Mar, our incoming APIO President. I humbly ask that you show Jay the same support that you have shown me these past couple of years as APIO president 2009-2011.

Si Yu'os Ma' ase (Thank you)!

*Pete B.*

## We Need Your Vote on Proposed Amendments to APIO Constitution and Bylaws

— Gary Parks, Chair  
Constitution and Bylaws Committee

As time passes and more people review a document, they wonder why something is worded a particular way or the implications of the item under a certain heading. Hopefully their natural instinct is to ask questions or provide suggestions. As members of APIO reviewed the APIO Constitution and Bylaws questions of why or suggestions have been sent directly to the Committee responsible or through their National Council Representative.

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee have reviewed this document by which APIO conducts Organizational business. There were some short falls in the document in light of future budgetary concerns we face. Cancelling this year's Annual Conference brought one such item to light which needed to be addressed: How do we conduct our business meeting if we do not have a physical location to hold our business meeting?

This issue has been addressed in Articles X and XV of the Constitution. The National Council in lieu of a physical meeting place for our annual training conference will determine the method of holding a meeting, be it a teleconference or some means via the web. Two new standing committees have been added: Grants and Farmer of the Year. Issues of disbursements have been addressed and well as other minor wording changes.

As a member of APIO, the Constitution and Bylaws is your document. It dictates how we conduct business within our Organization. Take time to retrieve and review the proposed amendments if you have not done so yet. Be ready to discuss any issues you have or and provide comments and suggestions to the Committee or your National Council Representative. The Committee will always take your comments or suggestions and present them to the National Council and Membership for consideration and discussion. To view the proposed changes document, visit [apio.org](http://apio.org).

Prior to the voting please send your comments, questions, or suggestions to me, Gary Parks, at [gary.parks@ks.usda.gov](mailto:gary.parks@ks.usda.gov), or to your National Council Representative, so we will be prepared to discuss the issue in a timely manner with the rest of the Membership.

# BARRIERS – HOW YOU CAN HELP KEEP NRCS FREE FROM DISCRIMINATION

— by Kurencio B. Ngowakl  
Nat'l AA/PI Emphasis Program Manager

As a reminder, one of our responsibilities/duties as state AA/PI SEPMs is to “ensure that all NRCS activities are free from discrimination and that barriers to the recruitment, employment, and advancement of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders are addressed. AA/PI assist in evaluating the effectiveness of the overall equal opportunity program in their organizational units and assist in identifying new and changing program needs.” (GM\_230\_403\_E - Subpart E - Asian American/Pacific Islander Emphasis Program, 403.78 Duties and Responsibilities of Collateral Duty State and Center AA/PI EPMs). To aid/assist you with this ongoing endeavor, the following are some basic steps to ‘Barrier Analysis’:

## SIX (6) STEPS TO BARRIER ANALYSIS

The barrier analysis process is broken down into six steps:

1. review policies, practices, and procedures;
2. analyze source material;
3. identify triggers;
4. determine root cause of triggers;
5. if root cause is a barrier, devise an action plan to eliminate the barrier; and
6. the EEO professional should follow up on the identified barrier at regular intervals to determine the success of the action plan.

Both EEO and Non-EEO professionals should be involved in the process of barrier analysis, incorporating ideas to make the process more complete. Upper-level management must also be invested in the process in order for it to be successful.

### 1. REVIEW POLICIES, PRACTICES, AND PROCEDURES

An EEO professional needs to be familiar with the agency’s policies, practices, and procedures in order to identify barriers. The areas which should be the subject of review are those in the natural employment progression, i.e., recruitment, hiring, training and career development, performance incentives and awards, competitive and career-ladder promotions,

supervisory and managerial selections, disciplinary actions, and separations. There may be other examples specific to a particular agency, such as the process for security clearances in Department of Defense agencies.

### 2. SOURCE MATERIAL

The source materials for identifying anomalies are varied. These materials were described in the previous section and include workforce statistics (such as those found in the MD-715 Report Data Tables), EEO complaints, EEO and Human Resources office interviews or data, union and advocacy group interviews or data, employee surveys, focus groups, exit interviews, and studies done by outside organizations. The EEO professional must study these sources to ensure that a thorough review is conducted.

### 3. IDENTIFY TRIGGERS

As described in the previous section on triggers, the EEO professional should look at the source data and determine if any triggers are evident. For example, there may be anomalies in the workforce data tables, or recurring EEO complaints on a particular issue, against a particular manager, or in a particular office or section of the facility. Another example would be exit interviews which identify bias in employment decisions that lead to the increased separation of a particular protected group.

### 4. DETERMINE ROOT CAUSES OF TRIGGERS

A barrier is the root cause of the trigger. The goal is to pinpoint the root causes. The process can be analogized to peeling an onion, stripping away layers until there is an answer to the question “Why?” a condition exists. A simple example may be that the agency learns from a review of data that it has a low participation rate of Asians in its total workforce. A logical next step may be to examine the applicant flow data. The applicant flow data shows that the agency is not getting applications from Asians, but

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primarily from white and black applicants. Why is this? The next step would be to review the recruitment policies and process. It turns out that the agency is only recruiting from three colleges that do not matriculate many Asians. Why? Is it because the three schools are the alma maters of the top agency officials? The barrier in this case would be that little or no recruitment is done at universities with more diverse student populations.

## 5. ACTION PLAN FOR ELIMINATION OF BARRIER

This step is straightforward, but not always easy: the agency must establish a plan of action to address the identified barrier, the root cause of the undesired condition. The specific barrier along with the action plan should be described in Part I of the agency's MD-715 Report and updated every year. In the example above, the action plan would be to begin to recruit at a more diverse set of colleges. This would not mean that the agency would need to stop recruiting at the three colleges but could simply expand recruitment to areas of the country that have larger concentrations of Asians and NHOPIs.

## 6. FOLLOW-UP

The final step, and one that is often overlooked, is to assess whether the devised action plan was successful at eliminating the identified barrier. Possible indicators of success are: the participation rate is up, the separation rate is down, there are reduced complaints, and favorable responses in surveys or exit interviews conducted after the action plan has been implemented. In the example above, the agency would look to see if the participation rate of Asians is beginning to rise and may specifically want to investigate whether more applications are being received from Asian candidates. If the plan did not result in a greater participation rate or an increase in applications, then the agency can conclude that either the wrong barrier was identified or the action plan gave rise to a new barrier. This follow-up process requires the EEO professional to conduct a continuous assessment and monitoring process from year to year.

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## CALIFORNIA NRCS CELEBRATES AAPI HERITAGE MONTH

— *Phuong Ly, California*

California had a successful celebration for the AAPI heritage month in May 2011. The celebration was held by different agencies within the USDA at the State Office.

The room was filled with display items and poster boards representing the diversity within AAPI. There were so many people participating that people had to stand in the back of the room.

I couldn't be more honored representing California as one of the proud states to represent AAPI. The event would not have been as successful without the committee and participants who volunteered their time to collaborate together to help celebrate this wonderful event. I want to thank everyone again for your hard work. I'm excited and looking forward for our next year's celebration.

(See Phuong's recap of the celebration on page 10.)



Jay Mar, Hue Dang, and Angela Biggs are developing a mentoring program for APIO members. More details will be coming soon.

Watch the APIO Web site for updates or contact Jay, Hue, or Angela for details:

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# Tinian San Jose Fiesta

By: Pamela Sablan Aguon

The Tinian San Jose Fiesta was held on the island of Tinian on April 29<sup>th</sup> thru May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011. The annual event showcases conservation work completed by many different conservation organizations. This year, NRCS joined forces with a local partner, Northern Marianas College (land grant college). Together, we provided a very comprehensive look at new and existing conservation practices available to local landowners.



Information & Education Booth set up near entrance to Fiesta Grounds.

The fiesta draws a diverse crowd. This year, the Fiesta's information & educational booth included NRCS programs & services information & display; Marianas Grazing Academy artificial insemination display; 4-H Youth Development Program highlights; SARE display funded projects and grant opportunities; Dry-litter Waste Management System; Aquaculture improvement program – Artificial Incubator System for Tilapia Hatchlings; Food tasting & Fruit/Vegetable Carving Station Demonstration; and Tinian Health Center giving Flu Shots. While NRCS & NMC-CREES were busy at their respective posts, many other activities were being conducted within the fiesta grounds. Those activities included: local food stands, hand crafted souvenirs, games, and children's toys. All goods were made from natural and recycled materials. The event also included performances by musicians and dancers.



Aguon speaks to local partners from the Northern Marianas College - CREES about Challenging Careers & the Earth Team Volunteer Program with NRCS.

NRCS outreach activities were held alongside NMC-CREES by the entrance into the fiesta grounds during this three day event. Local Chamorro Earth Team Volunteer assisted the NRCS throughout the event. Sheryl Sablan was tasked with taking photo documentation during the 3-day event and assisting with set up the booth



(L) Local partners inquire about reaching out to the youth. (R) Aguon reaches out to the Youth during the outreach activities.

Our outreach activities emphasized the importance of the Conservation Planning process to individuals interested in conservation and gave examples of what field data needs to be collected to begin the planning process. Additionally, we showed them samples of conservation practices that may be applicable to their sites based on the natural resource concerns assessed. Other emphasis was to reach out to Historically Underserved Producers and Female Producers.



Producer looks at photos of before and after NRCS assistance while Aguon explains how NRCS services and programs address resource concerns. Aguon shows a producer a photo showing what NRCS looks for during collecting field inventory data and doing field assessments.

In summary, the NRCS staff discussed NRCS Programs and Services to 36 individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds (Mainly Historically Underserved Producers including females). Senator Jude Hofschneider, Tinian Mayor Ramon Dela Cruz, Tinian Municipal Council Chair Patrick Manglona and Tinian Cattleman's Association President Jose Dela Cruz welcomed NRCS and briefly discussed NRCS Programs & Services available to Tinian Farmers & Ranchers. Senator Jude Hofschneider hinted at the creation of an NRCS Field Office in Tinian during his speech. Overall, the outreach activities were a success. NRCS was able to increase the number of CTA cooperators for the island of Tinian.



A potential producer wanting to improve feed and forage variety in pastures looks at the Earth Team Volunteer Program information (right) while Aguon is with another producer.

Aguon collects contact information from a new producer during the outreach activities.





# BUILDING A BETTER, STRONGER USDA

## MESSAGE FROM NRCS CHIEF DAVE WHITE

Greetings, NRCSers:

The Secretary has sent a message to all USDA staff about building a better, stronger USDA. In the message, the Secretary explained that the Department is looking at its operations to identify ideas, improvements and innovations to help us manage the coming budget changes.

NRCS has been proactively thinking about how we as an Agency can confront and overcome the current budget environment. I spoke to you about this in a video message I delivered last month. If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to visit the Conservation Corner on my.NRCS and watch the video.

As we actively collaborate with the Department to inform potential changes, we will also be looking internally to determine ways we can improve NRCS to ensure lasting success. Along with adapting to the current budget environment, there are two additional objectives that are driving our efforts: strengthen and build on our core mission and achieve operational excellence throughout the Agency.

Let's look at these a little closer.

### **Strengthen and build on our core mission**

There is no question that we have accomplished a lot as an Agency. Last year, we enrolled more than 27 million acres of land into NRCS's

conservation programs. That's a land area the size of Louisiana – all enrolled in just one year. With our help, through conservation assistance and improved resource management, soil erosion on U.S. cropland has decreased by 43 percent over the past 25 years. That's 1.3 billion tons of soil protected.

### **We're delivering results for natural resource conservation.**

That said, there are areas for improvement. We need to ensure that in everything we do our core mission of providing excellent service to producers and landowners – and helping them be stewards for conservation – stays at the forefront. We need to continue to strengthen our science-based technical expertise and ensure that no matter what cards we are dealt in the new budgetary climate, our core mission is fulfilled.

### **Achieve operational excellence**

When I first became Chief two years ago, I made organizational improvement a key priority. We have made good progress in this area. We were honest with each other about our strengths and weaknesses and have worked to tackle challenges together. We have improved our policies and procedures, our practice standards, and our budget process. But there is still work to be done. We need to strengthen controls over our business operations and ensure improved accountability mechanisms are in place.

The most emblematic challenge in our quest for excellence is NRCS's financial audit – an annual review that we have not passed for three years in a row. It is critical for us to improve our financial management. In addition,

we need to examine our functions and processes to determine ways for us to be more effective and efficient as an Agency.

### **So, how are we going to get there?**

We're taking a holistic approach, and I've challenged the NRCS leadership team to look across our entire Agency to determine what we need to do to position ourselves for success in the future.

Specifically, we're looking at how we can improve five key areas. We will:

- Identify ways to accelerate the Conservation Delivery Streamlining Initiative (CDSI) to help our field employees spend more of their time in direct assistance to our customers.
- Identify ways states can improve our technical assistance and increase the number of technical staff doing field work to ensure we continue to meet our customers' needs and provide high-quality service.
- Identify ways to improve the delivery of technology and science within both the Science and Technology and Soil Science and Resource Assessment Deputy Areas.
- Identify ways to improve our administrative functions across the Agency.
- Identify ways to modernize our communications capabilities, including our IT, Public Affairs, and Outreach services.

These improvements will support the Department's Cultural Transformation efforts as well – ensuring our employees are working

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in an environment that is supportive, inclusive and high performing.

We have just begun working on these organizational improvement efforts and we do not have predetermined solutions for the changes we need to make. Throughout this process we intend to get input from all levels of the organization. Your insight and feedback are critical and will help us make strategic and well-informed decisions.

My goal is to be fair, straightforward, and transparent with you throughout this process. While we don't have all the answers yet, we've posted a Frequently Asked Questions document in the Conservation Corner on my.NRCS, which should answer some questions you may have. Please reach out to your state or division leadership with other questions and we will work to get you answers as soon as we can. We will continue to communicate with you in the coming weeks and months.

I recognize that for many of us, this is not the first time we've gone through organizational changes. Change is sometimes uncomfortable, but we must be flexible and open to adjustments that will keep us at the top of our game. We are taking a measured approach to this and plan to build on the lessons we have learned from the past to help determine the best way forward.

I truly appreciate the work you do. You are our greatest asset as an Agency and our successes are a direct result of the dedication and commitment you put in every day.

Thank you for your patience and flexibility as we work to make the Agency stronger and advance the cause of private lands conservation. I will be speaking with you again soon.

Dave White  
Chief, NRCS

## 2011 A BANNER YEAR FOR SCHOLARS

— by R. David Fischer  
PIA East Regional Representative and  
Scholarship Committee Chair

The 2011 APIO scholarship process took it up a notch. Previous years saw awards of \$1,000 per recipient. This year, the committee proposed a change in the process whereby the applicants would be ranked and awarded accordingly. The following are this year's awardees with a brief bio of their accomplishments and aspirations.

Stephen H. Uramoto was selected for the \$1,000 award. He has a keen interest in his Japanese roots. His major in environmental science and economics may be considered less traditional than normal for the NRCS but none-the-less, is considered very appropriate for the future direction of the Agency. He is a freshman at Whitman College, is well rounded, does well in his classes, and comes highly recommended. He would like to be considered for employment with the agency in California, Washington, or Hawaii.

Winnie W. Y. Siau was selected for the \$1,500 award. She is very interested in natural resource management as an environmental engineer, does extremely well in her class work at USC, has received many awards, has excellent work experience, and is very involved in her community and other extra-curricular activities. She is scheduled to graduate in May 2012 and is very interested in working for the NRCS in California, Colorado, or Virginia.

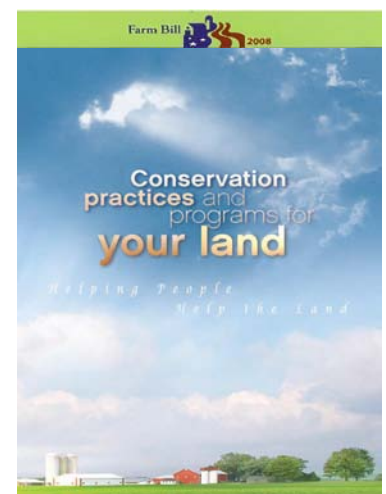
Marie Sina Faatuala was selected for the \$2,000 award. She has a unique understanding of the Samoan culture and its relationship to the natural environment. She comes highly recommended because of her positive attitude and "can-do" spirit and her team-work mentality. She does very well in her classes and received an Associate of Science Degree at American Samoa Community College. She is scheduled to receive her Bachelor of Science in General Agriculture in 2012 at UH Hilo, with an emphasis on agro-ecology and environmental quality. She would like to be considered for employment with the NRCS in American Samoa, Hawaii, or California.

### NRCS Conservation Program Information Available in Mandarin Chinese

— Cheryl Morton, Hawaii

Thanks to some hardworking employees, the NRCS publication Conservation practices and programs for your land is now available in Mandarin Chinese.

You can view or download copy on the APIO Web site: [apio.org](http://apio.org).





## NRCS Partners with Local Organizations on the Urban Terrace People's Garden Project

— by Yuri Plowden

*Asian American Pacific Islander SEPM/  
Resource Soil Scientist, Pennsylvania*

On what would otherwise be a neglected patch of soil bordering the asphalt parking lot of a high rise apartment building in downtown Harrisburg, a lovingly tended garden overflows with wild sesame, garland chrysanthemum, bell flower, and other Asian vegetables along with the usual squash, peppers, spinach and more familiar garden plants. This urban area transformed into small-scale subsistence farm is tended by Korean-American residents of the Linden

Terrace apartment building. The garden will comprise the center of the Urban Terrace People's Garden Project, one of over 400 People's Garden projects that USDA employees are involved with across the country and the ninth one in Pennsylvania. Susan Parry, NRCS Natural Resource Specialist, who is a point of contact for Pennsylvania's People's Garden Initiative, has been working with a Harrisburg-based community organization called Jump Street as well as the Capital RC&D Area Council to fund and support this particular venture that combines outreach, gardening, artistic projects and activities for at-risk youth.

The People's Garden Initiative is an effort by USDA to encourage its employees to create gardens that benefit the community by demonstrating collaboration, incorporating sustainable practices, promoting health and wellness, enabling social and cultural connections, and fostering pride. On all counts, the Urban Terrace project in Harrisburg fits this bill. Jump Street is a private, nonprofit organization that supports community and economic development through art. Deni Boger and Christine Glover of Jump Street said they will oversee the construction of two raised bed structures called Keyhole gardens and will work with local at-risk youth to create a mural wall at the site. One keyhole bed made of mountain stone and shaped like a kidney has already been installed. The bed raises the soil level several feet and the odd shape allows a wheelchair-bound person to easily tend the plants, a design which the organizers hope will encourage handicapped apartment residents to participate. NRCS provided resources to hire a Korean language translator so that Jump Street Urban Terrace garden coordinator, Christine Quimby, could communicate the project's design and ideas to local residents, Mr. Moo Kwan Lee and Mrs. Bong Soon Kim. Mr. Lee and Mrs. Kim, along with another Korean-American resident who has since moved away, began this organic garden several years ago. Although elderly, both are quite energetic and spry. They welcome the People's Garden Project and hope that it will entice other apartment residents to cultivate a patch for themselves.

Other plans for the project include building of a garden shed and installation of a rain-barrel irrigation system. Currently, Mr. Lee and Mrs. Kim hand carry plastic gallon jugs, one at a time, from the building or their apartment to water the plants. Quimby will enlist local volunteers, including USDA/NRCS employees, to help the residents with the construction and garden maintenance and the building owner will pay for needed materials.

Meanwhile, Mr. Lee said through the translator that he and Mrs. Kim would be happy to tend the new keyhole beds and will continue to experiment with a variety of vegetables. As they pressed bags of freshly harvested exotic leaves and roots into our hands they said, "We enjoy watching things grow."



# NEVADA USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT HOSTS SPECIAL ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN TRAINING PROGRAM

— by Diane Arvizo, AAPI SEPM  
Nevada USDA Rural Development

As the AAPI Special Emphasis Program Manager, and with May designated as Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, I took the opportunity to organize a training program that would both celebrate the occasion and provide insight to the historical and current struggles and contributions of the AAPI community, as well as provide additional cultural awareness of the AAPI heritage. The program was held on May 26, 2011 in the USDA Rural Development State Office in Carson City, and was open to all Nevada USDA RD, FSA, and NRCS staff via video teleconference.

My special guest was Dr. Isao Fujimoto (*right*), who also happens to be my uncle. Dr. Fujimoto gave an intriguing PowerPoint presentation on the topic of farming contributions and struggles of the Japanese American and immigrant community, centered around the Fujimoto family experience. Dr. Fujimoto is UC Davis Emeritus faculty in Community Development and Asian American Studies. He is involved with community based organizations in California's Central Valley with the Central Valley Partnership for Citizenship, rural minority communities throughout the country with the Rural Development Leadership Network, and with the Asian Rural Institute in Japan training village leaders from throughout the southern hemisphere in sustainable community development. He has served on the boards of Global Exchange, Food First, The Data Center, American Friends Service Committee, California Institute for Rural Studies and Rural America. Dr. Fujimoto continues to teach the "Community and Everyday Life in Japan" class for the UC Davis Summer Abroad program in Kyoto where UC students meet with community activists in the Kyoto-Osaka area. Prior to joining the faculty at UC Davis, he was a US Army correspondent in Korea and taught Chemistry and English at San Jose High School in San Jose, California. He helped start up the National Center for Appropriate Technology in Butte, Montana, serving as its Associate Director. His international involvement includes chairing a UC Berkeley delegation making contact with the student movement in Indonesia, leading Cornell student team on a literacy project in Honduras, conducting field research on village development in the Philippines and advising Micronesian Occupational College in Palau, Micronesia. Dr. Fujimoto grew up on the Yakima Indian reservation in Wapato, Washington and was an inmate of the Heart Mountain, Wyoming and Tule Lake, California concentration camps during WWII. He is the eldest of 13 siblings in a family that formerly farmed strawberries in the Santa Clara county communities of Madrone, Coyote and Morgan Hill. He is a graduate of UC Berkeley, Stanford and Cornell.



In doing some background research on my Uncle Isao's accomplishments, I came across a speech he gave for the 2007 UC Davis Fall Convocation, wherein he expressed very eloquently: "No matter what our age or major, no matter what our resources or life circumstances, the world stands ready to receive our gifts. Everyone here has the potential to make a difference and inspire others. How much and in what ways will depend on how we answer the question: Today and every day, how will we share our gifts?" Much like this statement made an impact on me, Dr. Fujimoto's powerful presentation made an impression on those who attended his program.

Also in attendance were special guests from the featured Fujimoto family, including my father-in-law Kaz Fujimoto and mother-in-law Dorothy Fujimoto. I am proud to belong to a family whose heritage is deeply rooted in Asian Pacific American history and honored that they could join the USDA RD, FSA and NRCS staff in celebrating AAPI Heritage Month. Certificates of Appreciation were presented to both Dr. Fujimoto and Kaz Fujimoto. An Asian American and Pacific Islander themed potluck lunch was served immediately following the program.

As an aside, thanks in part to the efforts of Sarah Adler, Nevada RD State Director, Dr. Fujimoto has been officially invited to serve as keynote speaker at Nevada's 2012 Small Farm Conference. I have no doubt the target audience will be receptive to his poignant presentation and its relevancy to our work with USDA employees and customers.



# 2011 APIO OFFICERS ANNOUNCED

— by Gary Parks, Chair  
2011 Election Committee

The 2011 election results are tabulated for another year with voter participation at 75 percent. This year, six positions were up for elections. The executive board positions to be filled were the Executive Vice President and Secretary. Regional Representatives positions included the East, Mid-West, West, Pacific Islands Area - East and Pacific Islands Area – West.

Elected by the entire membership were:

- Executive Vice President — Angela Biggs
- Secretary — Oliver Miranda

The Regional Representatives voted for by members of their respective Regions were:

- East — Yuri Plowden
- Mid-West — Winnie Chen
- West — Phuong Ly
- Pacific Islands Area–East — Reese Libby
- Pacific Islands Area–West — pending appointment.

Below are brief biographies to acquaint you with two of your newly elected Officers and Representatives.

Please join the Elections Committee in congratulating these fine candidates. The elections process is a vital part of the APIO's success. Stay active and involved for our continued success by contacting any National Council member to volunteer as a Standing Committee Chair or committee member.

## **PRESIDENT: JAY T. MAR, STATE CONSERVATIONIST**

Mar came to Connecticut from Wyoming where he served as Assistant State Conservationist for Programs as well as Small Watershed Program Manager.

Born in Minot, North Dakota, Mar grew up around farms in the White Earth Valley and Red River Valley. He began his conservation career planting trees for the Ward County Soil Conservation District. He graduated from North Dakota State University where he earned Bachelor of Science degrees in Range—Botany and Wildlife—Zoology.

Mar brings to Connecticut 30 years of diverse conservation experience with NRCS:

- Soil Conservation Intern in Burleigh County, North Dakota, and the USDA Plant Materials Center
- Soil Conservationist in Mclean County, North Dakota
- District Conservationist in Sheridan County, North Dakota
- USDA Conservation Technology Exchange, Hedeselskabet, Denmark
- RC&D Coordinator for Lake Agassiz Resource Conservation and Development Area, North Dakota, providing assistance to both urban and rural communities in the counties of Cass, Ransom, Richland, Sergeant and Steele
- Detail as Assistant State Conservationist for Programs, Wyoming
- Assistant State Conservationist for Programs and Small Watershed Program Manager, Wyoming
- Detail as Acting State Conservationist, Delaware

Mar is married to his high school sweetheart, Linda, who teaches students with special needs. They have three grown sons — Aaron, a teacher in Saipan; Nathan, a Nuclear Engineer in Chicago; and Ryan, who attends the University of Wyoming and is an NRCS Soil Conservation Intern. The Mars enjoy fishing, camping, and family time.

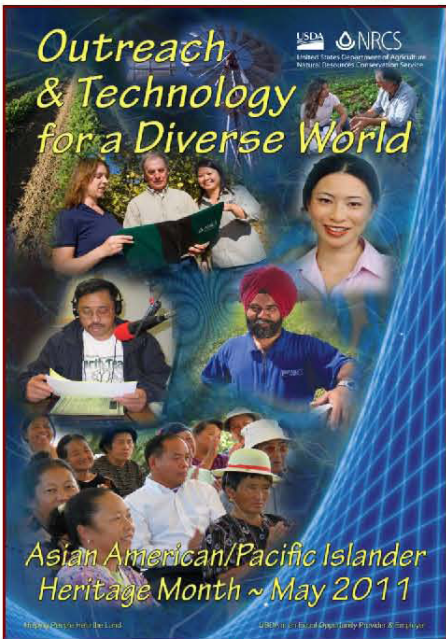
## **EAST REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVE: YURI PLOWDEN**

- NRCS Resource Soil Scientist, Bloomsburg Tech Office, Bloomsburg, PA; since 2010
- NRCS Soil Scientist, MLRA 147; 2002-2010
- APIO East Representative; 2010 to present
- APIO Conference Committee Chairperson; 2011
- APIO Awards Committee co-chair; 2010
- Asian American Special Emphasis Program Manager for PA since 2006
- Education: Bachelor's degree, Geology, Amherst College, Amherst, MA
- Masters in Agronomy/Soil Science, University of Maryland, College Park, MD

Congratulations to all of  
our Officers, and thank you  
for your service!

Watch for more biographies in future newsletters!

# ASIAN AMERICAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER CELEBRATION RECAP



• We hope you have enjoyed our wonderful event.  
 • Thank you all for participating. If you are interested for next year's event, please contact your agency's representative:  
 • **Cindy Mose: 530-792-5832, RD**  
 • **Leticia McElroy: 530-792-5870, RMA**  
 • **Phoua Yang: 559-276-7494 ext. 106, FSA**  
 • **Phuong Ly: 530-534-0112 ext. 118, NRCS**



**Congratulations Jim Cairns for winning this year's 2011 NRCS AAPI**

**Heritage Month.**



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