

NEWS

A Bounty of Corn for New Mexico Youths

by Dan Abeyta, Larry Sanchez, and Pat Sanchez, FSA, New Mexico

Some Native American youths in New Mexico have acquired a skill that while new to them actually dates back hundreds of years. This summer, through a project developed by New Mexico FSA State Office staff, they learned to grow sweet corn the way of their Isleta Pueblo tribal ancestors — using their hands and feet, along with hoes and shovels, to dig furrows and cover the seeds.

The idea began in December 1997, when Dan Abeyta, FSA's New Mexico Native American Liaison Officer, wanted to work with adolescents on the Isleta Pueblo reservation, an underserved community. "There's been a surge in crime and gang violence here, and teenagers are particularly vulnerable to this way of life," Abeyta says. He wanted the youths to have a constructive activity as an option and decided that a program teaching traditional Isleta Pueblo farming methods would fit the bill.

Abeyta introduced his idea to James M. Abeita, Chief Judge of the tribe's court. With Abeita's endorsement, others soon got involved to expand and define the concept, including Larry Sanchez, CED, Valencia/Cibola Counties; Oliver Jenkins, Farm Loan Officer, FSA; and Micky Jojola, Agricultural Program Instructor, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute.

The Alternative Agri-Vision Pilot Project is located on Isleta Pueblo land about ten miles south of Albuquerque. Joseph Jaramillo, tribal



With a lot of hard work ahead, CED Larry Sanchez (middle) explains planting techniques — dragging a shovel to create a crease for the corn seeds — to youths.

member, donated the use of a parcel of land to Dan Abeyta for the project. Larry Sanchez contributed his time to show the teenagers how to plant, irrigate, hoe, and harvest their corn without any cost to FSA. "We selected sweet corn because of its 85-day maturing time," says Abeyta. "We wanted the harvest to coincide with the tribe's August 28th Feast Day, a thousand-year old thanksgiving celebration that the tribe is currently resurrecting." During the feast, the youths shared their corn with their community, including tribal and religious leaders, and more than

60 officials from various Government agencies, including Eddie Moore, FSA's Executive Assistant to the Administrator.

"Another reason we used corn is that the tribe had it on hand," Abeyta explains. "This showed the teens that one doesn't necessarily need money to start something productive." Abeyta believes the successful harvest provided a useful lesson in values and ethics for the youths. "Caring for the land is hard work, but not without rewards — the corn crop is a tangible result of their hard labor. I'm hoping

ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN

Perseverance Paid Off.....I Have Good News!!

As you well know, this has been a challenging year for FSA employees — and for the farmers and ranchers we serve. U.S. agriculture is in one of the worst crises in decades. Farmers are being squeezed by low prices, high production costs, a strong U.S. dollar, and unprecedented disasters causing huge losses in some localities. These trying and uncertain times have translated into more work for our field employees, while we're being asked to do the job with fewer people.

We were 700 employees in the hole when the current agricultural difficulties began and were understaffed for some time before that. I know it's hard enough to do your work under those conditions without having to deal with the possibility of more cuts and the possible loss of one's own job. But that's the situation in which FSA employees found themselves. Something had to give, so the Secretary, the President, and I went to the Congress with a simple message: "Leave FSA alone. Don't cut any more people from

our ranks or we will be unable to do our job, and the farmers will suffer."

To our relief, the message got through: lawmakers are beginning to recognize that the recent staff cuts have gone through the fat and into the bone and muscle of our organization. Congress recently passed and the President has signed a \$40 million salaries and expenses increase that will provide some relief. This means that the recently announced staff reductions will not be necessary this year. But we know that's not enough, so we're not stopping there. We hope not only to maintain staffing levels, but to soon get the additional help our hardworking field employees require to provide the programs so essential to rural America.

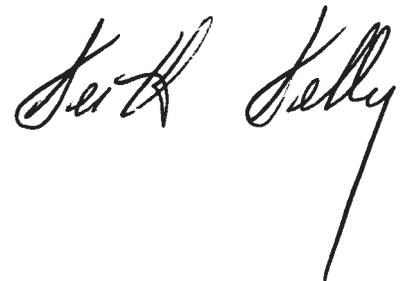
I recognize what a great job our field employees have been doing. Our state and local people haven't let our funding uncertainty and the effects of the recent agricultural downturn get them down. The recent LDP signup illustrates what I mean. When Farm Programs employees were snowed under with applications, the Farm Loan folks rolled up their sleeves and waded in to help.

In one Oklahoma county office, for instance, an Ag Loan employee was alone in the office at three o'clock one afternoon when he found himself bombarded with a flood of LDP requests. He didn't know much about the program. Many people in his situation might have thrown up their hands and

gone home. But instead, he called a neighboring county office to get some quick over-the-phone training and buckled down to process the requests. Working past 8:00 pm, he became an LDP expert in a big hurry and single-handedly saved the day.

There are many examples of FSA workers serving beyond the call of duty in the NAP and advanced AMTA signups as well; it's typical of the cooperative spirit and professionalism that distinguish all our employees. This is the kind of spirit all of us must embrace to get through difficult times.

Meanwhile, everyone we work with and for — our customers, Congress, the Administration, and the public — has begun to understand that our farmers are in serious difficulty. The Secretary and I will not let anyone forget that farmers need us to help cushion the downturn, get agriculture back on sure footing, and help it stay there. Our down-sized, slimmed-down Agency was intended to work with a smooth-running agricultural economy. But, as our people know, the agricultural economy doesn't always cooperate. The Secretary and I will continue to fight hard to get you the tools and staffing you need to do your jobs.



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CORN*continued from page 1*

the continuing project redirects these young people toward choosing positive directions in life.”

This demonstration project has been so effective on the reservation that ten other tribes have requested that Abeyta assist them. NRCS outreach staff in New Mexico has asked Abeyta for training, and he has received other requests from the local mental health community and inner-city programs to start something similar.

While the youths busy themselves with preparing for spring planting, Abeyta and the tribal court are working on expanding the project. They want to foster more interest in traditional gardening and tribal heritage among the community’s young people. They are also working on an intervention program for troubled youths. This program would provide work for incarcerated reservation youths or an alternative to jail for others. Abeyta is working with the juvenile courts and jail systems to provide alternative sentencing to allow young offenders to serve their sentences by tending the farm, while still attending school and possibly living at home. Abeyta believes that through farming, “Many of the marginal, nonviolent offenders



Shown admiring the plentiful corn crop are (left to right) Larry Burnett, SED, NM; Dan Abeyta; Eddie Moore; and Joseph Jaramillo, Isleta Pueblo tribal member.

could be rehabilitated and saved from getting into more trouble upon release.”

The farm project provided a boost to the tribe’s economy and information about FSA’s services without any financial aid from either the tribe or FSA. FSA now has a more positive presence on the reservation. “This success underscores how flexible FSA must be in reaching out and delivering programs to underserved communities,” Abeyta says. “We must figure out the reasons why certain groups that

could benefit from FSA programs are not participating. In overcoming those obstacles, we help communities help themselves.”

Eddie Moore certainly was impressed with what he saw during his visit to the reservation. “This project has engaged local residents in learning new agricultural skills and addressing community challenges. This type of outreach may prove to be the norm as we strive to serve more individuals, families, and communities.”

LEND A HAND TO THOSE IN NEED

FSA’s efforts during the last USDA Food Drive were spectacular — we collected over 105,000 pounds of food for distribution to food banks and shelters across the country. We are well on our way to doing it again in the current food drive. The drive called “USDA Making a Difference in One Month,” runs from October 16 through November 16. This time, the field effort is being coordinated through the FAC in each state, while individual agencies are handling headquarter efforts. Please try to

help by donating a can of food, box of rice or cereal, or whatever you can spare to help those in need.

Administrator Kelly stresses that this food drive is more than just a single event. He encourages us to make it a kick-off for continuing efforts by FSA employees to feed the hungry in our communities. See if you can find some extra time to volunteer in a soup kitchen, help sort donated food, or work in a local food bank.



Remembering Bill Waggener

by Jim Little, Director, Financial Management Division

William O. "Bill" Waggener, 37, FSA's Director of the Appeals and Litigation Staff and Acting Director of the Advisory and Corporate Affairs Staff, died at his home on October 1 after a twenty-month long battle with brain cancer. He is survived by his wife Natalie and two young sons, James and Brandon.

Bill studied journalism at Northwestern University, graduating in 1983. He went on to earn a law degree at Virginia's George Mason University in 1986. He worked for FSA for 13 years, starting as a Claims Specialist with the Financial Management Division.

Among Bill's many accomplishments during his tenure with FSA, he oversaw and reported on the Commodity Credit Corporation's (CCC) audit review and compliance system and implemented FSA's first State Mediation Program. He helped develop the Agency's first strategic plan under the Government Performance and Results Act and was on the management negotiation team for the first union contract.

Over the years, Bill was recognized for numerous achievements, including awards for implementing the former



Bill and his wife Natalie.

Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service's (ASCS) Automated Debt Management System, developing ASCS and CCC prompt payment policies, and establishing suspension and debarment policies and procedures. Bill also received a 1998 award for developing and providing Alternative Dispute Resolution Training on a National basis.

Bill was highly respected by his staff for his professionalism, fairness, and "open door" policy. As one employee recalls, "You could talk to Bill about anything. He was a great listener. And if you had a problem, he always got results. He really stood up for his employees."

Being exceptionally dedicated to his job, Bill continued to work while undergoing several series of chemotherapy and radiation treatments. He came to work even when feeling weak and ill. He underwent two brain surgeries in August. Following the second one, he told a co-worker to tell his boss "to get ready for me. I'll be back in the office next week!" "Bill always put a positive spin on the worst situations," says one of his coworkers. "During his illness, his courageous spirit was amazing. He inspired all who knew him."

Throughout his illness, Bill continued to coach his sons' little league baseball and basketball teams and was involved with their activities as much as possible. He often volunteered when other parents couldn't to ensure that his boys were able to participate in their sporting events. Bill was an avid golfer and played with friends, family, and coworkers in between treatments. He was also a spirited baseball fan and was always up for a chat about his favorite team, the New York Mets.

Bill's family requests that expressions of sympathy take the form of contributions to the American Brain Tumor Association, 2720 River Road, Des Plaines, Ill., 60018.

Our Winged Friends Get a Lift from CRP

The Conservation Reserve Program, as well as wildlife restoration efforts from private organizations such as Ducks Unlimited and Pheasants Forever, is making a big difference in our Nation's wild bird population. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service reports that:

- 75 species of birds use new CRP habitats in the Northern Great Plains;

- prairie chickens, once long-absent in Texas, have reappeared due to increased feeding, nesting, and brood habitats;
- in the Midwest, grassland birds are 21 times more abundant in CRP fields than in adjacent cropland fields and 32 times more likely to reproduce;
- ring-necked pheasant populations in Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, and South Dakota have doubled;

Painted bunting

Photo from
Department of
Interior



- wild duck nesting populations in the Dakotas and Montana have increased by over 3 million;
- lark, bunting, and eastern meadowlark populations, once in serious decline, have rapidly recovered as CRP grasslands were established.



The Information Revolution Finally Reaches FSA Field Offices

FSA recently received the authority to use fiscal year 1998 funds to buy almost 10,000 new computers to replace those that would be subject to the Year 2000 problem. This means that those old 386s and 486s will soon get a well-deserved rest, and their places will be taken by brand-new Pentium II 400s. New Pentium II laptops are also in the works.

"I know this has been a long time in coming," says Administrator Kelly, "but we've tried to make sure that these new computers will be useful for many years to come." Each will have 64 megabytes of memory, a gigantic hard drive, top-of-the-line graphics capability, and a CD-ROM. "I'm not much of a computer person myself," Kelly says, "but I'm assured that these are state-of-the-art specifications."

What this means to you is that many jobs will become a lot easier:

- Downloading files will be much easier and faster, through the use of local area networks and a wide area network.
- Agency web pages will make it a snap to find and download information, from fact sheets to press

releases, to notices, maps, and on and on.

- Access to the World Wide Web will make it possible to find useful facts and figures from the Department and the outside world.
- E-mail and associated communications functions like address books will be quicker, easier, and will use a common format.
- New graphics capabilities will make publishing professional-looking county newsletters, flyers, and other printed materials a breeze.
- On top of all this, the new machines will make day-to-day office tasks easier and faster.

Says Deputy Administrator for Management George Aldaya, "I know that nothing can take the place of enough people to do the job — we're working on that, too — but the people we have need up-to-date tools. I'm pleased to be able to announce a big step forward in that regard."

The new machines should start reaching the field by the end of the year, and it will take a few months to configure and distribute them all. Until then, hang in there. Help is on the way!

FOOD FACT:

Almost 50 billion meals are eaten in restaurants and cafeterias each year. The typical person (8 years and older) consumed an average of 4.1 meals prepared away from home per week — 213 per year — in 1996.

— Source: National Restaurant Association



Tools for Learning



Jantrice Chappell, Farm Programs (above), and Toni Williams, Farm Loan (below), display some of the school supplies collected from FSA staff for Washington DC's Van Ness Elementary School, USDA's adopted school. FSA employees filled over 15 boxes with donated supplies — the lion's share coming from the Farm Loan folks. This drive is part of the 12-year on-going partnership between FSA and Van Ness School, which includes student tutoring. The Christmas drive will be coming up soon, so watch for an announcement — you can make a difference and help these kids have a great holiday! For details, call Alex King, Assistant Deputy Administrator, Commodity Operations, and Agency Representative, at (202) 720-7565.



First Aid for Farmers

by USDA Secretary Dan Glickman

While the U.S. economy steams ahead, America's farm economy is plunging into its deepest crisis in a decade. President Clinton has called the situation 'a horrible affront to everything we've worked so hard to achieve to lift the economy for all Americans.'

I am pleased that Congressional leaders finally addressed the hardship in farm country by passing a substantial emergency assistance package. But they did so only after President Clinton vetoed the original bill because it did not do enough for struggling farmers.

This Administration fought for and won a final package that will get some real help out to folks whose livelihoods are on the line. Thanks to this President's strong stand, many family farmers are now planning for a Spring crop instead of a Spring auction.

There are a number of additional actions USDA is taking to help farmers and ranchers:

- Producers will have early access to their 1999 farm payments. This will provide a \$5.6 billion infusion at a time when many farmers are having a hard time with cash-flow.
- Farmers this month received \$1.3 billion in Conservation Reserve Program payments. USDA also is looking into accelerating future payments and using the full authority of the CRP to encourage sustainable agriculture by helping keep folks *in* agriculture.
- USDA will pay an estimated \$4 billion in loan deficiency payments and marketing loan gains for the 1998 crop, giving farmers a financial cushion against extremely low prices. USDA also now allows loan deficiency payments on high-

moisture corn, silage and corn with aflatoxin. This change will send an extra \$150 million out to farmers who could use the help.

- By the end of the year, USDA will have purchased some 2.5 million metric tons of surplus wheat from U.S. farmers for donation to hungry nations around the world. And, USDA continues to make aggressive use of our export credit programs. Since Asia's economies went south, these credits have supported \$2.4 billion in U.S. farm exports to the region — exports that might not otherwise have occurred. Worldwide, USDA guaranteed more than \$4.6 billion in U.S. farm exports last fiscal year. We are well ahead of that pace so far this year.
- USDA's crop insurance programs will pay out \$1.7 billion to struggling farmers in 1998. We also made a number of changes to strengthen the program. We increased the coverage farmers can get in places that face repeated disasters. And, we are developing pilot programs that experiment with covering new and different crops.
- I hope to have proposals in the President's budget that make crop insurance more effective and affordable for all producers. This will not be cheap, but it is the most important step we can take to shore up the farm safety net.

The message of all this activity is simple: From the many ways USDA is flexing its authorities to our strong stand to ensure farm families get the help they need from Congress, this Administration is focused on the farm crisis and intent on doing every last thing we can to help.

Don't Forget to Get Out the Vote!

December 1 is the last day to return voted ballots for FSA committee elections. Remind producers in your area to mail in their ballots.

Tradition is important in agriculture — and it works. No other group of citizens has so direct a voice in running Government programs and making them available to the people of their communities. Our unique system of farmer-elected committees has been working since 1933, allowing farmers to make lasting contributions to agriculture and conservation.

Voting is one way to retain, as a sovereign right, a citizen's voice and responsibility in public affairs. So, let's get the word out — VOTE!



Clean Water — It Doesn't Come Cheap

by Lloyd Wilhelm and Pat Sanchez, New Mexico

Lloyd Wilhelm, CED in San Juan County, N.M., has followed an unusual path to get involved with the younger generation of Native Americans. In June, he talked with 30 Navajo reservation students at Newcomb, N.M.'s middle school about water conservation and pollution.

During the summer, the middle school sponsors classes on wide-ranging topics and encourages professional people in the community to visit with the students. One of the teachers, Karen Foutz, suggested that Wilhelm participate. Since the county office already promotes water conservation and pollution awareness to youths during the annual San Juan County Water Fair, Wilhelm was well prepared for the talk.

For the fifth through eighth grade class, he presented a 15-minute film called "Just a Drop in the Ocean." He then brought out a portable percolator that the county office had constructed to show how water moves through different soil levels. Wilhelm filled the percolator with sediment and other debris normally associated with a flash flood. Before adding some murky water, he asked the class if they wanted to drink some. He got a resounding "NO!" He then poured it in and to their surprise the percolator's filtration system produced much clearer water. Thus, the class learned that the earth has its own purification process through which we can obtain drinking water.



Wilhelm directs students' attention to different problems associated with lack of cover on soil.

Wilhelm then continued the lesson outside. He used containers filled with local soil to teach the class how to apply water conservation techniques to the land. The children participated in a project showing how normal rainfall can either erode the soil away or, with proper conservation farming practices, provide beneficial moisture to

crops. Through this project, the students learned first-hand how pollutants can end up in the waterways, eventually affecting drinking water.

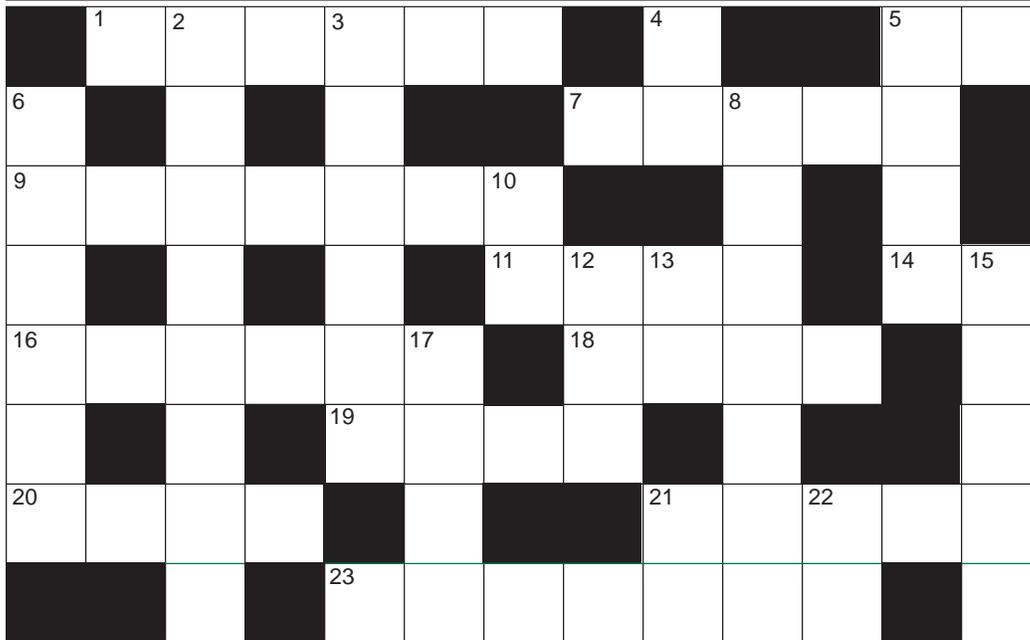
Judging by the amazed responses of both the teachers and students to the experiments and their results, the program was a huge success!

Pig Fact:

During the war of 1812, a New York pork packer named Uncle Sam Wilson shipped a boatload of several hundred barrels of pork to U.S. troops. Each barrel was stamped "U.S." on the docks. It was quickly said that the "U.S." stood for "Uncle Sam," whose large shipment seemed to be enough to feed the entire army. This is how "Uncle Sam" came to represent the U.S. Government.

— Source: National Pork Producers Council

NOVEMBER FSA CROSSWORD



DOWN

- 2. The science of cultivating major field crops
- 3. Ibis, peccary, or argali
- 4. The _____ State FSA Office is located in Davis
- 5. Noisy crop pest
- 6. Let's talk _____ this Thanksgiving
- 8. Thanksgiving pie
- 10. Be _____ liver is a great source of Vitamin A
- 12. Pigs and sheep went in here two by two
- 13. This tiny state has the fewest number of USDA employees
- 15. It makes your Thanksgiving bread rise
- 17. Place to store fodder
- 21. The _____ State FSA Office is located in East Lansing
- 22. _____ gume

ACROSS

- 1. America's favorite fresh fruit
- 5. The _____ State FSA Office is located in Windsor
- 7. Wood product
- 9. Wheat and barley are big crops in this agriculturally-rich country of the former U.S.S.R.
- 11. The average one in the U.S. is 469 acres
- 14. Cattle is this state's most lucrative commodity
- 16. This state ranks first in cash receipts of grain sorghum
- 18. Fruit is best in this condition
- 19. Farm animals enjoy a good salt _____
- 20. A Thanksgiving treat, aka sweet potatoes
- 21. Machines that convert grain into flour
- 23. Grain cutter and thresher

Answers to October's Puzzle



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
Month of November		National American Indian Heritage Month
November 12		Veterans Day
November 12	Kansas City, Mo.	Administrator Kelly to participate as a judge in the National Future Farmers of America's Star Farmer Competition
November 12	Kansas City, Mo.	Administrator Kelly to attend the National Association of Farm Broadcasters Convention
November 23	Lexington, Ky.	Administrator Kelly to attend the Burley Tobacco Market Grand Opening
November 26		HAPPY THANKSGIVING!!!!
December 3	Great Falls, Mont.	Administrator Kelly to address the Montana Grain Producers Annual Convention

Note: The above is subject to change.