

## FSA Outreach Goes Abroad

by Larry Segars, CED, Arkansas County Office, Ark.

**I**n October, I had the pleasure of visiting with an agricultural delegation from Thailand. We discussed FSA programs and how they work on the county level. The delegation included Dr. Suthiporn Chirapanda, Deputy Permanent Minister of Agriculture in Thailand; Prakarn Virakul, Counsel on Agriculture from the Thai Embassy in D.C.; and other officials. The group was escorted by Keith Rodgers, Dean of Agriculture at Arkansas State University.

Thailand, about the size of France, occupies the western half of the Indochinese Peninsula and the northern two-thirds of the Malay Peninsula in southeast Asia. The economy is heavily agricultural, accounting for 54 percent of its 32.6 million person labor force. Rice is by far the leading crop; the fertile central plain is dotted with numerous rice paddies. Other commercial crops include rubber, corn, kenaf, jute, tapioca, cotton, tobacco, kapok, and sugarcane. Marine and freshwater fisheries are common, and Thailand is a major exporter of farmed shrimp.

You may wonder how my county office got involved with Thailand. It started with a phone call from Keith Rodgers asking if I would be willing to meet with the delegates. They were in Stuttgart, Ark. visiting Riceland Foods and wanted some information on farm facility loans and other programs.

I scheduled a meeting with the group over lunch. Not an easy thing to do



Arkansas County, Ark, CED Larry Segars (fifth from left) and Arkansas State University Dean Keith Rodgers (third from left) with the Thailand delegation.

here. Where would be a good place? There is not exactly an abundance of nice restaurants in Stuttgart. Rodgers said not to worry – any place would be fine. So we met at the Little Chef, a good ole' southern cooking restaurant. I think everything went well, except that maybe the chicken and dumplings weren't what some of them had envisioned.

After the introductions, we talked for over two hours. The group was very well prepared and knew a lot about FSA. They were impressed with FSA's delivery system and our ability to, with short notice, administer crop, disaster

assistance, and other programs to producers. The delegation wanted my honest opinion on what worked well at the county level and how things could work better. We discussed the changes that would be needed to adapt our programs to Thai agricultural practices.

The delegates were particularly interested in farm storage and were trying to come up with a plan that the Thai government would accept. Barry Cooper, a Program Technician who accompanied me to the luncheon, was helpful

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## ADMINISTRATOR'S COLUMN from Acting Administrator James R. Little

### FSA Looks Ahead to a Bright Future

The change of Presidential Administration brings with it a host of changes for our Department and our Agency. But one thing remains constant, FSA's steadfast focus on providing top-notch service to our Nation's farmers and ranchers.

As the new Administration is established and organized at USDA, I want the emphasis to be on the can-do spirit of FSA. Our new USDA Secretary, Ann M. Veneman, is reinforcing this concept throughout the Department. Secretary Veneman has directed me to take whatever action is necessary to ensure that FSA continues its outstanding delivery of programs and services in a timely manner.

During my tenure, I pledge to maintain a productive, healthy, and fair work environment and to ensure that FSA continues to safeguard our Government's assets and resources.



James R. Little

We must work together in addressing key Agency issues, such as the strong progress made in establishing a Common Computing Environment in our field offices, upgrading and improving our delivery systems, and implementing E-File legislated mandates. We must also address and resolve expeditiously all civil rights issues and Consent Decree findings.

Secretary Veneman has made it clear that the Administration will deliver all fiscal year 2001 disaster and emergency related benefits and loans to farmers and ranchers as soon as possible. This means several things. First, all previously announced program signups will move forward as planned. Second, we will complete all disaster-related program regulations in a quality manner on a fast track. Finally, these regulations will proceed through Departmental and Office of Management and

Budget clearance as quickly as possible. These program regulations are not impacted by the President's moratorium on regulations and we all need to make sure our customers understand this.

The Secretary has also directed that I keep her apprised of all sensitive and controversial issues within our Agency. The only way I can accomplish this directive is through a team effort, so I look to each of you to keep this in mind as decisions and commitments are made. Feel free to bring any issues of concern directly to my office or through e-mail at [James\\_Little@wdc.fsa.usda.gov](mailto:James_Little@wdc.fsa.usda.gov)

I am confident that together we will meet all of our customers' expectations and those of our new Secretary as well. Many of you have already extended your knowledge and support to me. My thanks for your continued help.

As a former FSA employee, I know firsthand the important service FSA employees provide to America's farmers and ranchers. I am also confident that we can meet any challenge put before us, and I look forward to working with all of you!

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "James R. Little".

#### FSA NEWS

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FSA Public Affairs Staff  
1400 Independence Ave., SW  
Stop 0506  
Washington, DC 20250-0506

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## **FSA OUTREACH**

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here. In the past, he had worked on constructing grain bins. One major problem Thailand faces is that all construction materials for storage facilities must be imported – an expensive undertaking for the government. Considering the small size of Thailand's farms, I suggested that several producers collaborate to build shared facilities.

It was fascinating to compare differences in our cultures. For example, the average size of a farm in Thailand is 3 to 4 acres, where in Arkansas County it is several hundred acres. I told the group to be sure to brag about our Agency as much as possible. They laughed and one delegate said, "U.S. producers are very fortunate to have FSA."

Meeting with the delegates was an unusual experience for me. I don't know who had the most trouble understanding whom at times, me with their Thai and broken English, or them with my southern accent. We plan to keep in touch by e-mail and phone as they develop their plans. It was heartening to know that county FSA employees are held in such high esteem, even in such a distant country.

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## **Wishing You All the Best**

*by former FSA Administrator Keith Kelly*

**W**ell, my 3½ year tour of duty as FSA Administrator is complete. I look back fondly at the many things we have accomplished together. Your work has been extraordinary.

Even saddled with an ever increasing workload with a reduced staff, you kept your attention focused on helping keep America's farmers on their land and aiding those who wish to begin farming. Every day you help ensure a healthful, stable, and affordable food supply and sound stewardship of the land.

You took the challenges head-on, administering a myriad of new emergency programs, many designed and implemented entirely from scratch. By applying the resources available – farm loans, farm programs, food aid, conservation incentives, and others – FSA helped our Nation's producers face overwhelming adversity.

You benefitted farmers and fellow Americans in so many other ways. Employees worked diligently to bring their programs to previously



underserved customers and to hire a diversity of employees to better reflect the ever changing patterns of America's populations.

Your efforts with food recovery have made a meaningful difference for many diverse, low-income Americans. From 1997 to 2000, USDA employees across the Nation gleaned or recovered over 13 million pounds of nutritious food.

You did all this work, and more, in the face of high pressure and declining staffing levels. I have been thoroughly amazed by your service and commitment to America's farmers and ranchers. It has indeed been my honor and good fortune to "sign on and ride with such an outfit." I do believe that we have passed the Agency onto its next leaders in good shape. I hope they, with your help, will take FSA to the next higher level. You deserve nothing less.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Keith Kelly". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, thin vertical line extending downwards from the end.

## Maryland Gleans a Bounty of Produce

by Murray Dale Peppe, Mid-Atlantic Regional Public Affairs Specialist

**O**n a Saturday last fall, volunteers from FSA, local schools, and area gleaning networks contributed over 10,000 pounds of pears and red and green peppers to food banks in the Washington, D.C. and Baltimore, Md. area. Maryland SED Tom Shockley welcomed the gleaners, including former Administrator Kelly.

A Pennsylvania orchard kindly donated the 9,000 pounds of pears. The volunteers sorted and boxed them for distribution to regional food banks. Piscataway Farms contributed the red and green peppers, which were picked and sacked in the field by the volunteers.

The Prince Georges County School District offered a school bus and driver to transport the volunteers to and from the field. Gleaners were from the Washington Area Gleaning Network, the Baltimore Area Gleaning Network, the Maryland Food Bank, area high schools, and the FSA offices in Maryland and Washington, D.C.



Volunteers pick green and red peppers.



Volunteers sort and pack pears.

## If Only it Snowed in Puerto Rico!

by Trish (Smith) Halstead, Outreach Coordinator, Kansas

**W**hile many of us in colder regions may be weary of snowfall, it's quite exciting to someone who has never experienced it. That someone is Alexandra Castillo Lopez, a 20-year-old former intern in the Kansas State Office, who was pleasantly surprised by snowy weather here this winter.

Lopez, a Junior studying secretarial science at Interamerican University of Puerto Rico, participated in the Hispanic Association for Colleges and Universities Internship Program. Lopez was a great asset in the Administrative Division and made many friends. She completed her internship in December

and said it was an excellent opportunity that could help open doors for a great career.

To sustain the cold Kansas weather, Lopez bought clothing that will never be needed back home, such as sweaters, a winter coat, a stocking hat, gloves, and boots. The weather turned very cold in November, and she, along with the rest of us, bundled up every morning for the commute to work.

During the winter storm, Lopez packaged some snow

to take home – if only it were still snow when she opened it in Puerto Rico!



Alexandra Castillo Lopez.

## A Carnegie Performance

by Sue Carpenter, Kansas City Administrative Office, Mo.

**H**ow do you get to Carnegie Hall? According to FSA employee Debra Goldberg, “You practice, practice, practice.” Goldberg, a Management Analyst for Kansas City’s Administrative Office, is a singer with the 84-year-old Independence Messiah Choir. Goldberg has sung for 25 years with this 300-member choir of the Kansas City area.

The choir’s yearly performance of Handel’s *Messiah* is played worldwide via television and radio during the holiday season. This past year, the choir got the honor of performing *Messiah* at New York City’s Carnegie Hall. Goldberg describes the Hall as inspiring with its “unequaled acoustics and phenomenal history of musical performances. It was the thrill of a lifetime!”

The performance of the choir was supplemented by four professional solo artists. Goldberg says, “The magnificence of this opportunity just didn’t sink in until I actually began singing. Then, WOW!” The sold-out audience of 3,000 showed their appreciation at the end of the evening with an enthusiastic standing ovation.

“My biggest fan is my son, Tyler, who accompanied me on this dream come true,” says Goldberg. Mother and son toured New York City for several days. “Tyler would tell strangers on the street and shops clerks that we were in New York because his mom was singing at Carnegie Hall,” Goldberg says.

Goldberg grew up performing in school choirs, ensembles, and musicals. Her singing voice has taken her around the world. She’s also performed at numerous USDA functions, including the 2000 Kick-Off Rally for the Combined Federal Campaign.

Goldberg says, “I cherish the many opportunities music has provided me, the people I’ve been blessed to meet, the places I’ve visited, and the powerful emotions I’ve experienced through music. I look forward to many more musical moments.” And so do we!

*Source: January issue of Kansas City FSA’s On Target employee newsletter.*



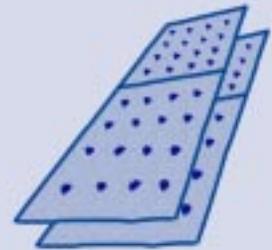
Debra Goldberg.



Goldberg outside Carnegie Hall.

### GRAHAM CRACKER INVENTOR BATTERED

Graham crackers are made with graham flour, an unbolted wheat flour. Graham crackers are named after Sylvester Graham, an American nutritionist who first developed this treat in 1829. Graham advocated a plain diet made up of rough cereals, fruit, vegetables, and homemade breads.



Grahamism flourished in the 1830s and his followers often lived in communes. Not everyone was impressed by Graham’s views though, and he was once attacked by a mob of angry bakers and butchers.

*Source: The Learning Kingdom*

## Minnesota Cares -- And Shows It

by Jim Meisenheimer, Regional Public Affairs Specialist; and Patsy Steffen, Minnesota SED's Secretary

**F**SA employees throughout Minnesota have a longstanding tradition of pitching in to help others through sponsoring outreach projects and donating food and household items. This giving spirit was exemplified during the recent holiday season.

In Carver County, for instance, USDA service center staff members upheld their five-year tradition of adopting a family in need through the county's Friends For Life project. This past year's recipient was a single mother with 6-year-old triplets. Employees collected over \$250 to purchase

clothing, toys, and a holiday meal for the family. They also gave the mother a \$50 gift certificate from Target.

The State Office has been collecting food and gifts during the holiday season for various organizations since 1992 – a long time! This year, 60 generous employees, including the Minnesota State FSA Committee, collected over \$800 to purchase gift certificates and gifts for a Hmong family with nine children. The Catholic Charities Frogtown Center in St. Paul located this Hmong family in desperate need of winter coats, socks, sweaters, household items, and food. These items were delivered to the family the week before Christmas so they were able to have presents under the tree on Christmas Day.

We are proud of our state's efforts to reach out to the community year after year and believe it reflects the caring nature of FSA employees. We hope that these outreach efforts will help make a positive change in the lives of individuals in our community.



photo by Tim Gieseke

Carver County, Minn. employees who donated items are: Jon Sandholm, FSA; Chip Hentges, Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD); Lori Brinkman, SWCD; Mike Wanous, SWCD; Sue Goetz, FSA; Jim Onstad, NRCS; and Carole Pierson, FSA. Other Carver County contributors not pictured are: Connie Laumann, FSA; Krys Krienke, FSA; Barb Werner, FSA-retired; Tim Gieseke, SWCD; Felicia Brockoff, SWDC; and Sean O'Brien, State Department of Natural Resources.

### HOGS RIOT ON WALL STREET

In colonial times, free-roaming hogs were notorious for rampaging through the precious grain fields of New York City's farms. Manhattan Island residents chose to limit the forays of these riotous swine by erecting a long, permanent wall on the northern edge of what is now Lower Manhattan. A street came to parallel this wall – aptly enough named Wall Street.

Source: National Pork Producers Council



## The “Quiet Corner” Speaks Up

by Dawn S. Pindell, CED, Windham County, Conn., FSA Office

**T**he northeast corner of Connecticut is known as the “Quiet Corner.” Our serene corner of the U.S. encompasses 745 square miles of graceful countryside and historic villages.

From bison to apple orchards, our agricultural region has it all. To promote this rich diversity, representatives from FSA and other USDA agencies, farmers, and agricultural industry leaders formed a locally led workgroup. The Thames River Basin Partnership (TRBP) supports agricultural growth in our region and works to preserve our unique rural character.

Our latest effort was an upbeat forum focusing on an exchange of ideas between community leaders and landowners. The October 2000 forum centered on a new brochure entitled “Green & Growing, A Guide to the Agriculture



photos by Keith Rogers  
Forum presenter John Behan, American Institute of Certified Planners; TRBP member Elizabeth Rogers, NRCS; panelist Debbie Tanner, Creamery Brook Farms; panelist Jerry Cosgrove, American Farmland Trust; TRBP member Dawn Pindell; panelist Betti Kuszaj, Northeastern Connecticut Chamber of Commerce; and panelist Michelle Womack, Main Street Coordinator.

Treasures in Northeast Connecticut and South Central Massachusetts.” Charlene Perkins Cutler, Director of the Quinebaug Shetucket Heritage Corridor,

highlighted the brochure. Connecticut SED Robin Chesmer was recognized for his role in chairing the committee that created this publication.

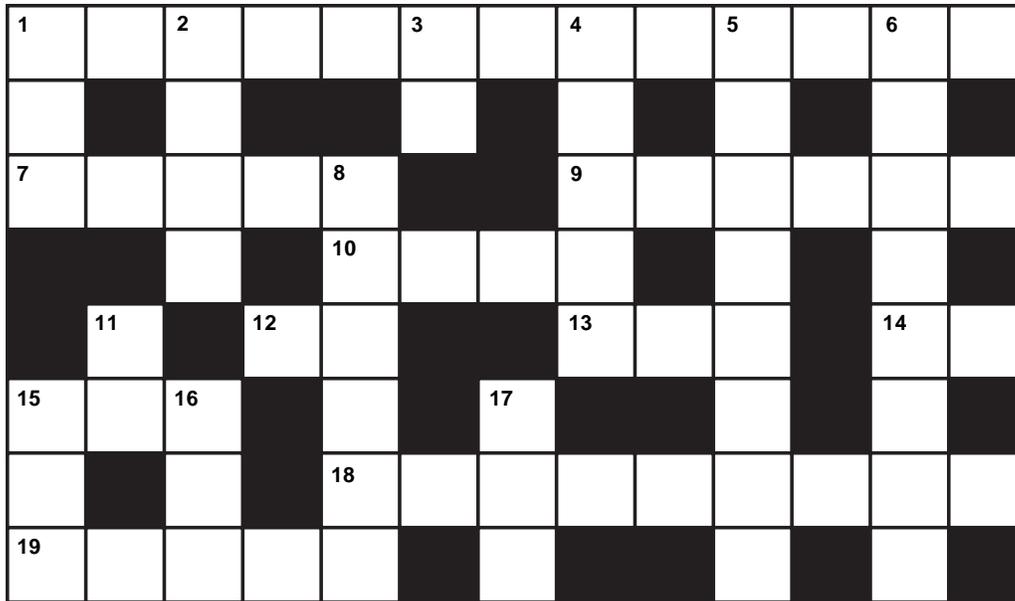
The forum also offered presentations and exhibits on conservation, the region’s economy, and the progress of the Thames River Partnership. In addition, I moderated a panel discussion called “Ideas To Grow With.” Panelists included farmers, bankers, and a local government official.

After a networking luncheon, participants chose between touring Creamery Brook Bison Farm or Main Street Danielson to learn from and share the farm/city experience. Everyone on the bison tour was treated to a hayride out into the pasture to meet the bison as they came in for a treat of grain. It was the perfect end to an informative and enjoyable day!



Jerry Cosgrove; Elizabeth Rogers; Robin Chesmer, SED; TRBP member Linda Cardini, Connecticut Rural Development Council; TRBP member Margo Wallace, NRCS; Dawn Pindell; and TRBP member Larry McMillan, Environmental Protection Agency. Other TRBP members not pictured are: Jerry Morrison, Department of Economic and Community Development; Lee Szruba, New London County Soil & Water Conservation District; Eric Thomas, Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection; and Susan Westa, Windham County Soil & Water Conservation District.

## FEBRUARY FSA CROSSWORD



**ACROSS**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <p>1. FSA employees belong to a variety of these in the workplace</p> <p>7. A quick and efficient way to communicate with fellow FSA employees</p> <p>9. The boll weevil is an _____ that wreaks havoc on cotton, destroying 8 percent of the U.S. crop annually</p> <p>10. FSA employees know the ins and _____ of our programs</p> | <p>12. Fresh ___ a daisy</p> <p>13. Tall and graceful shade tree</p> <p>14. You can lead a horse ___ water, but you can't make him drink</p> <p>15. Our employer</p> <p>18. FSA programs help producers become more _____ stewards of the land</p> <p>19. Small secluded valleys</p> |
|--|--|

**DOWN**

1. Number of Federal holidays in February
2. FSA employees usually run in high \_\_\_\_\_
3. Pigs \_\_\_ a blanket
4. The seeds of this plant are used in cooking and liqueurs for its licorice-like flavor
5. If you drink too much coffee, you may experience this
6. A colorless, oily component of the tobacco plant
8. FSA disaster programs help farmers recover from these
11. Bright \_\_\_ a peacock
15. Small pear-shaped fruit that is commonly eaten dried
16. This President established USDA in 1862
17. Agricultural youth organization

## CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Date	Location	Event
Month of February		Black History Month
February 2		Groundhog Day
February 2-3	Bismark, N.D.	Carolyn Cooksie, Deputy Administrator for Farm Loan Programs, to attend National Association of Credit Specialists Meeting
February 15-25	Johannesburg, South Africa	Alex King, Acting Deputy Administrator for Commodity Operations, to attend a Compliance and Financial Resource Management Training Workshop
February 17-24		National FFA Week
February 19		Washington's Birthday

*Note: The above is subject to change.*