

## Welcome Home, Jessyca

*"We felt your presence and support from thousands of miles away from our home here in Junction City, WI."*

**Jake and Monica Bourget**



*Jessyca's welcome home. (Back row, l to r) Jake and Jeremy. (Front row, l to r) Carey, Jessyca and Monica.*

To A Nation of Friends:

Ol' Mr. Webster, I believe, never invented the words to express the gratitude and love my family feels toward each and everyone out there who helped and prayed in anyway they could for the safe return of our little girl, Jessyca. We felt your presence and support from thousands of miles away from our home here in Junction City, Wisconsin. With your help and many others, we distributed over 2.5 million missing child posters and had over 7,000 posters on the back doors of semi trailers going coast to coast across the Nation. It was your help that kept the story alive and in the news which prompted national TV shows such as America's Most Wanted—Final Justice to put Jessyca's story and picture on the air so that a wonderful lady named Lillie in Houston, Texas could see it and recognize Jessyca and come to her rescue. For this we will never be able to thank everyone enough.

My thanks go to the people in Washington, D.C. and Wisconsin SED Doug Caruso for allowing FSA mailing and printing to be used to let the Nation know Jessyca had been abducted. Many of you voluntarily inserted the missing poster into your newsletters which helped a great deal. For taking the extra time to spread the word she was out there somewhere, thank you.

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## ...Message from the Administrator

If this were any other farm bill year I can remember, we'd be talking about sign up and how the new programs would work. Instead, without a bill, we have been gearing up to carry out programs under permanent legislation if need be. I assure you this was not our preferred course of action. What we all want is a responsible and effective farm bill written for today's needs.

We're now more optimistic that we'll get one. With the Senate and House now in conference on the farm bill, the legislative process is on the move. We're hopeful that acceptable new law can be enacted soon — and end the uncertainty that has frustrated everybody involved in agriculture.

The Senate and House bills do not address all of the Administration's concerns for a new farm bill. They do, however, offer several significant improvements over the budget reconciliation measure, and we're hopeful the House and Senate conference committees will soon get together and make additional improvements so we can get a final bill enacted.

We'll be working hard with the Congress to incorporate into the final package three principles enunciated by the Administration. These are the preservation of a responsible safety net for farmers, support for a strong and competitive agricultural section (including the promotion of exports and a vibrant rural economy), and the enhancement of economic opportunity for farmers and other rural residents.

Secretary Glickman said he was particularly concerned that neither the Senate nor the House measure provides as strong a safety net for farmers as he would like. He did say, however, the amendments adopted in the Senate version were significant improvements and that bill represents a good place from which to begin negotiations as the bill goes through conference.

I think we can safely assume that the "Freedom to Farm" approach in some form will be the basis for new farm policy. Even with modifications the Administration is seeking, we're looking at a dramatic departure from our current programs, and from the policies in place for the past 60 years. This means, of course, initially more work for everyone in FSA, as we continue to put the reorganization in place and now deal with implementing a new farm bill.

This leads me to another issue that I know is priority in the minds of everyone. What is the future of employment with the Agency and are we going to have reductions-in-force? I must be honest and say that "Freedom to Farm" coupled with reductions in our budget will cause the Agency to reduce staff. At the present time, we do not have the numbers to know exactly how many positions will be cut, where or when these reductions will take place. I can assure you, we will make every effort to minimize any staff reductions.

Buyout legislation is again being discussed on Capitol Hill. Early retirements are another option. RIF's are clearly the least desirable method, but we must prepare for that possible eventuality. We are working to develop a handbook which clearly states FSA/FAS reduction-in-force policy. We will develop this policy with help from both agencies involving headquarters, field employees and employee representatives. I will keep you informed as this working group progresses and as more information is available.

Administrator

### FSA News

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To the program assistants in the Portage County, WI Office, you were wonderful throughout this whole ordeal. No one could have asked for more, nor could I have expected you to do all that you did. For 105 days I was barely in the office and when I was there my mind was far from where it should have been. These women took their own vacation time to help at the "Find Jessyca Volunteer Center" as well as time from home to go into the office after hours to keep up with the busy fall we had. My wife, Monica, and I will never be able to thank them enough for their spirit devoted to never giving up and giving us continuous support and hope. If there is an award for dedication and perseverance, you guys deserve every bit of it.

And what about the producers we serve each day? Words cannot describe the reception and help many of them gave my family and me. The donations by many local producers to the Find Jessyca Fund were tremendous, and they were given at a time when I know many of them are financially struggling themselves. Our neighboring farmers kept us well fed with home-cooked

meals, and the Christmas goodies were wonderful. When my transmission went out in my truck, a producer went into town, picked up my truck, left a truck in my yard for me to use, and took my truck to another producer's shop where he took time out of his busy schedule and fixed it!! The generosity of so many reinforces my conviction that American farmers are some of the greatest people on the face of this earth.

Family is the most precious thing one could have in this world. Our daughter Jessyca was abducted on September 16, 1995, and was found alive 105 days later, and we picked her up in Houston, Texas on December 29, 1995. It was the most wonderful Christmas present anyone could receive—our daughter home at last. Due to the pending trial I cannot comment on Jessyca's condition or what happened to her except that she is home, safe, and the emotional healing process from being abducted will take some time.

I may only be a small time CED here in Portage County, Wisconsin, but I can guarantee that this day I am the happiest CED in this entire great Nation. We have many, many of you to thank for that. When you go to bed at night, if

you think of it, please say a little prayer for all missing children and their heart-broken parents. Believe me when I say they would greatly appreciate it, and somehow they can feel your prayers for them. Thank you.

Jake, Monica and Family



*From Jessyca: I want to thank every - one who helped look for me, because I wanted to be home. Every day I could only think about how*

*much I wanted to be home with Mom, Jake, and my brothers. I could feel everyone was looking for me, and I knew that one day they would find me. Thank You for bringing me home!*



Tanya McKinnon

## **PA's Daughter Takes the Crown!**

Debbie McKinnon, a program assistant in Rich County, Utah, is smiling a lot these days. After her daughter Tanya

was crowned as Miss Rodeo Utah during the Ogden Pioneer Days Celebration in July, she went on to win the title of Miss Rodeo America at this year's National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas. She beat out 32 other contestants.

The 21-year-old Utah State University senior is raring to go into the fastest-paced year of her life. Tanya expects a whirlwind year attending 100 rodeos during her reign and may fly to Hawaii and other exciting destinations as the sport's official ambassador.

Tanya is a Rich High School graduate and the only child of Ross and Debbie McKinnon. Her proud parents supported and encouraged Tanya through her involvement in 4-H horse shows, high school and professional rodeo.

After her year long reign, Tanya plans to finish her degree in bio-veterinary medicine and pursue her dream of becoming a large animal veterinarian.

## **More Bucks for Fishing**

Back in the September/October issue of the News, we told you about FSA spouse Bob Johnson taking home \$26,000 he won in a regional fishing contest in Minnesota. His winnings there qualified him for the National Walleye Anglers meet at Lake Cumberland, Kentucky.

His good fortune continued, though not on the same scale. In Kentucky, Johnson came in 12th — high enough to reward him with \$2,900. His wife, Barbara, who is agricultural credit officer in Plankinton, South Dakota, said he was pleased with that finish.

"He likes it so well, he plans to do it all over again in 1996," she said.

# Supervisory Training held in Kansas City for District Directors



Sally Davila, meeting planner, hands out boxes to DD's for mailing course materials back to their offices.

## Reorganization Within Farm Service Agency Requires Supervisory Training

District Directors (DD's) across the Nation attended the first Supervisory Training sessions developed for them in Kansas City, Missouri. DD's are beginning their new duties managing Federal employees in the Ag Credit Teams.

Beginning January 8, some of the over 250 District Directors in FSA arrived in Kansas City to attend the first session of the training. Due to the Blizzard of '96, the first session held January 8 - 12 was reduced to about 65 participants.

*"A much needed course that will provide assistance to all supervisors of Federal and County employees."*

Several District Directors had delayed arrivals because of the extreme weather conditions. This hardy group was welcomed by Jim L. Ray, Acting Director,

KCMO. He explained that the week of training would meet half the Agency's requirement of 80 hours of training for new supervisors. With the reorganization, both George Aldaya, Deputy Administrator for Management, and John Stencel, Deputy Administrator for Program Delivery and Field Operations (DAPDFO), recognized this training as a high priority. The District Directors will supervise Federal employees in the Ag Credit Teams, which are located in the County Office System and directly supervised by an Ag Credit Team Manager. The District Director is the second level supervisor in most cases for these employees.

*"I enjoyed the week with my peers; outside discussion was a benefit."*

During the week, DD's received needed information about regulations and directives in FSA. Efforts to apply this information in the sessions gave every-

one an opportunity to ask questions and to discuss their duties with both the trainers and fellow DD's. The skill and knowledge within each work area was effectively presented by the staff of KCMO's Personnel Division. Mary L. Winters, Chief, Personnel Division, was acutely aware of the need for this training as the reorganization continued. It required Personnelists in Kansas City to undertake service for about 7,000 employees compared with approximately 2,400 employees in the former ASCS. This dramatic increase in servicing needs prompted her to meet with the FSA Area Directors in November 1995.

*"Very worthwhile to have DD's together from around the Nation. I have learned much from other States which I believe will help in the reorganization effort. I would be willing to help in a future training session."*

John Stencel, DAPDFO, spoke to the first and third sessions about the efforts made to equip each of the District Directors with this new supervisory knowledge. He also introduced the one-day session of Train the Trainer for County Committee Training 1996 to be given when they returned home. The second session, held January 22-26, was opened by Elnora Dooms, Assistant Deputy Administrator for Program Delivery and Field Operations.

*"Instructors knew their topics and information very well and should be commended for that. They appear to like their jobs and that makes listening to them all the more enjoyable..."*



*Donald Grace, Chief, Employee and Labor Relations Branch, expresses his views about the Mentoring Program. Seated are Phyllis Honor (left) and Mentee, Pamela Kiessling (right).*

## **Mentoring Program Kicks Off!**

The FSA/FAS Mentoring Program Kick-Off Ceremony was held in Washington, D.C. on November 29, 1995. Mary Baskerville, National Office Mentoring Program Coordinator, welcomed FSA and FAS employees to the Kick-Off Ceremony. Remarks were made by Don Harris, Human Resources Division Director; George Aldaya, Deputy Administrator for Management; August Schumacher, FAS Administrator; Grant Buntrock, FSA Administrator; and the keynote speaker was Dallas Smith, Deputy Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services. A brief overview of the Mentoring Program was provided to ceremony attendees:

- It is a 1-year voluntary program for FSA/FAS National Office employees.
- A reasonable amount of official time will be allocated to participate in the Program.
- All FSA and FAS employees can participate in the Program regardless of grade or occupational levels.
- The open season for participating in the Program began during the Kick-Off Program and lasted until December 21, 1995.
- It is an excellent means for employees to enhance their own personal growth through learning from a more experienced employee.
- Mentors and Mentees will go through a orientation to learn their roles, and
- A Mentoring Program Committee will be formed to assist Program participants.

All of the speakers during the Ceremony shared their own personal experiences being both a Mentor and Mentee. In addition, the Mentees discussed the help they received from their Mentors which aided them in becoming successful in their careers.

Applications and brochures were given out during the Kick-Off Program. More information regarding the Program can be received by calling Mary Baskerville, National Office Mentoring Program Coordinator, at 202-254-8336, FSA Human Resources Division, Training and Development Branch.

## **Scholarship Applications Available**

Aspiring and current public employees in search of scholarship money take note. Applications are now available for the 1996 Public Employees Roundtable Public Service Scholarship Program which awards money to bright and talented college students who plan to pursue careers in government.

Since 1985, the Roundtable has awarded nearly \$100,000 in merit-based scholarships to students throughout the United States.

Applicants must be enrolled either full-time in a four-year undergraduate degree program or be enrolled full or part time in a graduate or post-graduate program. Undergraduates must have completed their first year of college work. All applicants must have a minimum cumulative grade point average in their current degree program of a 3.5 or higher on a 4.0 scale. Preference will be given to applicants with previous public service work or volunteer experience, including community service experience. Applicants will be asked to write a two-page essay which addresses the topic, "Through my chosen career as a government employee, I will contribute to a more positive image of public service by ..."

Applications may be requested by sending a self-addressed, stamped business envelope to PER Scholarship Program, P.O. Box 14270, Washington, DC 20044-4270. The deadline for receipt of applications is May 17, 1996. For more information, call Public Employees Roundtable at 202-927-5000.



*The old and new, side-by-side.*

## **Advanced 36: The black box that's showing up everywhere**

*Submitted by the Technical Services Division, KCMO*

What is an Advanced 36, why are we getting them, and how will it impact me? The Advanced 36 was announced by IBM on October 4, 1994. This upgrade of the System/36s™ is designed with the latest technology, which translates to faster hardware. Besides being "not much bigger than a bread box," the Advanced 36:

- Increases capacity, performance and reliability.
- Protects our software application investment.
- Preserves our investment in education and experience.
- Uses less electricity, is quieter, and doesn't require air conditioning, and
- Uses our existing printers and terminals.

Why are we getting Advanced 36s now? We are getting this interim solution now to ensure that continued, reliable program service delivery to our customers is maintained.

The System/36s™ have been steady and reliable, but they are old, tired, and in computer years, they are dinosaurs. Projections indicated that disk crashes were ready to explode, meaning unacceptable down times for County Offices and the producers they serve. In addition, several offices were on the verge of maxing-out the capacity of the largest System/36. Another justification for getting the Advanced 36 now is the reduced maintenance and utility cost. With all things considered, the Advanced 36s will pay for themselves in a short period of time and provide an immediate improvement in service to producers.

How will the Advanced 36 impact me? Any change makes people wonder about this. The great thing about this technology is that you don't have to learn a new system, keyboard and procedures during sign-up and a new Farm Bill because it still runs the existing applications with the same peripherals (terminals, printers, modems, etc.) but much faster than before. There have been numerous testimonials from the field describing the impacts they've already experienced. Here are a few: "Farmer waiting time is drastically reduced and employee morale improved greatly."

"Producers have noticed a big change time-wise, and they have been very pleased. Reports that used to take hours now take only a few minutes. I can't say enough for this Advanced 36 system. This is a MUST in every office."

"Because of increased processing speed, we are stressing that we now expect our staff to make one-stop work for our farmers unless they choose to come back another day to finish things up."

"Nearly every producer who has certified in the last week has commented on how much faster the job got done than in the past."

**Implementation.** The Advanced 36 roll-out happened at an unprecedented pace. Between March 1 and August 13, 1995, over 300 Advanced 36s were ordered for capacity upgrades to System/36s in County Offices. Approval was subsequently obtained to replace System 36s nationwide for all FSA service center offices. In late August IBM began shipping 100 Advanced 36s per week to State and County Offices. This pace increased until late December, when all sites were shipped an Advanced 36.

Justifying the Advanced 36 and installing it (migrating the software, files and peripherals) at no additional cost to the Government and in a very short time frame has not been easy. Thanks to the support of County Office employees and the Automation

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Coordinators, this challenging task has become an overwhelming success. ACs were extremely helpful in:

- Developing a process to capture timings that helped justify some of the savings in tax dollars and efficiencies,
- Developing and testing installation instructions,
- Determining the delivery schedule, and

- Coordinating installations, training installers, and performing installations.

County Office employees have made it all come together by:

- Responding quickly to the timing comparison request,
- Volunteering to be one of the early installations to help work out the bugs in our installation procedures, and
- Performing or assisting with the installation of the Advanced 36s and the deinstallation of the System/36s.

What's next? FSA continues work with other partner agencies involved in the USDA Service Center Implementation initiative to define and acquire a common computing environment to support Service Center program delivery and operations. One thing is for sure—with this interim solution, we will be able to maintain reliable program service delivery and provide quicker service to our customers until a common computing environment arrives.

## **Repeat: Flash Flood Destroys Pocahontas County Computers**



On November 3rd and 4th, 1985, a flash flood destroyed the Pocahontas County FSA Office. Six feet of water covered everything—including a new 5362 IBM computer.

Ten years later, January 19, 1996, excessive snow and heavy rains produced flooding which again destroyed the office, which lost all automation equipment, including the new A/36 just sitting in its box waiting to be installed.

In 1985 IBM recovered some data from the hard drive of the CPU. In 1996 the office resumed full operating capacity by January 23 through the use of a “miracle” tape backup. The Automation Coordinator (AC), Rick Snuffer, and State Executive Director Billy Burke arrived on site Sunday the 21st to survey the damage. They loaded

the automation equipment into the back of a truck to be examined for salvage by IBM (all equipment was later deemed unrepairable). It was during this process of shoveling through the mess and throwing out ruined equipment that Rick discovered the nightly files backup still in the tape drive. Due to below freezing temperatures, the tape had frozen in the drive. After a little persuasion, Rick freed the tape only to discover that it was filled with mud, ice and water. He said, “So much for this backup” and tossed it unprotected into the back of the truck.

As luck would have it, Rick had scheduled the Wayne County office for closure on January 22. He kept the U-Haul that had been rented to move furniture to the new consolidated office and

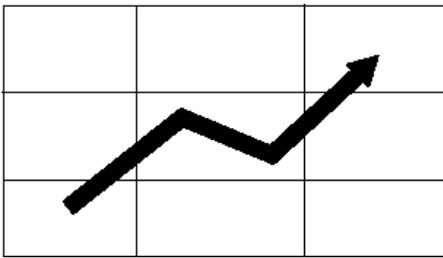
routed all surplus equipment including the used 5362 and all peripherals from Wayne to Pocahontas County. After removing the files from the Wayne County computer, the ever-thinking AC had a wild idea.

The flooded tape, full of mud, was now in the trunk of his car. While waiting for the Wayne County files to download, Rick disassembled the 600-foot tape only to find it in worse condition than he had thought. Mud and silt completely filled the cartridge and covered the tape. With patience and a lot of luck, he removed as much mud and water as possible. Afterwards, he tried to catalog the tape. The attempt failed. Unwilling to accept this, Rick opened the tape and cleaned it one more time. Over the next 2 hours, stopping to clean the tape drives as often as possible, the miracle tape allowed Rick to restore all data files. He then transported and installed the system at the new headquarters of the Pocahontas County FSA. Thanks to the miracle tape and a lot of luck, Pocahontas County resumed operating procedures as if it were a usual morning, and the flood had not occurred.

This is not the end of the story. The State Office quickly replaced the advanced A/36. Rick installed the new system on January 26. One week from the time the flood devastated the Pocahontas County FSA, the office and computer were up and running with all data recovered.

Pocahontas County employees ask that the next time someone wants to send them a new computer, make sure it comes equipped with its own flotation device.

## TSP Has Great '95 But Slow Start in 96



The three funds in the Thrift Savings Plan continued their upward spiral during the final two months of 1995. However, the funds slowed a bit during February.

The C Fund, invested in the Standard & Poor's 500 stock shot up 4.38 percent in November, 1.92 in December, 3.41 in January and slowed to a .91 percent gain in February 1996.

The F Fund posted a 1.49 percent gain in November, and climbed 1.39 percent in December. The fund has slowed dramatically as we begin 1996. In January the F Fund rose only .66 percent and lost 1.75 percent in February. The F Fund is invested in bonds.

And the G Fund, invested in special U.S. treasuries, continued steady. The G fund rose .51 percent in November, .50 percent in December, .49 in January and .46 in February.

For calendar year 1995, the C fund returned 37.41 percent, the F Fund 18.31 percent, and the G Fund 7.03 percent. In the 12 months ending in February 1996, the C fund gained 34.58 percent, the F Fund rose 12.07 percent and the G fund edged up 6.69 percent.



Randy Weber, Associate Administrator, (standing, right) checks in with the Task Force conferees.

## Farm Bill Task Force Meets in D.C.

A task force of Farm Service Agency SEDs, county staff and D.C. employees met in Washington in March to work on policy issues regarding the soon-to-be-law 1995 Farm Bill.

The late passage of a Farm Bill is placing enormous time restrictions on FSA to be ready to roll when it finally does become law. The best way to do it: bring the people together who are going to have to do the work and get plenty of State and county input up front.

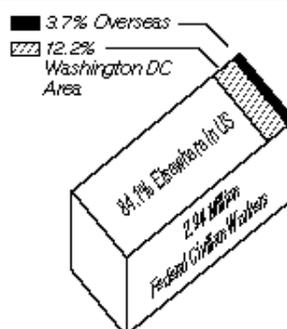
The group developed issues/options for Secretary's decisions, presenting best options for key policy decisions and drafted regulations & forms policy needed to administer the new law. Topics ranged from production adjustment data to guidelines for fair distribution of payments to farmers. "It really helped to have a wide representation of every kind of farming practice across the country," said April Hall, PA, from Goodland, Kansas.

The task force first met for one week in January. The March meeting was the

second conference, and another probably will take place in April. In between, conference calls are being held. In Washington, the group was updated daily by people who had been "up on the Hill" taking note of the changes to the Bill as it moved through Congress.

Judy Rocconi, CED, Little River County, AR, was impressed with the professionalism and team approach of the conferees. "I now have a better understanding of the agency's big picture. We're at the bottom of the chain — mass producing the work, but I've now been a part of the scope of Washington thinking — seeing how each small issue can affect every program across the country."

Scott Stofferahan, North Dakota SED, spoke for many of the conferees: "The county members on this task force typify this agency's history. Their attitude is, 'We've done it before, we'll do it again — short staffed, impossible deadlines, whatever needs to be done, we'll do it.'"



## Federal Workforce Snapshot

Of the Nation's 2.94 million Federal civilian workers, 12.2% work in the Washington, DC area. The remainder work elsewhere in the U.S. (84.1%) or overseas (3.7%). (Figures are as of 5-95.)