



In This Issue

- Heart to Heart with Hardisty
- Employee Spotlight—Rafael Vega
- Hoosier Happenings
- American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month
- Partners' Web Links
- Personnel Updates
- Featured Website—National Agricultural Library
- Mark Your Calendar

Heart to Heart
... with Hardisty



 Calendar year 2007 will soon end, and the new year is fast approaching. As we continue to work under a continuing resolution and wait on the passing of a new farm bill, there are some uncertainties that we deal with on a daily basis. However, the Indiana NRCS employees have faced uncertain times before and have made it through seamlessly.

Because of your hard work and dedication to conservation, you have persevered and attained a high level of success. I want to thank each of you for your positive attitude and work ethic. You should feel good about the work you do in helping people help the land. I am truly thankful to work with you in conserving our natural resources.

 The holiday season is here once again. Let me encourage you to relax and spend some quality time sharing with families and friends. The holidays give us some time off to enjoy, but also provide us with an opportunity to reflect on the past year's activities and to set goals for the coming year. I look forward to working with you in 2008, with great expectations of accomplishing much for conservation in Indiana.

Jane E. Hardisty

*** * * * Employee Spotlight * * * ***

**Rafael Vega
Soil Conservationist, South Bend**

Q: Rafael, would you tell us briefly about your roots?

A: I was born and raised on the island of Puerto Rico. My mother's name is Zania Toro and my father's name is Rafael Vega; and I have to say my first son will be named Rafael, too. Puerto Rico is a beautiful tropical island in the Caribbean Sea that has been a U. S. Territory since 1898. Our first language is Spanish, and second is English. Puer-torricans love great food, nice music, and great company!

Q: How did you become interested in conservation and in working for NRCS?

A: My interest in conservation came from my parents; my father is a chemist, who works in drinking water treatment facilities, and my mom is a science teacher. Since I was a child, they taught me to respect nature. This led me to pursue a degree in Environmental Sciences at the Interamerican University of Puerto Rico. During the summer of 2004, I had the great opportunity to do an internship at the Indiana NRCS state office through the Hispanic Associations of Colleges and Universities; assisting with digitizing the Web soil survey. That experience gave me the chance to see what this agency was doing for the benefit of our natural resources, and made me realize that working with NRCS was what I wanted to do for the rest of my life.

Q: You are known as a passionate person regarding conservation. Why is that?

A: In each project, I put my heart and soul in it. For me, everything is important, and there is no project that does not receive my best effort. Furthermore, being taught as a child the value of respecting nature made me an adult who believes in conservation. It is an honor to be an employee of this agency, and when I am dealing with a customer I put forth my best effort to influence that person to become positively involved in conservation.

Q: What activity have you found most exciting since you began working for NRCS?

A: One of the most exciting activities in which I had the chance to participate was the Indiana State Fair Pathway to Water Quality. I think that educating the next generation will provide them with the knowledge and values for helping people help the land in the future. Being able to interact with these kids, teaching them simple conservation concepts and observing their reactions, made me understand that this



agency's efforts in outreach activities is creating a fertile environment for future generations.

Q: What compelled you to apply for a Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM) position?

A: Since I started as a student I received guidance from various NRCS professionals to help me understand the great opportunities of this agency. Working with other SEPMs gave me the opportunity to look at them as examples of the type of employee I wanted to become. Now, my main focus as an SEPM is to make a difference for each person that I have the chance to attract to this agency, making sure that he/she has the same opportunities that I have.

Q: Do you have any hobbies or interests outside of work that take up your spare time?

A: I like to read fiction of Latin-American authors like Isabel Allende, Gabriel Garcia Marques, and Paulo Coelho. I love to workout, play basketball, dance to Latin music, and explore unknown places. Most importantly, much of my spare time is spent with my fiancée, Lindsay!

Q: What are some of your future goals in conservation?

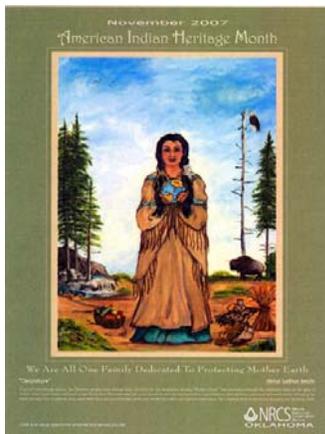
A: I think that my main goal as a conservationist is to become a good example of an NRCS employee to the community. My desires are to help Indiana with economically and environmentally friendly agriculture that is sustainable; to develop my skills and abilities to become a future manager; and to learn from the present NRCS supervisors who are setting the example for us to emulate in the future.

—Special Emphasis—

**November—American Indian/
Alaska Native Heritage Month**

American Indian/Alaska Native Heritage Month has been celebrated during November since 1990 to recognize the intertribal cultures and to educate the public about the heritage, history, art, and traditions of American Indians and Alaska Natives. Tribal Americans have brought to this country certain values and ideas that have become ingrained in the American spirit: the knowledge that humans can thrive and prosper without destroying the natural environment; the understanding that people from different backgrounds, cultures, religions, and traditions can come together to build a great country; and the awareness that diversity can be a source of strength rather than division.

The 2007 poster, “We are One Family Dedicated to Protecting Mother Earth,” illustrates an American Indian caring for the earth, and reminds us that we are all stewards of the land. The artist is LaDon Smith, member of the Choctaw Nation, Boswell, Oklahoma.



Contact: Kelley Barkell, American Indian/Alaska Native Special Emphasis Program Manager for NRCS Indiana, at kelley.barkell@in.usda.gov

Hoosiers Happenings (cont.)

Just a Heads Up

The National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) is gearing up to conduct the 2007 Census of Agriculture. NRCS employees need to be ready to spread the word and answer questions from our customers. Field offices will receive brochures and other promotional material soon. Employees can also obtain information by going online at www.agcensus.usda.gov and clicking on “Help Promote the Census” in the box at the right of the page.

Volunteers Get It Done

In 2007, over 700 Indiana Earth Team Volunteers (ETV) donated 16,000 hours or \$293,000 in work supporting conservation in 46 field offices around Indiana. Nationally, 78,000 ETVs donated almost one million hours of their time to conservation practices. The total value of this volunteer time exceeded \$18 million.

Each NRCS Area in Indiana has its personal ETV Coordinator who is able to provide information and answer questions regarding the ETV program. Please give them a call if you need help.

NW—Pam Devoss, Valparaiso, 219-462-7515, ext 116

NE—Bill Lambert, Auburn, 260-925-3710, ext 119

SW—Michelle Phillips, Greencastle, 765-653-5716, ext 5

SE—Pat Larr, Scottsburg/Clarksville/Hanover, 812-752-2269, ext 111

Thank you to all our NRCS employees and District partners for helping make this year a success!

—Nancy Manion, Indiana ETV Coordinator

PARTNERSHIP LINKS

Indiana Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, *Weekly Updates*:
<http://www.iaswcd.org/WeeklyUpdatesJan07.htm>

ISDA, Division of Soil Conservation
<http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>

Purdue University - www.purdue.edu

Indiana Conservation Partnership Strategic Plan Information
<http://www.in.gov/isda/2333.htm>

PERSONNEL UPDATE

Selections:

Colt VanNatta, District Conservationist, Connersville FO, effective 01-06-2008
Mary Jo Woodruff, Soil Conservationist, Programs Staff, Indianapolis, effective 01-06-2008
William Kutter, WREP Coordinator, Terre Haute FO, effective 01-06-2008
Kathleen Judd, Area Program Specialist, North Vernon AO, effective 01-20-2008
Angela Runshe, District Conservationist, Lebanon FO, effective 01-20-2008
Joshua Richardson, District Conservationist, Richmond FO, effective 02-03-2008

Retirements:

Joel Lindley, Agricultural Engineer, Paoli FO, effective 01-03-2008
Kitty Perkinson, RC&D Coordinator, White River RC&D, effective 01-03-2008
Roger Roeske, Agricultural Engineer, NW Area Office, effective 01-03-2008
Steve Woll, Soil Conservationist, Lebanon TST, effective 01-03-2008

Featured Website—NAL National Agricultural Library

<http://www.nal.usda.gov>

The USDA offers a host of agricultural information for employees and customers online at the National Agricultural Library. Visitors can browse by Audience or by Subject and can check out the news on any given ag-related subject. Other options at this Web site include Ask a Question, Request Library Materials, Search the NAL Catalog, and much more!

Mark Your Calendar

December

12/10-13/07	NOPBNRCSE Meeting, New Orleans, LA
12/12/07	SE Area Meeting
12/13/07	IFEC Meeting, Indianapolis
12/17/07	Prime Farmland Forum, Jasonville, IN
12/18-19/07	Certified Crop Advisors Conference, Indianapolis

January

01/08/08	NE Area Meeting
01/09/08	SE Area Meeting
01/09-12/08	16th Annual National No-Tillage Conference, “Gaining the No-Till Edge,” Cincinnati Hilton, Cincinnati, Ohio
01/14-16/08	IASWCD Annual Conference, Indianapolis Marriott-Downtown
01/15-17/08	Fort Wayne Farm Show, Allen County War Memorial Coliseum
01/21/08	Martin Luther King, Jr. Remembrance—HOLIDAY
01/29/08	NW Area Meeting
01/30/08	SW Area Meeting
01/31/08	CIT Leaders’ Meeting, Indianapolis

February

02/05/08	NE Area Meeting
02/12-14/08	NEDC—Train the Trainer Class, Indianapolis
02/13/08	SE Area Meeting
02/15-16/08	Indiana Cattle and Forage Symposium, Indianapolis Marriott East
02/18/08	Presidents’ Day—HOLIDAY
02/26/08	NW Area Meeting
02/27/08	SW Area Meeting
02/27/08	Tri-State Conservation Farming Expo, Auburn Cord Duesenberg Museum, Auburn, Indiana (More information at www.sjrwi.org)

Note: For a listing of Natural Resources Education Center workshops, go to www.in.gov/dnr/nrec

Helping People Help the Land