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## Heart to Heart ... with Hardisty

### Happy New Year NRCS!

 What a wonderful way to kick off the new year by celebrating our 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Diversity Day! This year's theme was "Hispanic Heritage" and Lindsay Martinez, HEPM, and the Civil Rights Committee did an outstanding job in bringing the message home while providing a fun atmosphere in which to learn. The next time you see these folks, make sure you give them a big "Ole!"



 As I reflect back on this past year, I'm so proud to see Indiana NRCS employees going above and beyond expectations. In FY2011, we had a 99 percent obligation rate for EQIP, a 98 percent obligation rate for WRP, a 33 percent decrease in contact cancellations and terminations, zero expired contacts and 100 percent of all off-scheduled contacts were reviewed. We managed to do all this *and* put more conservation on the land than any other year. This past year has been successful thanks to all of the hard work you've dedicated to putting conservation on the ground.

 As we enter 2012, I anticipate more challenges and opportunities for our NRCS family. While we'll continue working under a continuing resolution, I know our employees will deliver the same exceptional service our landowners have come to respect. Meanwhile, our Leadership Team is working diligently on developing our new Indiana Business Plan which will outline our priorities for 2012 and beyond.

Stay tuned for another exciting year in conservation!

*Jane E. Hardisty*

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**\* \* \* \* Employee Spotlight \* \* \* \***

**Tom Held, District Conservationist—Knox County**

**Q: Tom, you've been with the agency for a while. Please tell us when and how you began working for NRCS.**

**A:** I started as summer Intern in 1981 working with Leo Kelley and Jr. Spires in Knox Co. Vincennes Indiana. Jr. Spires took me under his wings. So in 1981, I was ready to change employment from farmhand to working with the USDA Soil Conservation Service. During my 1<sup>st</sup> summer with then "Soil Conservation Service" I was given an opportunity to work with the Agency as a Soil Conservation Technician in Crown Point Indiana, but Jr. Spires talked me into going back to school to get my B.S. However in doing so I realized how interesting a Job with the Soil Conservation Service could and would be!

**Q: You were an integral player in the Irrigation Cooperative Conservation Partnership Initiative (CCPI) in Knox, Sullivan and Greene counties. Can you fill us in on the goals and successes of this project?**

**A:** In our area it was just felt that the irrigation systems in Knox County and the surrounding area weren't running efficiently. Older irrigation systems were not being monitored or looked at routinely to ensure if water was being applied uniformly and at the proper rate for the given crops that were being grown. Additionally the water after use could sometimes flow back into the aquifer. More technical information was needed in order provide best management practices to the irrigation land users in our area. The opportunity for higher crop returns coupled with high input cost (water supply cost) toward all avenues of crop production were making all farmers think about what they can do to promote energy efficiency. Irrigation drives local agriculture. Irrigation used to water crops needed to be efficient, with less water wasted, with lower production cost while maintaining or increasing the yields of high value crops.

In the spring of 2010, support from the USDA NRCS was obtained for a pilot project through the EQIP CCPI resulting in an obligation of \$215,000 from June 2010 through 2015. As a result a partnership was formed: USDA NRCS, Purdue University, Local Irrigation Companies and the Knox and Sullivan County SWCD's are now key players in providing technical and financial assistance to a unique group of farmers. These producers had never had their irrigation systems assessed and shown how they

could utilize better technologies to make improvements on their irrigated acres in a way that safeguards and protects our ground waters resources.

**Q: I hear you work closely with a local group called "Kids Hope USA." Can you tell us a little bit about the group and the work you do for them?**



**A:** KIDS HOPE USA develops one-on-one relationships through the creation of church-school partnerships that pair church members with at-risk kids in supportive, mentoring relationships. KIDS HOPE USA mentors spend just one hour per week reading, talking, playing and listening to a child at school. By helping the child feel loved and valued, they help that child to learn, grow and succeed. I'm the Kids Hope Director at our church. We currently have 12 mentors meeting with 12 students from the Franklin Elementary School System. The activity has been very rewarding to me and my family.

**Q: Do you have any other hobbies or special interests you'd like to share?**

**A:** I enjoy my wife's and children's activities and fishing as a hobby. I'm also a board member for "Life after Meth: LAM", a Knox County group dedicated to rehabilitation of incarcerated inmates addicted to methamphetamines which assist them back into society.

**Q: What advice could you share with NRCS employees who aspire to advance the conservation ladder?**

**A:** Take time to go beyond USDA's program's, and from a resource standpoint know what is important and what is needed. If it is important enough involve others, you cannot do all it by yourself. Take time to include potential stakeholders and involve others every step of the way. Treat other like you would like to be treated and do your best to understand them.

## Hoosier Happenings

### KUDOS to...

**\*\*Lindsay Martinez, Rafael Vega** and the **Civil Rights Committee** for their efforts in putting together the 3rd Annual Diversity Day! Job well done! Submitted by Jill Reinhart—ASTC for Special Programs, Indianapolis

**\*\* Susannah Hinds, Ed Heckman, and Becky Ross** who did such a great job securing Great Lakes Restoration Initiative (GLRI) funds and presenting at the September 21st Pasture Management workshop. There is a great need / thirst for this type of conservation knowledge and people want to know about these practices. I hope to follow up with attendees to ensure some conversions or best pasture practices do occur and to track some on-the-ground action. Submitted by Julia Plumb, LaPorte County SWCD

### NATIONAL EARTH TEAM OFFICE MOVING!



The National Earth Team and NRCS Distribution Center will soon be moving to new space. **The shipping of publications, forms and exhibits will be suspended from October 12th through October 31st.**

National Earth Team Volunteer Staff members will be available during this process via email and telephone. Please check on the National Earth Team Volunteer website for phone numbers and e-mail addresses. Phone numbers and email addresses can be found by going to [www.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.nrcs.usda.gov) and clicking on "Earth Team Volunteers" located on the right side of the webpage.

Below is the new National Earth Team Volunteers contact information effective October 24, 2011:

**NRCS Distribution Center  
4407 - 121ST ST  
Urbandale, IA 50323  
New Phone: 515-270-4864  
Toll Free: 1-888-526-3227  
Fax: 515-278-7044**

### EVALUATING YOUR EARTH TEAM PROGRAM

Every service center should annually evaluate their volunteer program to measure progress and suggest what is to be accomplished in the coming year. Evaluations will help identify problem areas before they jeopardize the program. Evaluations need not be difficult or time-consuming, but they should be detailed enough to evaluate the volunteers, the supervisors, and the overall program. Generally, evaluations have three steps:

1. establish standards,
2. measure performance against those standards, and
3. correct deviations from standards and plans.

Evaluations benefit everyone involved in the volunteer program. NRCS gets valuable input that allows it to tailor the program to particular needs. The volunteers are given the opportunity to express their opinions and to ensure that their volunteer time is used wisely. Lastly, evaluations help supervisors manage office operations.

Evaluations may be formal or informal. The best evaluations usually contain elements from both styles.



Informal evaluations involve good listening techniques to obtain feedback from volunteers and staff. They are made on a continual basis and occur during training, coffee breaks and meetings.

Some formal evaluation tools are the annual business plan, position descriptions, performance appraisal worksheets and progress reports. The volunteer should always take an active part in the evaluation.

**For more information about Earth Team, contact your regional coordinator or check out the ETV website:**

**<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/feature/volunteers/>**

**\*\* SPECIAL EMPHASIS \*\***  
***Hispanic Heritage Month***

Indiana NRCS employees from throughout the state met in Bloomington, Indiana on Wednesday, October 5th to celebrate this year's Hispanic Heritage Month. Led by Lindsay Martinez, Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager, the Civil Rights Committee put together a great day that included lectures on Hispanic diversity and Hispanic Emigration. The day ended with song and dance as participants learned several types of Hispanic dance styles and Hispanic influenced songs.



*Clockwise from top left: Lindsay Martinez speaking to group with Sancocho, NRCS employees learning to dance, STC Jane Hardisty leading in a group dance, members of the Baila! Baila! Flamenco Dance Troupe demonstrating a traditional Hispanic dance.*

**PARTNERSHIP LINKS**

- IN Association of Soil & Water Conservation Districts, Weekly Updates:** [www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/whatsnew/index.html)
- IN Conservation Partnership:** [www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html](http://www.iaswcd.org/icp/index.html)
- IN Dept. of Environmental Management:** [www.in.gov/idem](http://www.in.gov/idem)
- IN Dept. of Natural Resources:** [www.in.gov/dnr](http://www.in.gov/dnr)
- IN State Dept. of Agriculture, Division of Soil Conservation:** <http://www.in.gov/isda/soil/>
- Purdue University:** [www.purdue.edu](http://www.purdue.edu)
- USDA Farm Service Agency:** [www.fsa.usda.gov](http://www.fsa.usda.gov)

**Hoosier Happenings (cont.)**

**FIRST ANNUAL INDIANA LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM A SUCCESS**

The first Leadership Development Program (LDP) class graduated with honors September 21. The six graduates spent 18 months honing their leadership skills. Participants developed an Individual Development Plan, many of which included job shadowing out of state, and an individual or group project. The group also visited with state and national leaders in Indianapolis and Washington D.C. Four impressive projects were produced out of the class, including an Earth Team Volunteer Handbook, Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) Training Plan, urban updates to the Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG), and a Specialty, Organic and Small Farms Resource Guide. Congratulations to Kelley Barkell, Dan Davis, Alyson Keaton, Bill Lambert, Amie Lester, and Brianne Lowe!



*LDP graduates with State Conservationist Jane Hardisty and Co-Coordinators Becky Ross & Jill Reinhart. From left to right: Jill Reinhart, Kelley Barkell, Dan Davis, Bill Lambert, Jane Hardisty, Alyson Keaton, Brianne Lowe, Amie Lester, Becky Ross.*

## Personnel Update

### REASSIGNMENTS

Kristi Kennedy, Soil Conservationist, GS-9, Brazil Field Office effective 10-9  
Wesley Bryan, Agricultural Engineer, GS-9, Princeton CIT, effective 10-23

### SELECTIONS FROM VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alena Stephens, Cartographic Technician, GS-8, Indianapolis MLRA effective 10-9  
Miranda McGillem, Area Program Specialist, GS-11, Vincennes Area Office effective 10-9  
Shasta Woodard, District Conservationist, GS-11, Bedford Field Office , effective 10-23  
Adam Conklin, District Conservationist, GS-11, Brownstown Field Office , effective 11-6  
Tiffany Roberson, Soil Scientist, GS-9, Plymouth MLRA, effective 11-6  
Tyler Staggs, Natural Resources Specialist (Ecol Sites), GS-12, MLRA , effective 11-6  
Hilary Barnhart, District Conservationist, GS-11, Richmond Field Office , effective 11-20  
Richard Mark DePoy, District Conservationist, GS-12, Vevay Field Office , effective 11-20  
Christopher Davis, MLRA Project Leader, GS-12, Plymouth MLRA, effective 11-20  
Randy VanMatre, District Conservationist, GS-12, Washington Field Office , effective 11-20  
Murray Tate Jenkins, Reality Specialist, GS-11, State Office – Programs, effective 11-6  
Lynette Horton-Harmon, District Conservationist, GS-11, Goshen Field Office , effective 12-18

### RETIREMENTS

Pam Davidson, Public Affairs Specialist, Public Affairs Staff effective 9-30  
Paula Mulligan, Executive Assistant, STC Staff effective 9-30  
Todd Ames, Soil Conservationist, Rensselaer CIT effective 10-3  
Mike Cheatham, District Conservationist, Paoli Field Office effective 10-3  
Stacy Odom, Resource Management Specialist, Northwest Area Office effective 10-3  
Darrell Rice, District Conservationist, Evansville Field Office effective 10-3  
Julie McLemore, District Conservationist, Rensselaer Field Office effective 10-31

## Mark Your Calendar

### OCTOBER

- 17: State Office Employee Meeting
- 18: Indiana Conservation Partnership Leaders Meeting  
Area Conservationist Meeting
- 19: Leadership Team Meeting
- 25: Northwest Area Meeting
- 26: Southwest Area Meeting  
Fort Wayne Great Lakes Restoration Initiative  
Workshop
- 31: Jasper SWCD District Showcase Tour

### NOVEMBER

- 1: Northeast Area Meeting
- 2: Southwest Area Meeting
- 8: SAC/FAC Meeting
- 9: Southeast Area Meeting
- 15: Area Conservationist Meeting
- 16: Leadership Team Meeting
- 17: SWCS Fall Training
- 24: HOLIDAY: Thanksgiving

### DECEMBER

- 6: Northwest Area Meeting  
Northeast Area Meeting
- 8: Southwest Area Meeting
- 13: SAC/FAC Meeting

