



# La Voz

Newsletter of the National Organization of Professional Hispanic  
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees

October 2004

## President's Message

By Bertha Venegas  
NOPHNRCSE President

It's been a busy four months for NOPHNRCSE! Since taking office, our Council has selected 10 committee chairs and approved their plans of action and budgets. The council selected the 2005 planning team and developed and approved a plan of action and budget for the council. Well on our way, we look forward to a successful year.

Be expecting a message from Astrid Martinez, Membership Chair, as we kick off the 2005 membership drive. She will be providing a letter of encouragement to join NOPHNRCSE. I urge everyone to submit your dues within the time allotted and recruit a new member, or two or three to join us! Mario Morales is recruiting members to be a part of the planning team for our national conference in Lafayette, Louisiana. Contact him if you want to be a part of that team. All the committee chairs are also recruiting members for their respective teams.

I submitted all 2004 NOPHNRCSE award winners to be considered



for the UNSUNG HERO Award. I am proud that Amanda Hasemeier was one of the recipients of the UNSUNG HERO Award given by the department. CONGRATULATIONS! Read all about Amanda in this newsletter. I also want to congratulate Gilbert Guerrero on his selection as the new National Hispanic Employee Program Manager.

I have asked all the Regional Representatives to communicate with our members by providing minutes, financial reports and any other information including newsletters and job openings. Feedback is encouraged. Contact your regional representative if you have any comments or concerns.

Wishing you and your family a joyous holiday season. Stay safe and may you have a prosperous New Year!

## Meet the National Council, 2004-2005

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## Don't Forget to Pay Your Membership Dues

*By Astrid Martinez  
Membership Committee  
Chair*

Don't forget to pay your membership dues for 2005

The 2004 membership dues expire on December 31, 2004. This means that dues for the 2005 calendar year are due by January 1, 2005.

It is important that we pay our annual dues to our organization. These dues help us to subsidize the cost of our conferences and other important activities carried out by NOPHNCSE. By paying your dues you will be able to participate in the decision making process of the organization. By being a member in good standing you can participate in the election and be eligible to hold any position in the National Council.

It is very important to be an active member if we want our organization to be a success. Our success depends on each one of us.

There are two ways you can submit your annual dues payment:

1. Submitting a check payable to NOPHNCSE for the amount of the membership you chose along with a completed membership form to:

Astrid Martinez  
4016 Norseman Ave.  
Grand Island, NE  
68803

2. By payroll deduction. Fill out the form AD-1054 "Request for Payroll Deduction", which you can

get from your human resources personnel and it is also available along with the membership form at the NOPHNCSE website. If you decide to go with this option, please remember that I still need a completed membership form and a copy of the AD 1054. Please mail a copy at the address above. The original copy of the AD 1054 will go to your human resources office.

Clarifications:

If you requested payroll deduction, review your Statement of Earning and Leave (AD-334 USDA) to verify that the deduction for the membership dues is there. You should see a line with code "87 Union/ Association Dues 29" for \$1.15. If the deduction is not there you are not in paying the membership by payroll deduction.

If this is your case please send me a check to pay your 2005 dues and visit your human resources personnel to start with the payroll deductions for 2006. You should visit your human resources personnel to clarify why the deduction you requested did not take place.

If you have not used payroll deduction before you must be aware of the following. If you start the payroll deduction in January of 2005 these will be applied toward the 2006 dues. These means you will have to pay the

2005 dues by mailing a check to my attention.

I will like to ask every member to call your Regional Representative and verify that we have the most current information for you in our files. We need to have current data to be able to reach you when necessary and keep you informed of organization activities. You can also complete the membership address update form located at the website and mail it to me.

If you have any question regarding membership please feel free to contact me at

astrid.martinez@ne.usda.gov

Membership forms are available on-line at: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/>.

## USDA Launches New Spanish-language Website

USDA has launched a new Spanish-language website, [www.usda.gov/EnEspanol](http://www.usda.gov/EnEspanol), as part of the department's ongoing efforts to expand Hispanic access to USDA programs.

"This website is a new tool to help more people access USDA programs and services," said Secretary of Agriculture Ann Veneman. "Consumers can use this website to find information from nutrition assistance to homeownership or conservation programs."



## Hasemeier Named Unsung Hero

In September, Amanda Hasemeier received the USDA Hispanic Americans: Unsung Hero (Héroes Desconocidos) Award for 2004. She was one of four in USDA given this award. NOPHNCSE recognized her this year as our Amiga/Amigo award winner.

In 1994, a Hispanic Employment Committee was formed in Pennsylvania. The original goal set out by its members was to develop cultural awareness in NRCS and the community that showed the positive value of Hispanics and promoted the individual and group professionalism through outreach. Besides working on quarterly newsletters and organizing programs for Hispanic Heritage month, the first outreach activity Amanda was involved with was a neighborhood urban school that had a high number of Hispanic elementary children. She helped in a first grade class, and in particular there was an immigrant girl with little English ability. Amanda was told that her help with this young student allowed for progress to the next grade without being left behind. Amanda received the Pennsylvania Civil Rights Award in 1995. As part of the Pennsylvania Civil Rights Committee, a gardening and tree-planting project that involved the younger grades took place at that

same school the following year. Amanda became HEPM in 1996 and in 1998 was elected the East Region Representative of NOPHNCSE, and remained so for two terms, all the while maintaining her dedication to the Scholarship and Endowment Committee. Other outreach activities moved to another part of the state working with Hispanic workers in the mushroom industry. In 2000, Amanda was given a group award for her work in Chester County. Those same workers are now becoming producers and property owners so a new level of assistance is reaching them. The outreach has been mostly in water quality issues in the mushroom-growing areas of Chester and Berks counties. The most recent activities Amanda has been involved with include translation work for safety documents and informational brochures and a joint-agency event where NRCS, FSA, RD, Chester County Conservation District, Small Business Administration, the American Mushroom Institute and a newly formed Mexican producers group with some private interests came together.

Hasemeier maintains consistent leadership, ensuring the continuous success of the scholarship and endowment fund.



*Amanda Hasemeier*

She has been chair of the committee for three years and a member since the committee was formed. Helping students of all ages has been a consistent commitment for Amanda, and even though her three children are almost out of college, there is always more work to do in helping students as competition in the world gets harder and costs of going to college continue to increase.

The Scholarship and Endowment Fund has enough funds now to increase both the number of scholarships as well as the financial amount awarded to deserving full-time students who major in a natural resources related fields. At the live auction during the annual training conference this year, NOPHNCSE raised \$5,607.50. The challenge is to continue to increase the endowment fund and to make sure that the availability of this scholarship is known throughout the nation, so that an abundant number of applications get returned to the committee for evaluation.

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Member Wins  
USDA Hispanic  
Americans:  
Unsung Hero  
Award for  
2004



## 2005 Annual Training Conference Update

*By Mario Morales,  
Conference Planning Chair*

It is my pleasure to announce that the NOPHNCSE membership selected Lafayette, Louisiana, as the site for the 2005 NOPHNCSE Training Conference. This event is scheduled for June 27-30, 2005. Your

Conference Planning Team is busy getting itself organized and beginning the planning process for what I hope will be an informative and enjoyable training conference. I want to take a moment to encourage the membership to join us for this event. The conference

will consist of professional training sessions, discussions of agency issues and opportunities, informative and personal development training sessions, and some other very interesting presentations. There will also be opportunities for some family activities so consider bringing your family to this event.

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### Training Conference Update

### Hispanic America: The Last 100 Years

*By Nicholas Kanellos*

Every school child should know that the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the United States is St. Augustine, Florida (founded in 1565), and that Hispanic culture had a firm root in the Southeast and Southwest of what became the United States before the English arrived at Jamestown and before the Pilgrims dropped anchor in Massachusetts Bay. If, indeed, a school child is taught these facts, he or she is unlikely to be taught much more about the Hispanic contribution to American civilization, however; it's just not a part of today's classrooms and textbooks. It is never brought home that Spanish, Hispanicized Africans and Amerindians and their mixed-blood descendants provided the basis for the development of much of American agriculture, mining, transportation grid, city planning, architecture and even law

in the Southeast and Southwest. For example, such concepts as the right of women to inherit and own property, homestead rights, and the rights of adopted children to be treated the same as genetic offspring are examples of originally Hispanic legal principles that touch us today in the very heart of our existence: our families. Likewise, the Hispanic background of the United States helps us to understand the important role that Latinos have played throughout the 20th century in the development of this nation.

As the century and the millennium come to a close, it is appropriate to take an account of Hispanic accomplishments in the United States. In the 20th century alone, the impact of Hispanic achievements was felt long before the demographic growth of this last decade.

### By-Laws Review

*By Patrick Conner,  
Committee Chair*

The NOPHNCSE Constitution and By-Laws are in need of review and revision. The committee's goal is to accomplish this task prior to the 2005 Training Conference.

Please submit comments and suggestions for changes to Patrick Conner: pat.conner@tx.usda.gov or 830-796-3334.

### Career Profile Questionnaire

*By Tamara L. Buitenwerf,  
Recruitment & Career Development Chair*

The NOPHNCSE Recruitment and Career Development Committee is compiling membership career profiles. This publication will enhance the abilities of schools, professional organizations and NRCS offices to locate and contact guest speakers, trainers and mentors from within our organization. Please complete this questionnaire, which will be located on the NOPHNCSE website soon, and include a photograph of yourself to further add to the quality of this publication.



## National Hispanic Heritage Month, 2004: A Proclamation by the President of the United States of America

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### Hispanic Heritage Month: A Presidential Proclamation

During National Hispanic Heritage Month, we recognize Hispanic Americans for helping to shape our national character and strengthen our communities. The warmth and vitality of the Hispanic culture are great gifts to America and are part of the unique fabric of our country.

Hispanic Americans have enriched our Nation through contributions in many professions and fields, including education, law, government, business, science, sports, and the arts. Since our Nation's founding, Hispanic Americans have served bravely in the United States Armed Forces, earning more than 3 dozen Medals of Honor and numerous distinguished military decorations for their leadership, courage, and patriotism. Today, Hispanic Americans in our Armed Forces, National Guard, and Reserve units continue this proud legacy as they stand watch on the front lines of freedom. The hard work, values, and devotion to community of Hispanic Americans set a

positive example for all Americans.

Across our country, we are working to continue helping Hispanic Americans realize the great promise of America. In 2002, I set a goal of increasing the number of minority homeowners by at least 5.5 million by the end of the decade. We are making good progress — having added more than 1.6 million minority homeowners so far. My Administration's business agenda and economic policies have helped create an environment in which Latino small business owners in the United States are starting new businesses and employing millions of people, expanding trade throughout the Americas, and generating billions in revenue. Through the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, we are working to ensure that schools are serving every student. In addition, we are committed to improving immigration services while strengthening national security.

I join with all Ameri-

cans in celebrating the heritage, culture, spirit, and contributions of Hispanic Americans. To honor the achievements of Hispanic Americans, the Congress, by Public Law 100-402, as amended, has authorized and requested the President to issue annually a proclamation designating September 15 through October 15, as "National Hispanic Heritage Month."

NOW, THEREFORE, I, GEORGE W. BUSH, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 15 through October 15, 2004, as National Hispanic Heritage Month. I call upon public officials, educators, librarians, and all the people of the United States to observe this month with appropriate ceremonies, activities, and programs.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this seventeenth day of September, in the year of our Lord two thousand four, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-ninth.

GEORGE W. BUSH



## Women's Equality Day – August 26, 2004

**"No liberty ever given her has been lost or abused or regretted."**

*By Sharyn C. Alvarez,  
National Federal Women's  
Program Manager, NRCS,  
Civil Rights Division*

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"No liberty ever given her she has been lost or abused or regretted. Where most has been given her she has become best."

Thursday, Aug. 26, 2004, marks the 84<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, "extending the right of suffrage to women." Suffrage, according to Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, tenth edition, means "to support with one's vote." It is also stated as "the right or the exercise of the right to vote in public affairs."

The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was first introduced in Congress in 1878. Though it failed to pass, it was introduced at every session of Congress for the next 40 years. Tennessee was the 36<sup>th</sup> state to ratify the Amendment on Aug. 18, 1920. Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby certified the ratification on Aug. 26, 1920.

In 1848, Seneca Falls, New York, was the site of the first conference on women's rights. The women and men there adopted a Declaration of Sentiments that called for women to have the same rights as men such as education, property ownership and management and voting. However, women's suffrage was their main goal. Opposition was strong and relentless. Many felt that granting women equal right and encouraging

their participation in politics would be the end of family life. There were those who believed that women were not intelligent enough to represent their views and would be better served remaining under the protection of the men in their family.

Obtaining the right to vote was a long, difficult struggle that required perseverance and sacrifice. In their struggle to gain equal rights women willingly protested, chained themselves to the White House fence, were arrested and went on hunger strikes.

Several generations of woman's suffrage advocates and supporters wrote, petitioned, demonstrated, marched, lobbied, were harassed, beaten, scorned, mocked and jailed. Many lived long lives and died never seeing victory for the dream they worked so hard for.

Before the U.S. Constitution was amended in 1920, many U.S. cities and states amended their constitutions allowing women the right to vote, in some cases, as early as 1910.

In 1893, New Zealand became the first country to grant women the right to vote. Australia, Britain, Canada, Finland, Germany and Sweden gave women of their countries the right to vote in the early 1900s.

There are countries that still have not granted women the right to vote.

Born on July 24, 1920, it was only fitting that New York House of Representative Bella Abzug (1920-1998), "always a champion of women's rights, human rights, equality, peace and social justice," would be the person to introduce legislation to commemorate Aug. 26 as Women's Equality Day. In 1971, A Joint Resolution of Congress was passed.

As we continue to work for equality, let's not forget to remember those who did the same, so that we may all have the freedom to vote. When we exercise our right to vote, encourage others to register, teach our children the value of and the need for their participation in the election process, we pay tribute and high honor to those who gave their best in service to us all.

"Yet, as man advances, woman is elevated, and her elevation in turn advances him. No liberty ever given her has been lost or abused or regretted. Where most has been given her she has become best. Liberty never degrades her; slavery always does. For her good, therefore, she needs the ballot."

**Excerpt from House Report No. 2289. Views of the Congressional Minority Favoring Women's Suffrage (1886)**



## USDA Student Educational Employment Program

By Herman B. Garcia  
HEPM, Colorado NRCS

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Meet SCEP  
Student  
Christian  
"Chris"  
Dominguez

The Student Educational Employment Program (SEEP) was established in December 16, 1994, and combined four other programs: Cooperative Education Program (COOP), Federal Junior Fellowship Program, Stay-In-School Program, and Harry S. Truman Scholarship Program. The new streamlined SEEP has two subprograms which include the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP) and the Student Career Experience Program (SCEP).

The STEP allows students to work if they are unsure of their career goals and want to explore different options available to them. They gain an understanding of the day-to-day activities of the Federal government. These students can lead into a SCEP position once they have identified their scholastic degree.

The SCEP program is a revamping of the old COOP program and is intended to partner student's scholastic goals with NRCS specific job classification work. The goal is to integrate classroom course work with NRCS field work periods. The students not only receive wages to assist in funding their education, they are in a better position to determine what course of study would best fit them for the

competitive entry level job market. The course of action the students take during both phases will also be a great asset for future Federal job selections or advancement opportunities.

Many of our states are vigorously seeking students to help fill the projected voids in our permanent workforce over next two to three years.

The following are two such stories from Colorado SCEP students who are gaining a greater appreciation for the Federal sector.



Christian "Chris" Dominguez, NRCS Engineering SCEP Student

Chris is currently attending New Mexico State University. He was raised in the United States and holds many immediate family ties to Mexico. His family supports the agricultural industry in southeastern New Mexico. The area is rich in farming and dairy production. Chris plans to take his engineering knowledge back home and Mexico.

He reported to the NRCS La Junta area office in southeastern Colorado as an engineering SCEP student. Chris says, "Thanks to the SCEP program, I have been able to attain important work skills that will be beneficial to me in my career. I have also acquired important knowledge on subjects such as surveying, designing, hydraulics, and others that will aid me in my achievement of a college degree in Civil Engineering."

In addition to teaching Chris job skills, the NRCS employees at the La Junta office have helped Chris find a place to live. By helping him locate a place to live his transition is made easier by not have to worry about housing. In return, he has had more time to concentrate on work and helping with the NRCS workload.

Chris is proud of his early accomplishments, which include two ponds, surveying several projects, and assisting in the planning and application of sub-surface drip irrigation systems. He gave a PowerPoint presenta-

*(continued on page 8)*



Continued from page 7

tion on his irrigation project at the NOPHNRCSE 2004 training conference. He informed NRCS staff and others on how south-eastern Colorado is handling the drought situation.

Chris is so convinced in our conservation delivery that he said, "My role as an NRCS employee will not end at the end of summer. I will be a contact person for NRCS at New Mexico State University. I will gladly help aid in the search for future SCEP students and maybe even full-time NRCS employees."

Chris believes the SCEP program has been a great advantage for him and appreciates everything he has learned while working with NRCS.

"Our SCEP students, when provided with good personal experiences and top quality training, will be our ambassadors to new SCEP students," said Herman Garcia, HEPM for Colorado.

Robert served his second summer work phase at the Longmont field office. He has worked on cultural resources forms and maps, surveying, inlet box and pipe designs using Auto-CAD, plotted survey points, solved concrete calculations, and learned how to use and place tensiometers.

He recently participated in Cultiva, a 10-week long youth operated organic market garden workshop, hosted by a non-profit organization, Growing Gardens of Boulder, Colorado. He presented the basics of soil identification and basic irrigation management and demonstrated how a tensiometer works. Growing Gardens strives to provide a living example of a sustainable multi-cultural and multi-generational community through community gardening, emphasizing the importance of urban food security. The three tensiometers had been donated to the Cultiva project. "The kids were pretty interested in learning about the different kinds of soils and they were interested in learning how to use the tensiometers," Robert said.

Last summer he served his first summer SCEP work phase at the Metro field office in Lakewood, Colorado. There he worked on hydrology, reviewed sub division site plans, developed seed planting mixes associated with subdivisions, and pipelines.

Herman Garcia, HEPM Colorado, said, "Our SCEP students, when provided with good personal experiences and top quality training, will be our ambassadors to new SCEP students."

Garcia added that these students are in a very competitive yet highly desired field. Our competition from other federal agencies and private industry needs to be overcome by the service and training we provide. NRCS has lost candidates due to the time lag from the initial meetings to the offering of a position and follow-up. The other recruiters are there with immediate hiring authority and in many cases better financial incentives than NRCS. The competition can be very aggressive and incentives can vary from stipends for cost of living at work phase, travel expenses to and from work phase, and college expenses.

NRCS has for many years been the focal point in searching for highly qualified conservationists. This comes from conservation instructors that were skilled and received hours of training both on-the-ground and in the classroom. These are the staff the students should be mentoring our student employees today.

For additional information see the following web sites:

<http://www.studentjobs.gov/>

<http://www.opm.gov/employ/students/intro.asp>



Robert Duran, NRCS Engineering SCEP Student.

Robert Duran is currently a junior at New Mexico State University and is studying civil and mechanical engineering technology.



## 2004-2005 Committees, New Regional Reps

**Finance - includes Audit, Budget and Ways & Means**

Chair, Mary Sanchez  
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**Partnership - includes Legislative and International Affairs**

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**Communications - includes Webmaster**

Chair, Lori Valadez  
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**Constitution and By-Laws - includes Historical Profile**

Chair, Patrick Conner  
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South Central

**Membership**

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**Recruitment and Career Development - includes Women's Issues, and Historically Hispanic Colleges**

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**Natural Resources**

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**Scholarship and Endowment**

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**2005 Conference Planning - includes Awards**

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Co-Chair, Donna Remides  
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