



AG SCIENCES 2009

A Monthly Newsletter for the College of Agricultural Sciences

January 2009

News in Brief

Foundation Funds Bioenergy Research

The Morgan Family Foundation, of Los Altos, Calif., has committed \$270,000 over the next two years to fund research in the college's Biomass Energy Center.

The Biomass Energy Center coordinates and facilitates bioenergy research and outreach across the university, building teams to address the complete value chain of biomass energy systems. Biomass energy or "bioenergy" refers to the use of organic materials to generate electricity, produce biofuel, or create products normally made through nonorganic methods.

ENRI Honors Three

The Environment and Natural Resources Institute in the college has honored two faculty members and a graduate student for outstanding achievements.

Ottar Bjornstad, professor of entomology, was named this year's recipient of the institute's Early Career Award. Donald Davis, professor of plant pathology, was named the 2008 recipient of the Career Award. Andy Wilson, a doctoral candidate in the Ecology intercollege graduate degree program, was named the recipient of the 2008 Outstanding Graduate Student Award.

Food Science Transfer Pact Set

Penn State's Food Science Department has reached an agreement with Gloucester County College in Deptford, N.J., that will admit students from that college to the University Park campus.

Incoming juniors from Gloucester County College who meet an eligibility requirement will be able to transfer credits from their first two years before pursuing a Bachelor of Science degree in Food Science.

Christ Named Senior Associate Dean

Barbara Christ, professor and head of plant pathology, has been named senior associate dean in the college, effective Jan. 1. She replaces Paul Wangsness, who retired earlier this year after serving the college as a faculty member and administrator for 37 years.

In her new position, Christ will have broad, collegewide duties in planning and implementation related to programs, daily operations, budgets, safety, university

policy and procedures, personnel, promotion and tenure, hiring and retention, facilities and land, external relations, and assistance for academic, regional and support units of the college.

"I am delighted that Barb Christ has agreed to join our senior administrative team," says Robert Steele, dean of the college. "Her leadership ability, familiarity with our stakeholders, and understanding of our teaching, research and extension missions will help us strategically move the college forward, despite the difficult fiscal environment facing the state and the nation."

She joined the plant pathology faculty as an assistant professor in 1984, became associate professor in 1990 and attained the rank of full professor in 2000.

Christ is president-elect of the American Phytopathological Society and will begin her term as president in August 2009. She also has served the society as vice president and as a member of several committees Christ's research has focused on potato breeding and disease management.



▲ Barbara Christ

College Plays Big Role in State Farm Show

The many faces of the college will be evident at the Pennsylvania Farm Show, Jan. 10-17 in Harrisburg, highlighted by an expanded exhibit with educational stage presentations. But the college's presence will be felt throughout the sprawling Farm Show Complex.

In the college's exhibit in the Main Exhibits Hall just off the Maclay Street entrance, a wide variety of displays will highlight college expertise and activities, such as land-use planning, bioenergy research, food-safety and preservation, water

quality protection and academic majors.

College officials hope to connect with prospective students at the Farm Show. "We're always looking for good students," says J. Marcos Fernandez, associate dean for undergraduate education. "We are excited about showcasing the numerous fulfilling careers associated with agriculture and renewable natural resources at the 2009 Farm Show."

Presentations will be offered on the college exhibit's stage throughout the

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Familiar Faces

QUESTION: What resolutions are you making for the New Year? If you don't believe in New Year's resolutions, what are you hoping to change?



Rod Thomas, instructor in agricultural and biological engineering

"I don't have a New Year's resolution yet because I'm still trying to figure out how to spend all of my stock profits."



Steve Walker, doctoral student in agricultural and biological engineering

"My resolution is to get back to the gym and to graduate."



Jennifer Landry, graduate student in horticulture

"I don't usually make any resolutions because I wouldn't stick with them even if I did."



Kathy Shumac, research technician in horticulture

"My New Year's resolution is to be happy and not dwell on the negative."



Greg Ziegler, professor of food science

"My resolution for 2009 is to spend more time with my family. My boys are teenagers now, and they're a lot of fun to be

around, so I want to spend more time with them before they get older and move away."



Surinder Chopra, associate professor of crop and soil sciences

"My New Year's resolution is to be someone who is useful to others, not to take life

for granted and to be with my family as much as I can."



Dawn Holsopple, administrative assistant in the Dean's Office

"I always try to start an exercise program though I don't always stick with it. I carry that one over year after year."

New Director, Messina, Named for the School of Forest Resources

Michael Messina, professor and associate department head for undergraduate programs in the Department of Ecosystem Science and Management at Texas A&M University, has been named director of Penn State's School of Forest Resources, effective Jan. 5, 2009.

Messina will replace Charles Strauss, professor of forest economics, who is retiring after more than seven years as director and more than 47 years on the Penn State faculty.

"Mike Messina brings to Penn State an impressive record of scholarly accomplishments and a demonstrated commitment to helping students achieve success," says Robert Steele, dean of the college. "As a Penn State alumnus, he also understands our long history of excellence in forest resources and is dedicated to sustaining and enhancing that tradition."

The School of Forest Resources currently enrolls about 350 undergraduate and about 100 graduate students. As director, Messina will oversee more than 70

faculty and staff, including two endowed positions: the Maurice K. Goddard Chair in Forestry and Environmental Resource Conservation and the Joseph E. Ibberson Chair in Forest Resources Management.

After receiving his bachelor's degree in Forest Science from Penn State in 1979 and his doctorate in Forestry from North Carolina State University in 1983, Mes-

sina spent three years as a postdoctoral research fellow at the New Zealand Forest Service's Forest Research Institute. He joined the Texas A&M faculty as assistant professor in the Department of Forest Science in 1986, was promoted to associate professor in 1992 and achieved the rank of full professor in 2001.

Messina's academic interests include silviculture, intensive pine-stand management, forested wetland ecology and management, ecophysiology, and nutrient cycling. He has authored or co-authored more than 30 scholarly articles in refereed journals and has received or shared research grants totaling almost \$2 million. ■



▲ Michael Messina

Days Commit \$1 Million to Arboretum

Plans long in the making for a children's garden at the Arboretum at Penn State may be realized sooner than anticipated, thanks to a \$1 million endowed gift from State College native Marcia Udine Day and her late husband, Robert J. Day, to support Arboretum programs related to the special interests of children and youth.

"I anticipate that we will apply the Days' generous gift to the Children's Garden, which has been included as an element of the Arboretum since the beginning," says Kim Steiner, director of the Arboretum. "We'll begin working this year with a design firm that has special expertise in gardens of this kind. It is our hope that the Days' gift will encourage others to support this important project and make the Children's Garden the next

major addition to the Arboretum."

Marcia Udine Day graduated from Penn State in 1949 with a bachelor's degree in home economics. Robert Day, a Sharon native, was a State College High School graduate and received a bachelor's degree from the university in 1947. In 1950 he joined the United States Gypsum Corp. in Chicago, working his way up through various managerial positions, including president, CEO and chairman until his retirement in 1990. The couple's gift was part of their estate plans, finalized before Robert Day's death in 1998.

Previous philanthropy to the university from the Days includes gifts to the Penn State Educational Partnership Program in the Pittsburgh area and for undergraduate scholarships. ■

From Dean Steele

The holiday and semester break provide a great time to reflect on the past year and to think ahead to what 2009 may bring. We ended 2008 on solid footing with continued overall undergraduate enrollment growth and overall enrollment stability in our graduate programs. This was largely due to ongoing, creative and clever efforts of many in our college to revamp and enhance our recruiting activities. These efforts are clearly succeeding in attracting new students while also enhancing the quality of our student population.

We begin 2009 by welcoming Dr. Mike Messina as our new director of the School of Forest Resources and thanking Dr. Charles Strauss for his years of dedicated service to Penn State as professor and director. We also welcome Dr. Barbara Christ as our new senior associate dean. Dr. Paul Wangsness has provided invaluable leadership for us in this position since 1997 and, though now retired, he will continue to be available to assist Dr. Christ's transition into her new role.

We also begin 2009, however, with much less confidence in our general economic condition in the commonwealth and in the nation. We've seen an overall reduction of 6 percent in our state-funded budget. We still don't have a federal budget but expect to see some action on this once President-elect Obama is inaugurated. This uncertainty has led us to dramatically slow our commitments to fund new, and some ongoing, programs. Until we know more about our economic health, we must continue to find efficiencies and cost savings and to make cuts when necessary.

We continue to work at building bipartisan support for our programs and to demonstrate their importance, relevance and impact to our stakeholders and supporters.

Finally, the onset of January brings the hallmark event of Pennsylvania agriculture, the state Farm Show. A heartfelt THANK YOU to the more than 100 folks from our college who work tirelessly on this event—both out front and “behind the scenes”—to make it a resounding success, year after year. I encourage everyone to take a day and visit the Farm Show sometime during its eight-day run. ■



Name: Bryan Swistock

Hometown: Born in Natrona Heights, Pa., grew up in Indiana, Pa.

Job title, description:

Water Resources Extension Associate. “I conduct applied research and work with field extension educators to create and deliver educational programs for the public on water resources issues such as safe drinking water, water conservation and impacts of natural-gas drilling.”

Office: 308 Forest Resources Building.

Working at Penn State: 21 years.

Spouse: Kim Swistock, a conference coordinator in the College of Agricultural Sciences, Office of Conferences and Short Courses.

Children: Ashley, 20, and Derek, 17. “Ashley is currently a senior at Penn State and a majorette in the Blue Band. Derek is a senior at Bellefonte High School, enrolled in the CPI welding program.”

Pets: Two dogs. “Cappi, 6, is an English setter and loves to chase shadows. Bear, 2, is a Gordon setter and is afraid of his shadow.”

CD currently in your car's player: Dixie Chicks.

Favorite musician: Rolling Stones.

All-time favorite movie: Caddyshack. “I've seen it 100 times and still laugh.”

Favorite actor: Robert Redford or Meg Ryan.

Favorite food: Any seafood.

Favorite restaurant or hang-out: “Dunkin Donuts—their coffee is ridiculously good!”

Hobbies: Hunting, fly-fishing, golf, bike riding, saltwater aquariums.

Little-known claim to fame: “As a kid, I got to play golf and had lunch with Arnold Palmer.”

Thing you are proudest of: “Worked with Bill Sharpe (professor emeritus of forest hydrology) for 20 years and lived to tell about it!”

How you relax: “Fly-fishing on Fishing Creek or bike riding along one of the rails-to-trails.”

Favorite part of job: “Helping people understand and solve their water-resources problems. Extension work is extremely challenging, but there's nothing like the appreciation you receive from someone after you have helped them solve a problem.”

College Plays Big Role . . . *(continued from page 1)*

week. For a complete schedule of stage presentations, visit the college's Web site at <http://cas.psu.edu/spotlight/farmshow>.

Penn State also will take part in the renewable agricultural energy area in the new Expo Hall. The college will display agricultural crops—such as canola, camellina and soybean—that can yield biofuels.

Each year, more than 100 faculty, county extension educators and staff from the college participate in the Farm Show as committee chairs and members, exhibit personnel, publicity staff and judging

coordinators for competitions from beef cattle and poultry to maple products and mushrooms.

The Pennsylvania Farm Show is the largest indoor agricultural event in America, with 24 acres under roof, spread throughout 11 buildings, including three arenas.

Farm show officials expect more than 400,000 spectators, some 8,000 animals, 13,000 competitive exhibits and nearly 300 commercial exhibitors at the eight-day event. ■

Up and Coming...

January 4-10. Ice Cream Short Course, Nittany Lion Inn, UP. Call Bob Roberts at (814) 863-6132 or visit www.foodscience.psu.edu.

January 9-11. Canine Kinship Agility Trial, Ag Arena, UP. Friday 8 a.m.-4 p.m., Saturday and Sunday 8 a.m.-6 p.m. Contact Vickie Vander Vere at (570) 322-5859.

January 10-17. Pennsylvania Farm Show, Harrisburg. Call (717) 787-5373 or go to www.farmshow.state.pa.us.

January 17-18. AAKA Agility Trial, Ag Arena, UP. 7 a.m.-6 p.m. daily. Contact Carol Metz at (814) 386-4111.

January 19. Martin Luther King Day.

January 24. Ice Cream 101: Introduction to Frozen Deserts, Nittany Lion Inn, UP. Call Bob Roberts at (814) 863-6132 or visit www.foodscience.psu.edu.

FACULTY/STAFF ALERTS

Weather Day Guideline

With increasingly severe winter weather expected, faculty and staff are reminded to review the provisions of Human Resources Guideline No. 10, "Handling Weather Day Absences or Official University Closedowns Due to Weather Conditions." A key principle of the guideline is that the university does not give time off for "weather day" absences unless the president or the chief executive officer of a campus officially closes the facility. No one else may authorize free time off. WPSU-FM will continue to provide information on class cancellations and office closings in times of inclement weather.

WISE Recognition Awards 2009—Call for Nominations

Women in Sciences and Engineering (WISE) looks to recognize Penn State students and personnel, full- or part-time, male or female, who have helped women to excel in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. To nominate someone, or for more information about these awards, log on to

<http://www.equity.psu.edu/wise/recognition.asp>. The deadline for submitting nominations is Jan. 30.

ON THE MOVE

New Faces

Nathaniel Doyno, extension associate in Allegheny County.

Christina Grozinger, associate professor of entomology.

Harland Patch, research associate in entomology.

Ryan Wellar, information technology specialist in veterinary and biomedical sciences.

Partings

David Johnson, senior research associate at the Southeast Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Landisville.

Leona Joseph, associate extension educator in Philadelphia County.

MORE ABOUT US

Noteworthy

2008 Penn State Cooperative Extension Director's Award Recipients

The Penn State Cooperative Extension Director's Awards provide recognition to teams and individuals "whose behavior and performance leads the organization forward in the 21st Century." They are presented annually in three categories:

The Spirit Awards recognize individuals or groups who show an outstanding commitment to Cooperative Extension and their community through their dedication, enthusiasm and high-quality performance. This year's recipients are:

OUTSTANDING COUNTY EDUCATOR—Robert Goodling, Jr., Lebanon County.

OUTSTANDING VOLUNTEERS—Pat and Jerry Longwell, Armstrong County.

OUTSTANDING YOUTH—Brianna Isenberg, Indiana County.

OUTSTANDING EXTENSION ASSOCIATE—Gregory Hoover, Department of Entomology.

OUTSTANDING STAFF—Catherine Blausler, Northwest Region.

OUTSTANDING ENTREPRENEUR—Katheryn Lesser, extension educator, Adams County.

OUTSTANDING OUTREACH PARTNER—Bedford County Afterschool Consortium, under the leadership of Walter Curfman and Lyn Skillington.

The Team Award recognizes extension administrative or program teams that work together in an exemplary fashion to address a special initiative or goal. This year's recipient is the Crop Management Extension Group, which includes Susan Alexander, extension educator in Jefferson County; Craig Altemose, senior extension educator in Centre County; Mark Antle, research support assistant in crop and soil sciences; John Ayers, professor of plant pathology; Mary Barbercheck, professor of entomology; Melanie Barkley, senior extension educator in Bedford County; Douglas Beegle, professor of agronomy; James Clark, senior extension educator in McKean County; Norman Conrad, extension educator in Union County; Paul Craig, extension educator in Dauphin County; Lisa Crytser, staff assistant in crop and soil sciences; Bill Curran, professor of weed science; Justin Dillon, senior extension associate in crop and soil sciences; Sjoerd Duiker, associate professor of soil management; Mike Fournier, county extension director in Bucks County; Jeff Fowler, county extension director in Venango County; Andrew Frankenfield, extension educator in Montgomery County; Kevin Fry, extension educator in Armstrong County; Jeff Graybill, extension educator in Lancaster County; Donna Grey, extension educator in Luzerne County; Marvin Hall, professor of forage management; Dave Hartman, extension educator in Columbia County; Mena Hautau, extension educator in Berks County; Ron Hoover, coordinator of on-farm research in crop and soil sciences; Greg Hostetter, extension educator in Juniata County; Joel Hunter, extension educator in Crawford County; David Johnson, senior research associate at the Southeast Agricultural Research and Extension Center; William Kleiner, Southeast Region director; Bob Leiby, county extension director in Lehigh County; Dwight Lingenfelter, program development specialist in crop and soil sciences; Eric Lorenz, senior extension associate in the Pesticide Education Program;

Mark Madden, extension educator in Sullivan County; Stanley McKee, extension educator in Huntingdon County; Dave Messersmith, extension educator in Wayne County; Gary Micsky, interim county extension director in Mercer County; Dwane Miller, extension educator in Schuylkill County; Tom Murphy, associate extension educator in Lycoming County; Jan Pruss, senior instructor in crop and soil sciences; Leon Ressler, interim Capitol Region director; N. Don Rill, research support associate in crop and soil sciences; Gregory Roth, professor of agronomy and state program leader for renewable and alternative energy; Jonathan Rotz, assistant extension educator in Cumberland County; John Rowehl, extension educator in York County; Richard Stehouwer, associate professor of environmental soil science; John Tooker, associate professor of entomology; Delbert Voight, extension educator in Lebanon County; and J. Craig Williams, extension educator in Tioga County.

The Leadership Award

honors an extension professional who has a strong history of outstanding leadership and contributions to extension, and who has demonstrated the highest overall standards of excellence. This year's recipient is Bhushan Jayarao, professor of veterinary science.

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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