



2023 USDA LGBTQI+ Pride Month  
*Changing the Landscape*

# 2023 USDA LGBTQI+ Pride Month Observance

June 29, 2023 | 1:00-2:30 p.m. ET

*Virtual event on Zoom*



Organized by  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR)  
and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)

# Observance Program

## Opening Remarks



**Roberto Contreras (he/him)**  
Civil Rights Director  
Food and Nutrition Service

## National Anthem

Gay Men's Chorus of Washington

## Remarks



**Dr. Penny Brown Reynolds (she/her)**  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights,  
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights

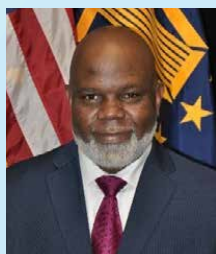


**Stacy Dean (she/her)**  
Deputy Under Secretary  
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services



**Kevin Shea (he/him)**  
USDA Acting Deputy Secretary

## Introduction of Keynote Speakers



**Willie Taylor (he/him)**  
Administrator, Southeast Regional Office  
Food and Nutrition Service

## Keynote Speakers



**Dr. Katherine Dentzman (she/her)**  
Assistant Professor in Rural Sociology and Rural Public Policy,  
Iowa State University

*Dr. Dentzman has advanced an understanding of the human dimensions of herbicide resistance, and she has numerous publications. Katherine also applied theories of good farming, place attachment, and intersectionality to study the pathways and barriers to success in agriculture faced by women and LGBTQ+ farmers.*



**Dr. Jac Wypler (they/she)**  
National Young Farmers Coalition

*Dr. Wypler helps to facilitate the Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) in the Northeast. Jac has worked in agriculture for a decade on farms, with non-profits, and in education. Jac received a Ph.D. in Sociology at University of Wisconsin-Madison for their research on social power and resistance strategies in Midwest farming communities.*

## Introduction of Postcards from the Field



**Jeremy Wood (he/him)**  
DEIA Strategy and Policy Advisor  
Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer  
Equality USDA President

## Postcards from the Field Video

## Closing Remarks



**Alberto Gonzalez, Jr. (he/him)**  
Senior Advisor for External Engagement  
Food and Nutrition Service

# Message from the Secretary



Dear USDA Employees,

For the past 21 years, during the month of June, we have celebrated the contributions of LGBTQI+ individuals to our nation and to our work here at USDA.

The LGBTQI+ community today proudly stands as a beacon of justice and self-acceptance within the walls of our organization and their acceptance across society has grown. But, just as is true with any march toward civil rights, the battle has not been easy. It has taken courage, determination, and allyship to secure basic human rights like marriage-equality and employment protections. While there is still a ways to go, we are honored to serve with and among the LGBTQI+ employees at USDA who work every day to serve all people. Our organization and country are stronger for your integrity, hard work, and unwavering commitment to making this world a better place.

On April 26, 2023, President Biden issued A Proclamation on the 70th Anniversary of the Lavender Scare which began when President Eisenhower signed an Executive Order banning LGBTQI+ Americans from serving in the Federal Government. This action codified a shameful chapter of exclusion in our government, and I encourage you all to take time to read this proclamation and learn more about the history of LGBTQI+ plus individuals in Federal Service so that we may never return to such acts of discrimination and hate.

It is history like this that contextualizes this year's Pride Month's theme, "Changing the Landscape." When we understand the past, we can learn and lead the way towards acceptance, inclusion, and equality. This theme should be a call to action for all of us. With a collective commitment to centering dignity and respect in our work, USDA is changing the landscape of American agriculture, the food supply chain, and rural communities for the better. USDA continues to emphasize the importance of LGBTQI+ equality by fostering workplace environment where

everyone is included, respected, and empowered to fulfill their potential. That commitment transfers to our customers. From the LGBTQI+ producers who contribute their knowledge, skills, and experiences to providing the country with its food, fuel, and fiber to the LGBTQI+ leaders in science, rural communities and families across the country, our collective potential has no bounds.

## Some of the ways we are implementing inclusive hiring and retention practices at USDA are:

- Developing Departmental policy in support of transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary individuals in line with the recently revised OPM Guidance on Gender Identity and Inclusion in the Workplace;
- Continuing to hold "Working Effectively with LGBTQI+ Coworkers and Customers" and other training sessions with Equality USDA;
- Forming an action plan for collection and utilization of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) data in USDA programs and exploring best practices on internal collection of SOGI data to ensure a diverse workforce;
- Establishing the Office of the Chief Diversity & Inclusion Officer, to lead implementation of the USDA DEIA Strategic plan; and
- Sharing stories of how we're helping LGBTI+ customers across the country, including Stacey Givens, Andee and Lindsey Stevens, and Charlize Katzenbach.

Sincerely,

**Thomas J. Vilsack**  
USDA Secretary



# 2023 Pride at USDA



The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer, the Office of Operations, and the Office of Safety, Security and Protection collaborated to light the Whitten Building June 1-11 in support of LGBTQI+ employees.



Tremayne Wilson with the National Agricultural Statistics Service staffed the Equality USDA booth on June 23 at the USDA Farmers Market.



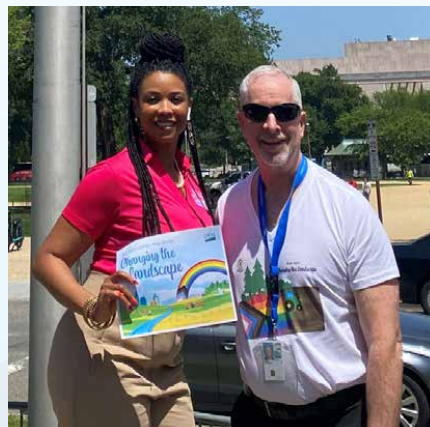
FAS held its Pride Observance on June 14. (From left to right) Nicola Sakhleh, Ryan Brewster and Jake Fagliarone, from FAS; Fred Boll, Director, from Department of State; and Seth Wyngowski, from GLIFAA.



# Postcards from the Field



**August Gant**  
Silviculture Forester  
Forest Service  
Scott County, Arkansas



**Ahlisia Shipley and Brent Elrod**  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
Washington, D.C.



**Brian Guse**  
Director  
USDA's Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production  
Washington, D.C.



**Carlos Ortiz and Dr. Decatur Foster**  
National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
Kansas City, MO



**Chris Biles**  
International Program Specialist  
Foreign Agricultural Service  
Washington, D.C.



**Elizabeth Creech (with wife Elliana and daughter Rowan)**  
Natural Resources Communication Specialist  
Natural Resources Conservation Service  
Raleigh, NC



**Drake Dalton**  
Soil Conservationist  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Escambia County, AL



**Valvina Miranda and  
Christine Chavez**  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Davis, CA



**Valvina Miranda,  
Christine Chavez and  
Julie Meyers**  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Davis, CA



**Jeffery Ishmael**  
USDA Relief Grader  
Agricultural Marketing Service  
Des Moines, IA



**Jeff Howard**  
Assistant Director  
University of Maryland  
Extension  
College Park, MD



**Joanna Pope**  
State Public Affairs Specialist  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Lincoln, NE





**Julie MacSwain**  
Retired  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Oregon and Minnesota



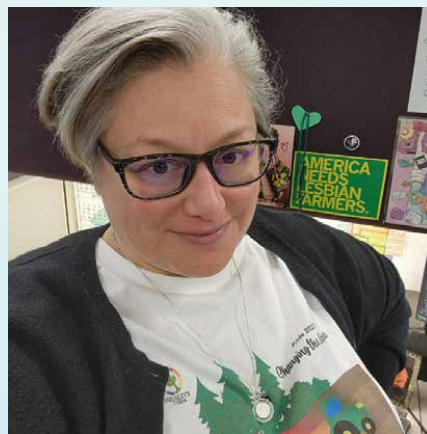
**Kalieg Walther,  
Laura McPherson and  
Elizabeth Herzig**  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Massachusetts



**Kirsten Strough and  
wife Emily Ryan**  
Visual Information Specialist  
Farm Production and  
Conservation Business Center  
Boise, ID



**Lanie Bilodeau, Ph.D.**  
Research Leader/  
Location Coordinator  
Agricultural Research Service  
Baton Rouge, LA



**Lauren Siebert**  
Program Technician  
Farm Service Agency  
Poweshiek County, IA



**Joe, Hannah, and Anna  
(Chickadee Creek Farm)  
and James Strehse**  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
New Jersey





**Petra Volinski**  
Supervisory Soil Conservationist  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
North Carolina



**Rainbow Alliance and  
Inclusion Network**  
Animal Plant and Health  
Inspection Service  
Ames, IA



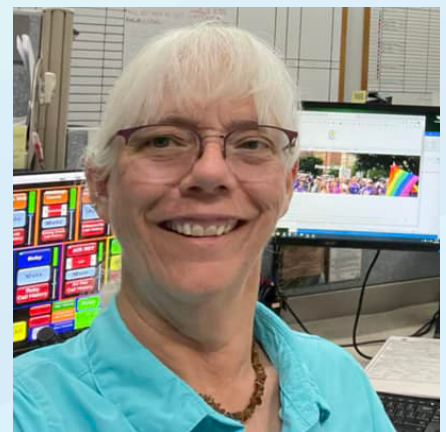
**Rose Schwartz**  
Soil Conservationist  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Greenfield, MA



**Russell Ames**  
Management Analyst  
Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Washington, D.C.



**Sarah Sol**  
Writer/ Editor  
Rural Development  
Oregon



**Sueanne Cmehil-Warn**  
Retired  
Forest Service  
Mark Twain National Forest,  
Missouri



**Carolyn Jones and  
Julie Meyers**

Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
California



**Tremayne Wilson**

Agricultural Statistician  
National Agricultural Statistics  
Service  
Washington, D.C.



# Equality USDA Board

Equality USDA is the employee resource group for LGBTQI+ employees and retirees of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. The mission of Equality USDA is to create and continue to foster a work environment free of discrimination and harassment based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression. Equality USDA seeks to make USDA a place where you can grow your own destiny, no matter who you are or whom you love. To join Equality USDA, visit [equalityusda.org](https://equalityusda.org)!



## **President: Jeremy Wood (he/him)**

Jeremy has been a part of the USDA family for over 20 years and currently is the DEIA Strategy and Policy Advisor in the Office of the Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer within the Office of the Secretary. Jeremy has been involved with the LGBTQ+ Special Emphasis Program since its creation in 2009 and is co-leading USDA's efforts to implement President Biden's Executive Order on Preventing and Combating Discrimination on the Basis of Gender Identity or Sexual Orientation.



## **Vice-President: Adriana Campagna (she/they)**

Adriana is the Lower Willamette/North Coast Basin Engineer for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) in Oregon. They started their career with NRCS in July 2016 in California. Since starting her career, she has worked in two states in a variety of positions ranging from Field Office Engineer to State Wetland Engineer. She is an At-Large member of the Oregon Civil Rights Committee and was the previously the Treasurer for Equality USDA.



## **Communications Director: Justin Fritscher (he/him)**

Justin is the Public Affairs Section Chief for USDA's Farm Production and Conservation Business Center, leading communications for USDA's farm program agencies (Farm Service Agency, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Risk Management Agency). He joined USDA in 2011, originally working for the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service in Jackson, Mississippi. Justin is a Louisiana native and a Louisiana State University alumnus.



## **Secretary: Rachel Frei (she/her)**

Rachel is an Urban Conservationist for the Natural Resources Conservation Service for the state of South Dakota. She began her career as a soil conservationist and district conservationist in 2019. Prior to working for NRCS, Rachel received her master's degree in agro-environmental science with research in soil physics and fertility from Aarhus University in Denmark. She received her bachelor's degree in environmental science and soil science from the University of Rhode Island.



### **Treasurer: Chris Nasados (he/him)**

Chris is a Senior Program Specialist who has worked for the last thirteen years in the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office of the Food and Nutrition Service in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Program Integrity. Prior to Federal service, he worked for the State of Pennsylvania for 10 years as both an Income Maintenance Caseworker and then as a Human Services Program Specialist.



### **Community Outreach & Engagement Committee Co-Chair: Cristina Miller (she/her)**

Cristina is a health economist with Rural Development Innovation Center supporting the work of the USDA Rural Health Liaison. She has been part of the USDA family for 14 years. Prior to federal service, she was a golf pro and a German-to-English translator for the senior executives of a large German corporation in the U.S. She holds a M.A. in Political Science, a M.S. degree in Agricultural Economics, a certificate in agriculture health and safety, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Economics.



### **Community Outreach & Engagement Committee Co-Chair: Zephyr Usinger (they/them)**

Zephyr is a Soil Conservationist with the Natural Resources Conservation Service at the Kealahou field office on Hawaii's Big Island. They started their federal career as a Pathways intern working in multiple field offices across the Hawaiian islands. They received their master's degree in natural resource and environmental management at the University of Hawaii, Manoa on Oahu. Their family has lived on the Big Island of Hawaii for over 25 years and currently grow organic lettuce and dragon fruit.



### **Past President: Meghan Walter (she/her)**

Meghan is an Environmental Engineer for NRCS's West National Technology Support Center in Portland, Oregon. She provides technical expertise to the western 13 states in dam safety, hydrology, hydraulic and environmental engineering, and stream and wetland restoration. She holds a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering, a master's degree in Water Resources Engineering, and is a licensed Professional Engineer in Oregon and Iowa. Meghan served as the President of Equality USDA from 2018-2021.



# Acknowledgements

The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR) would like to extend our gratitude to all the amazing speakers who shared their time and talents for the 2023 USDA Pride Month Activities.

Thanks to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for leading the Pride Planning efforts in 2023 and thank you to the Pride Planning committee members whose efforts are reflected in today's program.

- 2023 Pride Planning Committee
  - Sonja Frazier (she/her), Chief Diversity Officer, FNS
  - Kim Betton, Director (she/her), Public Affairs, FNS-SERO
  - Fred Cheng (he/him), Diversity & Inclusion Program Manager, FNS
  - Suzette Wilson (she/her), Senior Equal Opportunity Specialist, OASCR-MAL
  - Alethea Parker (she/her), Public Affairs Specialist, FNS-SERO
  - Noreen Walsh-Esrey (she/her), Program Specialist/LGBTQI+ SEPM, FNS-SERO
  - Samantha Benjamin-Kirk (she/her), Lead Program Specialist, FNS-SERO
  - Rosie Daugherty (she/her), Branch Chief, Community Nutrition Program, FNS-SERO
  - Dashawn Decou (she/her), Management Analyst, FNS-SERO
  - Deidra Williams (she/her), Program Specialist, FNS-SERO
  - Tremayne Wilson (he/him), Agricultural Statistician, NASS
  - Joshua Allen (he/they), State Outreach Coordinator, NRCS-VT
  - Jeremy Wood (he/him), DEIA Policy and Strategy Advisor, OSEC-OCDIO/President, Equality USDA
  - Allyson Sneed (she/her), Equal Opportunity Specialist, OASCR-MAL
  - Pearl Plumboy (she/her), Equal Opportunity Specialist, OASCR-MAL
  - Paola Nieves Rivera (she/her), Intern, OASCR-MAL

A very special thank you to the following for their outstanding efforts to make USDA's Pride events a success:

- 2023 Pride Month Poster, Observance Program, & Postcards from the Field Video Production
  - Kirsten Strough (she/her), Visual Information Specialist, Farm Production and Conservation Business Center
  - Justin Fritscher (he/him), Public Affairs Chief, Farm Production and Conservation Business Center
  - Brian Guse, Director (he/him), Office of Urban Agriculture and Innovative Production
  - Adriana Campagna (she/they), Basin Engineer, NRCS-OR/Vice President, Equality USDA
- Pride Flag Raising & USDA Whitten Building Lighting
  - Mike Illenberg (he/him), Director, Brands, Events, Print and Editorial Review, and Internal Communications, USDA Office of Communications
  - Duane Williams, Director, USDA Office of Operations
  - Tom Hoffman, Director of Facilities Management, USDA Office of Operations and facilities management staff
  - Chad Carroll, Chief Security Director, USDA Office of Safety, Security, and Protection, and security staff
- Pride Month Social Media and employee spotlights
  - Thanh-Thanh Pham (she/her), Social Media Manager, USDA Office of Communications
  - Sasha Harrison (she/her), Web Graphic Designer, USDA Office of Communications
  - Thomasina Brown (she/her), Graphic Designer, USDA Office of Communications
  - Chelsea Anderson (she/her), Digital Analytics Manager, USDA Office of Communications
- Pride at the USDA Farmer's Market
  - Tomi Ajiboye (she/her), Program Specialist, USDA Farmer's Market
  - Equality USDA

# Notes

Equality USDA uses the acronym LGBTQI+ to represent the range of sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions present in our world, including but not limited to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, pansexual, Two Spirit, gender nonconforming, nonbinary, intersex, asexual, and ally.

## EEO

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