

OKLAHOMA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD, AND FORESTRY

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January 30, 2017

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Oklahoma enumerators count among nation's best

Two employees at the Oklahoma Data Collection Center received national honors for the work they do in gathering agricultural information from farmers and ranchers. Rhonda Withrow was selected as the 2016 Supervisor of the Year and James McDaniel was selected as the 2016 Enumerator of the Year. The data they collect from phone surveys with producers provides needed information that affects the livelihood of individual farmers and farm communities across the country. Enumerators at the collection center are employees of the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA).

It takes more than good phone manners to be a successful phone enumerator. It also takes a certain amount of personal charm and persuasion. Survey questions take time from a farmer's busy day and may require very detailed information about crops planted and harvested. Experienced enumerators like Withrow and McDaniel ask survey questions pleasantly but efficiently and understand farm operations so they can quickly take down data from a tired farmer at the end of a long day.

Withrow was acknowledged for her outstanding leadership, mentorship and support to a crew of 20 at the Oklahoma Data Collection Center. She has worked there for 14 years and has received many awards for her efficiency and dedication. Data Collection Center Coordinator Lance Daugherty notes that she does more than supervise her crew. She actively participates in making calls to producers and gives new crew members confidence and courage through her example.

McDaniel has been an enumerator for three years, but relies on knowledge from more than 30 years with the Farm Service Agency in addition to growing up on a dairy farm. He was recognized for his outstanding performance as the most productive enumerator in the Oklahoma Data Collection Center. His ability to get producers to complete surveys points to his friendly interview style and polite demeanor.

Daugherty's pride in the Oklahoma Data Collection Center is well-justified by results. There are over 2,500 NASDA enumerators nationwide. Only 12 were selected in the 2016 Awards for Excellence Program and two of them were from his office in Oklahoma City.

Enumerators are vital to the U.S. Department of Agriculture's understanding of agricultural practices across the country. They collect information that is used by many people in the agricultural industry and in policy-making roles. Data from surveys forms the basis for unbiased information that tells the true state of the agricultural economy. Enumerators are key players in the data collection effort.

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Photo caption:

Oklahoma Secretary of Agriculture Jim Reese (l) congratulates James McDaniel and Rhonda Withrow on national awards received for their work with the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Troy Marshall (r), State Statistician of the NASS Oklahoma Field Office, and NASS Oklahoma Data Collection Center Coordinator Lance Daugherty (2nd from r) were present to make the awards.

