

Sunburst: A Horizon Newsletter

2010 Trainee Forum Edition

August means one thing to trainees in PBS's Great Lakes Region: The annual Trainee Forum at the regional headquarters in Chicago. Whether attending for the first, second or third time, GSA's future leaders gathered to meet with its current ones for three days of mentoring, networking and recognition. Attendees also got to sample some of downtown Chicago's finest lunch establishments—not to mention taking part in the epic coda of the 2010 Trainee-Mentor Cup Series: a softball game for the ages.



Facilities and Management Services Program Director Sandra Canchola (center) holds court at one of the Management Roundtable Discussions, speaking to (clockwise from center) Laura Marble, Procurement Branch Manager DeLois Glover, Megan Coleman, Kyle Van Someren, John Matthews and Jordan Dykstra.

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of the
2010 PBS
Trainee
Forum.



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Chicago, IL

Benjamin Craig
Jennifer Johannsen
Thomas Monaweck
Alex Putnam
Kathryn Weissman
Dana Wisehart

Cincinnati, OH

Jonathan Rubin
Andrew Shelton
Rebecca Vaccari

Columbus, OH

Emily Haberkern

Dayton, OH

Eric Ham

Detroit, MI

Joseph Bustamante
Joseph Hillebrand

Minneapolis, MN

Scott Christensen
Joseph Curtis
Aaron Wilson

Springfield, IL

Leigh Ann Davis
Jaclyn Emrick

Learning from bosses and peers alike

On August 25, the Ralph H. Metcalfe Federal Building in Chicago welcomed some 121 guests—120 Region 5 trainees, and one Commissioner of Public Buildings.

PBS head honcho Bob Peck paid a surprise visit to the 2010 PBS Trainee Forum, kicking off Day Two of the three-day event with a brief address and a Q&A session. For fifty minutes, Commissioner Peck spoke to some of his newest charges about the agency's upcoming challenges, the role of civil servants in American society and the reputation of Great Lakes as one of GSA's top-performing regions.

Though not originally on the agenda, the visit was in keeping with the tone of the annual gathering of trainees from throughout Region 5. From August 24-26, attendees took part in panel sessions covering topics like team-building, career development and sustainability efforts within PBS.

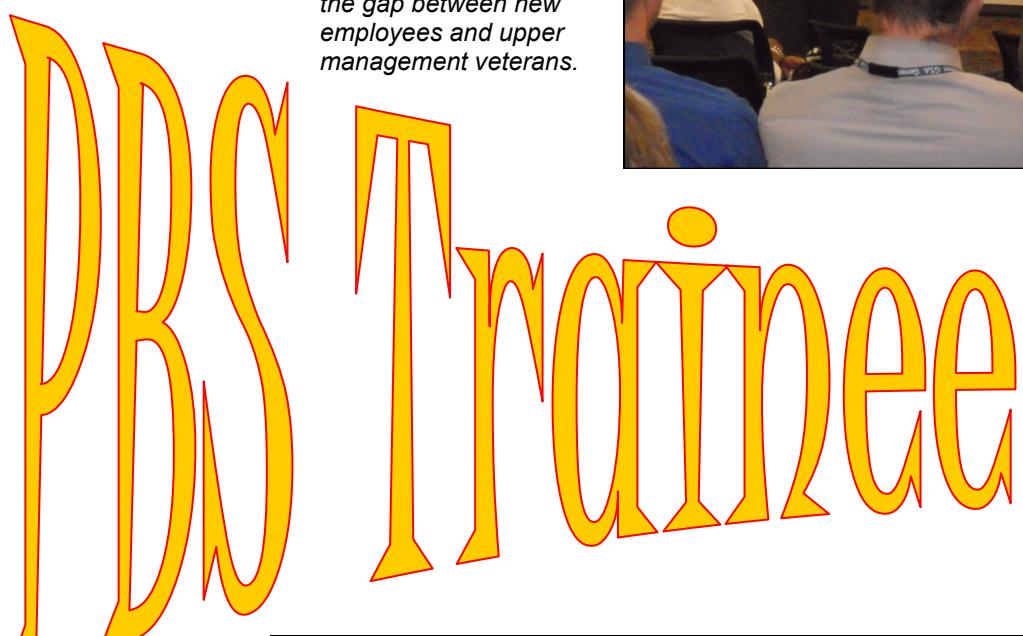
Division directors took the time to present overviews of their particular corners of the agency. Recently graduated trainees shared advice on getting the most out of the program. And an assortment of directors and managers held roundtable discussions to impart their wisdom to future successors.

Other sessions offered in-depth looks at some of the efforts at the forefront of PBS. The agency-wide implementation of Global Project Management (gPM) was discussed by National Project Manager Allison Azevedo and National gPM team member Josue Flores. Regional Recovery Executive Charles Hardy and Budget and Financial Management Director Jesse Ozuna outlined the next phases of Region 5's projects under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Regional Historic Preservation Officer Regina Nally and Preservation Architect Mariah McGunigle spotlighted PBS's commitment to Historic Preservation and the Art in Architecture program.

Wednesday afternoon was capped by the Awards and Recognition Ceremony, in which each division within PBS honored the contributions of one or two exemplary trainees. The full list of honorees can be found on page 3.

Andrew Daglas

PBS Commissioner Bob Peck (right) takes questions from the crowd after delivering an impromptu keynote address on Day 2 of the Trainee Forum. Peck's surprise appearance dovetailed with the Forum's goal of bridging the gap between new employees and upper management veterans.



The Management Roundtable Discussions are always among the Forum's best-attended sessions. Trainees packed the room for informal conversations with PBS directors and upper managers, eager for the opportunity to glean career advice and obtain a fuller understanding of various divisions.

Clockwise from left: Design & Construction Director Robert Theel, Tom Monawec, Kathryn Weissman, Nathan Ingersoll, David Zeeb, Acquisition Management Director Mike Wolff, Edgar Delgado, Ryan Beard.



Above: Some of the shiny, happy attendees of the 2010 PBS Trainee Forum. From left to right....actually forget it, there's no way we're naming all of these people. You know who you are.

Forum 2010

"A Day In The Life" sessions focused on the challenges and successes of recent trainee program graduates, straight from the mouths of alums like Kyle Van Someren (below left), Lindsay Dault (below right), William Chapman (not pictured), and Ryan Beard (not pictured, for once).



At right: Anna Bednarczyk (left) accepts accolades from Property Management Service Center Director Ken Kunesh (right) and Deputy Director Mary Kennedy (center) at the Awards and Recognition Ceremony. Twenty trainees received such honors at the event.



At the Awards and Recognition Ceremony, each division highlighted one or two of its most valuable trainees before their peers. The recipients are:

- Budget & Financial Management
Virginia Lopez
- Customer Projects Service Center
Stephanie Flores
- Design and Construction – Architecture & Engineering
Kyle Van Someren
Stephanie Zajewski
- Design and Construction – Capital Construction Projects
Greg Oprian
- Greater Chicagoland Service Center
Patricia Gonzalez
Marc Zitzer
- Ohio Service Center
Connie Bilek-Hammond
Angela Jayjack
- Organizational Resources
Aaron Merkle
Michael Mitchell
- Michigan Service Center
Robert Potter
Miranda Webster
- Minnesota/Wisconsin Service Center
Rosemarie Buchalski
Meghan Coleman
- Regional Office
Anna Bednarczyk
- Regional Procurement Branch
Brian Bogucki
Kathern Williams
- Southern Illinois/Indiana Service Center
Philip Heimlich
Jason Hoffmann



Experiencing the thrill of victory...

...and the agony of that other stuff

Trainees climb back into the series, then let it all slip away

The Trainees took two things into May's Bar Trivia contest against the Mentors: a 2-0 deficit in the Cup Series, and a never-say-die attitude. At the end of the night, only one of those was unaltered.

Age may have triumphed over beauty in the first two events of the inaugural Trainee-Mentor Cup, but the youngsters finally found their mojo in the third event of the best-of-five series. On May 13, at the Weathermark Tavern in Chicago's South Loop, the Trainees trounced the Mentors by an average score of 60 points to 37.

The victory closed the series gap to 2-1, keeping the Trainees' Cup hopes alive. Previously, the Mentors had eked out narrow wins in basketball and bowling.

Their dreams of delivering a humiliating sweep of the impudent youngsters were not to be, however. In the contest of useless knowledge, the Internet generation had a clear edge. Perhaps the Mentors were stymied by questions about such new-fangled minutiae as Willie Mays and the Soviet city of Petrograd.

Each side fielded five teams, part of more than 20 teams taking part in the Weathermark's regular trivia contest. In the end, the Trainee squads had bested not only their long-time rivals but all other competition as well—taking the top five slots in overall scoring. First place belonged to the team of Energy and Sustainability's Mike Virgilio and Property Management's Anna Bednarczyk, Liz Madison, Bill Winczner and Marc Zitzer.

-Andrew Daglas



Best of the best (clockwise from left): The top-finishing team of Bill Winczner, Anna Bednarczyk, Mike Virgilio, Marc Zitzer and Liz Madison enjoy the Trainees' sole Cup victory, while Josh Westhouse tries to share the credit from the background.

Looking to build on their momentum from May's Trivia victory, the Trainees charged strong out of the gate at the fourth Trainee-Mentor Cup event, beach volleyball. After a dominating start, though, the upstarts finally ran out of steam.

The Trainees were hoping to square the Cup Series score at 2-2. They appeared to be well on their way after a dominating 25-7 win in the first game of the best-of-three match in Chicago's Grant Park on July 29.

But the Mentors thwarted those hopes with a comeback of their own. They rallied to take the next two games 25-12 and 25-16. Their third win in the five-event series cinched the championship in the very first Trainee-Mentor Cup Series.

Veteran volleyballers like Ray Cubberly, Bret Cullen, Edgar Delgado, Liz Madison, Kyle Van Someren and Marc Zitzer kept the Trainees fighting with spectacular spikes and dogged digs. But the fluid passing and seeing-eye serves of Mentor leaders like Tom Hennigan, Jeff Miller, Diana Vaughan, and Coach Jesse Ozuna soon found the holes in the Trainee defense.

The persistence of the Mentors was reminiscent of the basketball event, in which another late-game surge propelled them to the first win in the series. Suggestions made by some that the use of human growth hormones (HGH) played a role in the Mentors' repeated athletic triumphs are, of course, completely unfounded and spurious.

Sadly, the coronation would have to wait, since the Trainee Cup—which had been missing for several months—was again nowhere to be found. At press time, it was believed to be someplace no one ever visits — perhaps the workspace of Ryan Beard.

-Ryan Beard & Andrew Daglas



Kyle Van Someren (right) leaps for the spike, while Jesse Ozuna digs in to defend. The Mentors rebounded from a poor first game to take the match 2-1, and clinch the Cup Series three events to one.



Trainees build for future, but Mentors put up a fight

One side was playing for pride, the other to pad its stats. But neither was prepared to go gently into that good night (okay, late evening) when the fifth and final Trainee-Mentor Cup event was held on August 25.

Seven innings weren't enough to settle matters when the squads met on the softball diamond at Chicago's Wicker Park for the season's swan song. Heads-up play by the Mentors combined with a controversial rule interpretation to force an 8-8 tie.

Powered by an especially potent brand of Gatorade, the Trainees led 8-7 heading into the bottom of the sixth. In what should have been the final inning of play, the Mentors continued their pattern of late-game heroics. After an early first out, they rallied to put two on base. Vince Pumo then drew a walk to load the bases, setting up the drama.

One quirky rule stated that if a



Ken Kunesh squares up for an at-bat against the Trainees.

team walked a male batter ahead of a female batter, that female had the option of taking an immediate walk as well. Although intended to prevent teams from pitching around the Y-chromosomes in the opposing line-up, the rule didn't specify that it only applied to *intentional* walks.

So when Laura Husarek stepped to the plate following Pumo's free

pass, she was instantly awarded first base, forcing in the tying run.

Following one scoreless extra inning, the demands of time and beer ended the game in a draw. The anticlimactic result left everyone eager to kick off the 2011 Cup Series.

Since Trainees from across Region 5 were in town for the Trainee Forum, the contingent of participants and spectators was larger than ever. With ringers like David Zeeb, Sam McFadden and Becky Hoover in the line-up, the team surged to an early lead in a five-run first inning. Local newcomers chipped in strong performances as well, like Russell Swickhemier at the plate and in the field, and Tom Monaweck on the pitcher's mound.

Far from discouraged, the Trainees and ready to build on their momentum and seek to reclaim the Cup next season.

-Andrew Daglas



Congratulations to everyone who made the inaugural Trainee-Mentor Cup season a rousing success! The Mentors won the FY 2010 Series by a final tally of 3-1-1, but the Trainees are hungry for a rematch. We'll see you all back on the court, on the field, and in the bar, when the FY 2011 Series kicks off this autumn!

Your Thrift Savings Plan: a primer

Editor's Note: This article is for informational purposes only, and should not be construed as endorsing a particular investment strategy. The author is not a certified financial advisor.

Chances are, if you're reading this, you plan to retire someday. You likely have some money in the Thrift Savings Plan (TSP), but what are you doing with it? There are a number of investment strategies for the TSP, and a few websites that will provide helpful articles and information to help you plan.

As a federal employee, you're entitled to three sources of money in your retirement. One is Social Security. The second is an annuity, based on your tenure and salary history: your three highest-earning years are averaged, and 1% of that amount is multiplied by the number of years you work to determine the annual payment. For example, if you work for 30 years, and average \$100,000 in your three highest-earning years, you will earn \$30,000 per year after you retire. As a nice bonus, if you work for more than 30 years, you earn 1.1% instead.

The third plank of your retirement is the TSP, which is the federal government's version of a 401(k) retirement plan. You contribute a portion of each paycheck, pre-tax, into the TSP; the money is available to withdraw after retirement. As an incentive to help plan for retirement, the government matches up to 5% of your salary as part of this contribution. Recent and new hires are automatically enrolled in a TSP plan; more tenured employees must opt-in.

TSP Options

Now that you know how the TSP works, it's time to discuss investing options. The TSP is made up of Exchange-Traded Funds (ETF), which are aggregates of individual stocks, bonds and/or U.S. Treasuries. The money invested in the TSP buys shares of these funds, according to the levels of risk and return you target.

The most secure option is the G Fund, which offers minimal risk and minimal return by investing exclusively in short-term Treasury securities. The F Fund tracks a mix of government, corporate and mortgage-backed bonds, which makes it slightly riskier but offers higher returns.

The C and S Funds follow domestic stock funds—respectively, the S&P 500, which tracks a broad cross-section of the market; and the Dow Jones Total Stock Market Index, which comprises companies not represented in the S&P. These funds have more risk, but offer frequently higher returns than the G and F Funds. The I Fund follows international stocks, and is influenced by fluctuations in global currencies as well as fluctuations in the prices of international stocks.

In addition, you can choose a Lifecycle fund, which invests in those basic funds in different combinations.

These take the guesswork out of balancing risk and return by automatically adjusting the proportion of risky and safe funds as you get closer to retirement.

An employee planning to retire around the year 2040 might choose the L 2040 fund. This fund starts off heavily invested in stocks, which offer higher returns than bonds; because the employee is far away from retirement, he/she can tolerate the greater volatility and chance of loss that comes with stocks. As the target date approaches, the fund adjusts the balance to favor bonds, in order to protect against heavy losses close to retirement.

This chart shows monthly returns for each fund.

| Month | L Income | L 2010 | L 2020 | L 2030 | L 2040 | G Fund | F Fund | C Fund | S Fund | I Fund |
|-------------|----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|---------|----------|
| 2009 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sep | 1.08% | 1.32% | 2.63% | 3.14% | 3.56% | 0.26% | 1.07% | 3.74% | 5.94% | 3.79% |
| Oct | (0.26%) | (0.38%) | (1.39%) | (1.81%) | (2.15%) | 0.26% | 0.51% | (1.86%) | (5.51%) | (2.41%) |
| Nov | 1.27% | 1.47% | 3.00% | 3.55% | 3.96% | 0.26% | 1.30% | 6.00% | 3.85% | 3.16% |
| Dec | 0.59% | 0.70% | 1.50% | 1.85% | 2.12% | 0.25% | (1.55%) | 1.94% | 6.57% | 1.43% |
| 2010 | | | | | | | | | | |
| Jan | (0.45%) | (0.58%) | (2.03%) | (2.49%) | (2.88%) | 0.29% | 1.54% | (3.60%) | (2.43%) | (5.17%) |
| Feb | 0.74% | 0.81% | 1.61% | 1.94% | 2.18% | 0.24% | 0.38% | 3.11% | 4.89% | 0.06% |
| Mar | 1.43% | 1.61% | 3.75% | 4.52% | 5.15% | 0.27% | (0.11%) | 6.04% | 7.39% | 6.28% |
| Apr | 0.50% | 0.51% | 0.76% | 0.94% | 1.05% | 0.28% | 1.07% | 1.58% | 4.82% | (2.35%) |
| May | (1.50%) | (1.64%) | (4.98%) | (6.07%) | (6.97%) | 0.28% | 0.85% | (7.99%) | (7.51%) | (11.20%) |
| Jun | (0.61%) | (0.68%) | (2.34%) | (2.98%) | (3.47%) | 0.24% | 1.56% | (5.24%) | (6.90%) | (1.75%) |
| Jul | 1.81% | 1.81% | 4.82% | 5.80% | 6.60% | 0.23% | 1.07% | 7.01% | 7.00% | 10.78% |
| Aug | (0.63%) | (0.62%) | (2.29%) | (2.88%) | (3.33%) | 0.22% | 1.28% | (4.51%) | (5.59%) | (3.14%) |
| YTD | 1.26% | 1.18% | (1.10%) | (1.80%) | (2.43%) | 2.06% | 7.89% | (4.62%) | 0.21% | (7.80%) |
| Last 12 mo | 3.99% | 4.33% | 4.64% | 4.88% | 4.98% | 3.10% | 9.29% | 4.93% | 11.03% | (2.28%) |

TSP Strategy

The most common strategy when investing in the TSP is dollar cost averaging. With this approach, you contribute a fixed amount of money to your investment on a regular basis (say, \$100 each month). The idea behind it is that if your investments decrease in value, you're buying more shares at a lower price; when the



value rises again, you own more shares than you would have if the price remained the same. Dollar cost averaging works best (or only) in situations where the market is generally trending upward. As you can see in the

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graph, the S&P 500 took a big hit in late 2008/early 2009, and hasn't regained its 2007/early 2008 highs.

In the long term, you'll probably be fine using dollar cost averaging. However, if you move your money to the G or F funds when the market starts to dip, you can buy when prices get closer to the bottom and not lose the money. Does this mean that now is a great time to invest?

Maybe. It's impossible to tell where the market will go in the future, but the author of this article does not have a lot of optimism for the near-term market.

If you look at the 12-month returns in the chart below, you'll notice that year-to-date returns are much lower than they were at the start of the last decade. This shows a weakening in the market, and as a whole may not bode well for its near-term prospects.

| Year | G Fund | F Fund | C Fund | S Fund* | I Fund* |
|-----------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|--------------|
| 2000 | 6.4200 | 11.67% | (9.14%) | (15.77%) | (14.17%) |
| 2001 | 5.3900 | 8.61% | (11.94%) | (9.04%) | (21.94%) |
| 2002 | 5.0000 | 10.27% | (22.05%) | (18.14%) | (15.98%) |
| 2003 | 4.1100 | 4.11% | 28.54% | 42.92% | 37.94% |
| 2004 | 4.3000 | 4.30% | 10.82% | 18.03% | 20.00% |
| 2005 | 4.4900 | 2.40% | 4.96% | 10.45% | 13.63% |
| 2006 | 4.9300 | 4.40% | 15.79% | 15.30% | 26.32% |
| 2007 | 4.8700 | 7.09% | 5.54% | 5.49% | 11.43% |
| 2008 | 3.7500 | 5.45% | (36.99%) | (38.32%) | (42.43%) |
| 2009 | 2.9700 | 5.99% | 26.68% | 34.85% | 30.04% |
| 10 Yr Compound | 4.62% | 6.39% | (0.94%) | 1.69% | 1.10% |

Additionally, though it may appear that most of the value lost in 2007 was regained in 2008, remember that percentage gains and losses are only the same if the amount of money is the same. For example, if you have \$200, and lose 50% in one year, you end up with \$100. If your \$100 gains 50% in the next year, you only end with \$150. If you were planning on 10% annual returns instead of the massive loss and gain, you would be down almost 40% from your projected outcome.

Below are websites that explore these ideas in greater depth for those who want to get the most out of their retirement plan.

•<https://www.tsp.gov/index.shtml>

The official TSP website. It has been recently updated, so if you haven't been in a while, now is a great time to check it out. If you've never been, there are calculators that will help you determine how much you should be investing, and how aggressive you must be in order to meet your retirement goals.

•<http://www.tsptalk.com/>

TSP Talk is one of the author's favorite TSP websites. It has a wealth of information about the TSP and various blogs and news articles that discuss investing.

•<http://www.fedsmith.com/corners/tsp/>

Fedsmith, while being an interesting site for general news about the government, also includes a section devoted to TSP-specific news.

-William Chapman

Horizon of Excellence

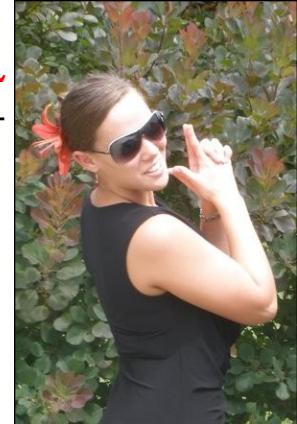
In every edition of the *Sunburst*, we like to shine the spotlight on a few top-performing trainees in **Horizon of Excellence**. In this edition, Liz Madison and Rebecca Vaccari tackle difficult questions posed by *Sunburst* writer and fellow trainee Abigail Graybill.

Liz Madison

Property Manager, Chicago, IL

What is your educational background?

In May 2009, I graduated from Ferris State University in Big Rapids, MI. After four years I earned an Associate's Degree in Architectural Technology, and a Bachelor's Degree in Facility Management with a Minor in Communication.



Who are your favorite sports teams?

When it comes to major league sports, some of you have had the joy of hearing my sports team theory: "Whoever is winning" is the short version! However, when it comes to who I'll cheer for regardless if they're winning or losing: the Ohio Wesleyan University Women's Soccer Team- until my younger sister stops playing for them, that is!

What do you enjoy doing outside of the office?

Running, being outside, making wire jewelry, playing volleyball, fishing and just having fun in general.

If you knew that today was your last day on Earth, how would you spend it?

I would spend it with family and friends redoing and completing activities on my Bucket List: zip-lining, skydiving, bungee jumping, base jumping, parasailing, white water rafting ...etc... and end the day with a nap!

3 words your friends use to describe you?

"Ferosh" (per Anna Bednarczyk), happy & dependable

What is your favorite movie?

I can honestly say that I don't have a favorite movie.

What did you do before working at GSA?

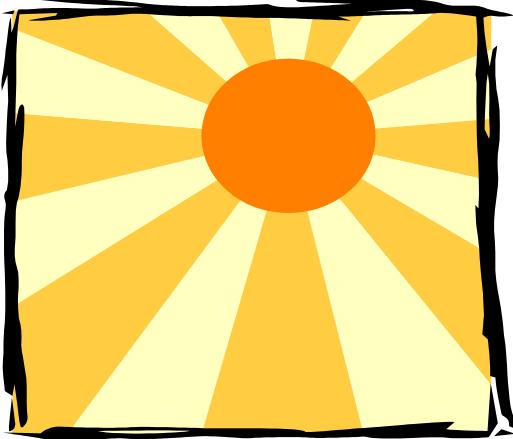
Seeing as I was hired right out of college...

In school years: Attended FSU and worked two jobs

In summers: Juggled 3 jobs, completed an internship with Priority Health and bonded with family and friends.

If you could have lunch with anyone, alive or deceased, who would it be and why?

My Grandma on my Dad's side of the family – I never got to say goodbye.



HORIZON
U.S. GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
PUBLIC BUILDINGS SERVICE

We hope you enjoyed this issue of Sunburst: A Horizon Newsletter! If you have any ideas for articles, or would like to submit your own, please send an email to andrew.daglas@gsa.gov. If you are interested in assisting Andrew with the Sunburst newsletter, please contact him.

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Horizon of Excellence

Rebecca Vaccari

Program Analyst, Cincinnati, OH

What is your educational background?

Graduated from Miami University in 2005, with a major in finance. Graduated with my MBA from the University of Cincinnati in September 2010.



Who are your favorite sports teams?

Cincinnati Bengals and Reds

What do you enjoy doing outside of the office?

I enjoy running, rec softball, reading, hanging with friends and family and fixing up my house.

If you knew that today was your last day on Earth, how would you spend it?

I would probably spend as much time as possible with all of my friends and family, and possibly go skydiving.

3 words your friends use to describe you?

Funny, stubborn, loyal.

What is your favorite movie?

Anchorman.

What did you do before working at GSA?

Financial Reporting Analyst, and going to school for my MBA.

If you could have lunch with anyone, alive or deceased, who would it be and why?

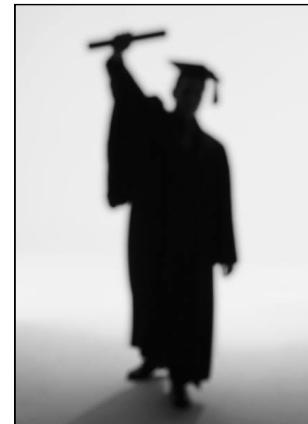
I would have lunch with Cher because I think it would be hilarious.

Congratulations to 2010's PBS Trainee Program Graduates!

Breanna M. Ackley
Mohammed G. Ahmed
Ryan J. Beard
Lauren S. Behan
Rachel J. Bichsel
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April B. Miller

Michelle K. Mitchell
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Kristina M. Wallig
Benjamin J. Warren
Miranda Webster



Brandon Whittier
Kathern M. Williams
Evelyn Yang
Marc A. Zitzer