

National Organization  of Professional Hispanic
Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees



La Voz

Newsletter

December 2009

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President's Message

Luis Hernandez, President



Dear Member of the NOPHNRCSE Family,

Saludos!

Calendar year 2009 is just a few weeks away from being over. This time of the year makes us reflect about our success in the past and challenges and opportunities in the future.

In 2010 NOPHNRCSE will be a key player of an event of transcendental importance in the history of NRCS professional employee organizations. The NRCS Civil Rights Division and professional employee organizations are currently planning a joint conference. The NRCS 2010 Joint Professional Employee Organizations and Special Emphasis Program Managers Training

Conference will be held the week of March 15-19, 2010 at the Downtown Marriott Hotel in Kansas City, Missouri.

The conference theme is “Partners Retooling for the Future To Accomplish Unity and Diversity.” Registration information is forthcoming.

Many of you are fully engaged with the planning of the conference. I deeply appreciate it. If you have any questions about the 2010 Joint Training Conference, please contact Carmen Ortiz (Carmen.Ortiz@ca.usda.gov) or Lori Valadez (Lori.Valadez@tx.usda.gov). Conference information will be posted on NOPHNRCSE website as it becomes available (<http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/>).

Another upcoming historical milestone of NOPHNRCSE is the completion of a modern website that will meet current and emerging needs of the membership and organization. The website is close to completion and its release will take place early 2010.

Shortly, elections will be held for the following positions: President, Vice-President, Secretary and a few Regional Rep positions. Please make sure you membership dues are up to date so you can participate in the elections process. The future of NOPHNRCSE is in your hands!! Thank you for your contributions and continuous support to NOPHNRCSE.

Have a FELIZ NAVIDAD with your family and friends!!

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Call for Posters

Tony Resendez, Natural Resources Committee Chairperson

NOPHNRCSE invites the submission of Abstracts for Technical Posters to be presented at the 2010 Joint Training Conference. We encourage all universities, NRCS staff and scientific societies to showcase their conservation activities across the nation.

Topics for Posters:

1. Experiences in providing effective and equitable service to customers with multilingual and multicultural needs.
2. Communication methods and materials that reach minority, historically underserved, and nontraditional groups.
3. Experiences in cooperative approaches (building partnerships, networking, etc.) for the conservation and protection of natural resources.
4. Experiences in locally led, voluntary watershed-based approaches for attaining effective resource management.
5. Uses of market-based approaches; NRCS activities that support these approaches could be used to leverage non-federal dollars going to conservation efforts.
6. Development of Technology and Information Systems.
 - Instruments or tools like GIS, remote sensing, satellite imaging for resource assessment, conservation planning and implementation
 - New technology for nutrient and pest management, organic and inorganic and Waste Management Tech.
7. Emergency assistance associated with a natural disaster

- Examples: storms, hail, tornadoes, wild fires, etc, and NRCS assistance showing their programs work: debris removal from stream channels, road culverts and bridge abutments; reshaping and protection of eroding banks; repair of levees and structures, and reseeding of damaged areas.
8. Office or group wide success stories in any of the following:
- Conservation projects or practices installed or completed, or close to completion, which is making a positive contribution to local air quality, water quantity/quality or another local resource concern.
 - Farm experiences in maximizing fuel efficiency (i.e. program to do conservation tillage or no-tillage, which also improves soil quality and air quality).
 - NRCS support of projects using solar power in farm operations or other renewable energy sources like wind turbines or methane produced by dairy lagoon digesters, which can produce electrical power.

Submission Guidelines:

- Deadline for submitting Abstracts (up to 400 words) for Posters is January 4, 2010. Abstracts will be accepted by e-mail or FAX by COB on that Friday. Late submissions will not be considered!
- Abstracts for proposed posters must be in English.
- Conference registration is required for all NRCS employees.
- Accepted posters must be submitted in electronic format and maybe utilized/referenced in future publications by NRCS and NOPHNRCSE.
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Contact persons:

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Joint Training Conference Hotel Accommodations

Lori Valadez, Conference Planning Committee

The Kansas City Marriott will be home to the 2010 Joint Training conference. Reservations can be made at the Kansas City Marriott Downtown, 200 West 12th Street, Kansas City, MO 64105, by calling (800) 810-0850 or (816) 421-6800. Reservations can also be made via the Internet at <http://marriott.com/mcidt>. In order to receive the government rate of \$107.00, individuals must identify themselves with Joint Employee's Organizations and SEPMS Training Conference at the time reservations are made (The block of rooms is under EOSE-Program). Rates cannot be changed at check-in or checkout time for guests who fail to identify their affiliation at the time the reservation is requested. Reservations by attendees must be received on or before January 30, 2010.

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2010 Scholarship Announcement

Gilbert Guerrero, Scholarship Committee

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic NRCS Employees (NOPHNRCSE) has the mission to motivate and mentor members for leadership roles to assist NRCS and partners in delivering natural resources conservation. Following our mission, NOPHNRCSE is proud to present the 2010 scholarship program.

This year NOPHNRCSE will award two \$1,000.00 academic scholarships to deserving students that are pursuing a degree in an Agriculture, Natural Resources, or Natural Resources Conservation related field of study at an accredited school of higher education.

Student Eligibility Requirements:

- Graduating High School students accepted to an accredited college or university and registered students with at least one full academic year remaining before graduation.
- Demonstrate integrity, ability, and competence in work
- Show interest in Natural Resources Conservation
- Have a grade point average of at least 2.75 on a 4.0 scale
- Submit completed application form and requested documentation.

In addition to the scholarships mentioned above, NOPHNRCSE offers three special funds established by notable members and their families to encourage new generations of Hispanics to pursue careers in Agriculture and Natural Resources Conservation. The eligibility criteria are as follow:

- Martha Guerra-Arteaga Scholarship: Scholarship for a female student with a major in public affairs, Communications or Natural Resources Conservation.
- Remides-Coronado Scholarship: Scholarship for a student from the Southwest part of the United States with a major in Agriculture or Natural Resources Conservation.
- Ray T. Margo Scholarship: Scholarship for a student pursuing a major in Range Management and is going into their Junior or Senior year at an accredited university.

Travel cost of scholarship recipients will be covered for attendance at the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) 2010 Joint Professional Employee Organizations and Special Emphasis Program Managers Training Conference and Awards Ceremony to be held in Kansas City, Missouri, on March of 2010. In addition to the scholarship winners, NOPHNRCSE will be awarding three separate paid conference TRAVEL ONLY opportunities to qualified student applicants. Conference attendance is an excellent opportunity to network and build relationships with members of the organization and NRCS employees in different working areas and states.

The following is the scholarship application form and guidelines for completing and submitting the application. **Due date for consideration is January 22, 2010.**

For more information please contact:

Rafael Vega
Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager

Email: rafael.vega@in.usda.gov
229 S. Second Avenue, Suite 3
Princeton, IN 47670
Phone: 812-385-5033 ext 3
Web Site: <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/>

2010 Scholarship Application

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNRCSE) provides scholarships to deserving Hispanic students that wish to pursue or are pursuing a Bachelors degree in a Natural Resources or a Natural Resources Conservation related field of study at an accredited four-year institution. Please complete this application (type or print legibly) and submit it and all items required to:

Rafael Vega
NOPHNRCSE Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee
229 S. Second Avenue, Suite 3
Princeton, IN 47670

Complete application package must be postmarked by January 22, 2010. Incomplete or late applications will not be evaluated.

Circle one: Male Female

Name: _____

Permanent Address: _____

City, State, and Zip: _____

Mailing Address: _____

(If different from above) _____

Telephone: _____ Birth Date (Mo. /Day/Yr.): _____

Birth Place (State and Country): _____

Email: _____

Name and address of High School or
College you are currently attending: _____

Overall GPA (on a 4.0 scale): _____ U.S. Citizenship: ___ Yes ___ No.

Note: Scholarship Applications will not be processed without proof of U.S. Citizenship.

Student Number (not Social Security number, if known): _____

How did you receive this application? _____

Name: _____

The following items must be submitted along with this signed application form. Failure to submit a complete 2010 NOPHNCSE Scholarship Application package will result in you forfeiting any opportunity to be selected for a 2010 NOPHNCSE Scholarship.

The following items constitute a complete 2010 NOPHNCSE Scholarship Application package:

1. Submit this completed application with your signature;
2. Submit a personal statement of 350 to 500 words in length (double-spaced). Please include information such as personal background, name of school(s) you plan to attend or are attending, personal and career goals, and extra curricular activities. You may also include other information that you feel is important (remember not to exceed 500 words)
3. Submit a copy of an official or certified high school or college transcript;
4. Submit two letters of recommendation from a High School teacher(s)/counselor(s) or College professor(s); and
5. Proof of U.S. citizenship (copy of Birth Certificate or Naturalization Certificate).
6. Graduating high school applicants submit a copy of a letter of acceptance from the college you plan to attend.

**** Note:** Receipt of a NOPHNCSE Scholarship does not constitute a guarantee of future employment with the USDA - Natural Resources Conservation Service or any other federal agency.

Certification:

I certify that all the information provided is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. Purposely providing false information may result in the recall of any scholarship granted or in the forfeiture of any scholarship awarded.

I am aware that any scholarship awarded by NOPHNCSE will be disbursed through my University Financial Aid Office. If I am selected to receive a NOPHNCSE Scholarship, I will utilize the NOPHNCSE award toward expenses related to my college attendance. Also, I understand that if I receive an award, there is no guarantee of renewal and must reapply for a new scholarship each year.

I understand that proof of college enrollment will be required if selected and that I must notify my University Financial Aid Office and NOPHNCSE of any changes to my enrollment status. I further understand that changes to my enrollment status may result in the cancellation of any

award provided. I hereby acknowledge that it is my responsibility to keep my institution's Financial Aid Office and NOPHNCSE informed of all address changes.

I acknowledge that it is my responsibility to submit a complete application package to NOPHNCSE in compliance with the posted deadline. Incomplete or late application materials will result in my scholarship application package not being considered for any award. All application materials become the property of NOPHNCSE. I hereby give NOPHNCSE permission to share this information for the purpose of recruitment, public relations, or possible employment.

I hereby certify that I have read the application information and guidelines, as well as this Certification, and that I understand and accept all of the conditions specified. Failure to sign this Certification will result in my ineligibility for this Scholarship Award.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Scholarship Program 2010 Information and Guidelines

The United States Department of Agriculture - Natural Resources Conservation Service (USDA-NRCS) was first organized in 1933, as the Soil Erosion Service and was later known as the Soil Conservation Service. In 1994, USDA went through reorganization and the Agency's name became the Natural Resources Conservation Service. The Agency's purpose has always been, and continues to be, the promotion of the conservation and wise use of our country's natural resources. USDA-NRCS employees possess backgrounds in a variety of disciplines that include agronomy, agricultural engineering, animal science, civil engineering, computer science, crops science, hydrology, range science, soil science, wildlife science, and several other disciplines.

NRCS accomplishes its conservation goals by drawing upon the various sciences and conservation disciplines to help private landowners conserve their soil, natural resources and water resources. NRCS employees and private landusers assess the land's capabilities and resources along with the existing conservation problems and opportunities. NRCS employees then work closely with agricultural producers and landowners to assist them in developing conservation plans and with the implementation of conservation practices while achieving their production goals and objectives. Through the implementation of conservation practices, the overall quality of life within a watershed and across our country is improved.

The National Organization of Professional Hispanic Natural Resources Conservation Service Employees (NOPHNCSE) was established as a Professional Society of Natural Resources Conservation Service employee. NOPHNCSE promotes the belief that Hispanics can and should fill an existing, invaluable void in the protection of our country's natural resources and the wise use of our agricultural and recreational private lands. NOPHNCSE was created to assist the USDA-NRCS with its delivery of Program Information and Program Benefits to minority and non-minority communities; to showcase the value that Hispanics bring to the USDA-NRCS; to demonstrate the role of Hispanics in a diverse, multi-cultural workforce; and to serve as a strong link between the USDA-NRCS and the Hispanic community.

NOPHNCSE was organized to augment the outreach programs of USDA and NRCS, and to enhance USDA Program Delivery. Internally, NOPHNCSE has vowed to assist USDA-NRCS

achieve a multicultural workforce and to assist with the recruitment and professional development of quality Natural Resources Conservation Service Hispanic employees.

With this Scholarship Program, NOPHNCSE achieves one of its founding goals, “to develop and establish a NOPHNCSE Scholarship & Endowment Fund.” NOPHNCSE intends to support Hispanics goals of higher education and to encourage Hispanics to become protectors of our country's natural resources through this Scholarship and Endowment Fund Program.

NOPHNCSE wishes to provide scholarships to deserving Hispanic students who wish to pursue, are currently enrolled in, or are admitted to an accredited four year institution with the intent of earning a Bachelor of Science degree in a natural resources field or a natural resources conservation related field of study.

Candidates elected to receive the 2010 NOPHNCSE Scholarship will be selected on the basis of academic achievement, personal strengths, demonstrated leadership abilities, and career goals. NOPHNCSE will accept Scholarship Applications **postmarked by January 22, 2010.**

The NOPHNCSE Scholarship & Endowment Fund Committee will determine the 2010 NOPHNCSE recipients utilizing an established selection criterion. Each applicant will be evaluated on the basis of their complete Scholarship Application package that must include the items requested above. The NOPHNCSE Scholarship and Endowment Fund Committee is organized and administered by the NOPHNCSE National Council. Additional travel scholarships may be awarded to students to attend the annual NOPHNCSE conference.

To learn more about NOPHNCSE or USDA-NRCS please explore our web pages at <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/> or <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov>, respectively.

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Farmer/Rancher Conservation Awards

A request for nominations for the Farmer/Rancher Conservation Awards went to State Conservationists and Directors of the Pacific Basin and Caribbean Areas to nominate Asian/Pacific, Black and Hispanic farmers/ranchers for this award. The deadline for submitting nominations is February 1, 2010. Work with your State Conservationist/Director and encourage them to submit a nomination from your state. The nomination form can be found on the NOPHNCSE website at

http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/2010_conf/2010_conf_info.html

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Pay Membership Dues by January 15

Tim Garrahan, Membership Committee

This is a reminder to all current and new members that dues for the year 2010 must be paid by January 15, 2010 to be a member in good standing. A member in good standing is eligible to be an officer or a regional representative on the National Council as well as vote in the general election for officers and regional representatives. Because our Annual Conference is in mid-March this year rather than in the summer, our deadlines for nominations and annual dues have had to be scheduled earlier in the year.

You can send your dues and membership application to Tim Garrahan. The address is: 7098 Atlanta Circle, Seaford, Delaware, 19973. You can print a membership application off of our home page under membership. <http://www.nrcs.usda.gov/intranet/hispanic/>
The check should be made payable to NOPHNRCSE.

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Conference Logo Developed

NOPHNRCSE member Erika Alverio developed the logo below for the NRCS 2010 Joint Professional Employee Organizations and Special Emphasis Program Managers Training Conference. Input was provided by all of the entities sponsoring the conference (special thanks to Samora Bennerman, branch chief, Affirmative Employment and Compliance Branch, and Jacqueline Padron, national HEPM, for their input). Good job Erika.



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New Professionals Stress Encouraging New Careers, “Weaning Syndrome”^{1, 2}

Mario Rodríguez, Soil Conservationist, MA- NRCS, Holden FO

Note from the author: This article has been written with the objective of state a series of situations experienced by new professionals at the moment of encouraging a new career. The author is encouraging new professional to seek for mentors and advisors. Also, the author is giving supervisors a tool to identify employees in personal distress. Some of the statements where take from informal conversations with recently graduated professionals and information gathered from sociology and humanistic science articles. Some terms used are fictional or used because their direct literal definition and they are just to create a visual impression of the situation and

author’s opinion stated. These terms are not clinical terms or medical statements. Some other terms and statements has been identified by superscript numbers (²), and the source that them where take are numbered at the end of the article.



One may be asking why I use the title "weaning syndrome" for this article. Please do not Google it; I'm not going to talk about the dermatitis suffered by weaned pigs³. I just Though the meaning of the words *syndrome* and *weaning* prove very

appropriate for explaining a condition that afflicts newly graduating students at the beginning of their careers.

Over the past years, different agencies have been recruiting people, mainly recently graduated students, to join its team of professionals. Many of these new professionals are between the ages of 21-30 years old and come from countries in and outside the United States mainland. These graduates have spent the past years of their lives academically preparing for the professional world, but not for the life that awaits them outside their family circle.

When a person begins a career, there is a diverse range of experiences and situations that as a student he/ she had not experienced before. These students experience things as simple as credit decision-making, medical situations, and professional decisions. Some of these situations were previously handled by the student's fathers, mothers, or legal guardians. This is complicated by the fact of being in new locations outside of his/ her country. The aloneness and decision making situations creates a series of feelings or, as we will call, "*symptoms*".

I am not a psychologist or doctor of medicine, but employees are subjected to a greater degree of stress while they try to enhance their human competencies in order to have an edge in the highly competing global scenario [Christiana, 2009]. That is why I write of these stress feelings as *symptoms* that can be identified and characterized in this theoretical "*syndrome*".

The symptoms feature:

1. *Feeling of separation* - One feels that the decision to work overseas has separated him/ her from a familiar social circle and family. The person feels that moments has been lost in the lives of his/ her beloved. The student feels that his/ her life is stagnated, and his/ her loved ones lives move on at the speed of light.
2. *Loneliness* – standing apart from others of its kind; isolated ⁶. The person insists that he/ she is alone no matter where the location. He/ she doesn't know who to go to in emergencies. There is a feeling that he/ she is the only one suffering and nobody understands the suffering. His/ her mind is wrapped in ideas of loneliness and despair.
3. *Uncertainty and Worry* - Worry is a state or feeling of anxiety and unhappiness [Hoikkala, 1997 ⁴]. Been under a great deal of pressure will sometimes doubt their ability to make the right decision [Paulus, 2009 ⁵]. In normal situations the person would make decisions without taking in consideration the results. Thinking that if something bad happens, he/ she always has someone that will help fix it. Being "alone" makes him/ her afraid to fail. Every decision is accompanied by ideas of defeat without even knowing the results of this decision.
4. *Vulnerability* – Susceptible to physical or emotional injury ⁶. The person, not having the symbol of this "*home*", tends to be vulnerable to the environment around him/ her. In normal situations, the person is comfortable with the surrounding environment, which leads to spontaneous and natural behaviors. An example is the difference in language, accent, and the wrong interpretation of the words when communicating. The student feels that everything said can be used against him/ her.
5. *Depression*- The condition of feeling sad or despondent ⁶. As result of facing situations, the person seems depressed. He/ she is constantly with negative thoughts, usually comparing the former life with the present one, recalling the past times. The person is constantly wondering how life will be if he/ she had decided not to emigrate.
6. *Auto Sequestration* ¹- The person, far from seeking



help, tends to withdraw to their own ideas. He/ she tend to spend most of free time locked up in his/ her house. This person does not go out to the neighborhood, and passes the hours watching TV without doing any outdoor activities.

7.

Alternatives:

After a pass through the five stages of grief and adaptation to change, *denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance* [Kubler-Ross 2006⁷], the person tries to integrate the new world that surrounds him/ her. An alternative for easy adaptation is exit and *avoid the enclosure*. Cafés, bakeries restaurants, and the post office are examples of places where the person can go and make contact with surrounding neighbors. The fact of going to retrieve the mail, gives a person the opportunity to interact with others.

Positivism, a quality or state characterized by certainty or acceptance or affirmation and dogmatic assertiveness⁶, is the universal tool. Each situation is more than a problem it's an opportunity. I do not think of myself as very "Gung Ho", but every day that passes is a class in the school of life. We should learn from them and find such opportunities that lie ahead after each decision.

Support, we all have something to contribute. Each person has a history of overcoming hardships. These new professionals should not be afraid to ask for advice or opinions. Many situations are repetitive between different people, and typically there are common denominators on how to resolve these issues. The most knowledgeable people should *observe more closely the indicators* of this "syndrome" and act quickly to help mentoring these new professionals.

Communication is the key. Communication is defined as a process by which we assign and convey meaning in an attempt to create shared understanding⁶. The person must inform relatives about his/ her feelings. I encourage him/ her to explain problems, what bothers him/ her etc. Constantly, with good intentions, relatives tend to tell us good and bad things that happen back home. People suffering from this "syndrome" should make close relatives aware that some of the things we hear do not help overcome the distance. An example is with people that come from big cities, they receive communication about friends and relatives about social activities. These people hear friends saying "too bad that you are not with us" or "wish that you were here to enjoy it". These types of comments are hampering the listener's acclimatization process. Another example is listening to totally positive conversations about our place of origin. This paints a fantasy place and makes one feel home is a better place than where he/ she is now, which is depressing. This creates a misguided thought that something is wrong with him/ her because back home they are all happy and he/ she is not. Teach relatives to show both sides of the coin, the good and bad, and teach them to help you see the positive outcomes of the decisions you have taken. Words of encouragement are always welcome.

The uncertainty only resolves with experiences. Every experience in life consists of:

1. A situation,



2. Why this situation is happening,
3. The alternatives to fix the situation,
4. Solution found,
5. The results obtained after solution is applied.

The experiences accumulate in to the subconscious and come afloat when any decision needs to be taken. This shows each result so we can choose the best solutions. If we experience a new situation, we need to seek help from an official or non-

official mentor, friend or co-worker. In many cases we have similar experiences and we can help each other with alternatives. The "mentor" program is a good choice for new employees to seek advice and alternatives. Employee mentoring programs, after all, are designed with a look to the future [Peterkin, 2008 ¹⁰]. Encouraging connections among co-workers also reduces stress, because having social support reduces the negative effects of stressful situations [Lee, 2005 ⁹].

Finally, the auto-sequestration *is not an alternative*. Get involved in social activities, sports, etc. Keep busy in the leisure hours to help divert your attention. Get outside, relax, enjoy the best gift, you have the control of your life, your future. Continue to be positive, and then notice the opportunities that each situation brings you, and always have present that each step you make gets you closer to a life of achievements and opportunities.

"Life's up and downs provide windows of opportunity to determine your values and goals - Think of using all obstacles as stepping stones to build the life you want" [Sinetar, 1999 ¹¹]

REFERENCES:

¹ This term is fictional and/or used because their direct literal definition. They are used just to create a visual impression of the situation and author's opinion stated. There is no medical evidence of this evil. The term is used alone and with the sole purpose of illustration of a situation.

² *Weaning* - To take a person outside of family protection and out of his or her comfort zone.

Syndrome - Group of signs or signals that characterize a disease or physical or mental disorder. *Dictionary Manual of Spanish Language* Vox © 2007 Larousse Editorial S.L.

³ *Post Weaning Multi-systemic Wasting Syndrome (PMWS)*, <http://www.thepigsite.com/pighealth/article/350/post-weaning-multisystemic-wasting-syndrome-pmws>. 5M Enterprises Ltd., 4 Haywood House, Hydra Business Park, Nether Lane, Sheffield, S35 9ZX, England.

⁴ Tommi Hoikkala, *Expressing Worries about Childrens*, Department of Social Policy, University of Helsinki, August 1997

⁵ Sue Paulus, *Leading Through Self-doubt*, Chief Executive Group, LLC, August 2009

⁶ The American Heritage® Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition copyright ©2000 by Houghton Mifflin Company. Updated in 2009.

⁷ Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, *The stages of grief*, Memorial Hospital, Inc. Towanda, Pennsylvania, 2006

⁸ Beulah Viji Christiana, *Impact of Stress Management on Human Competencies*, Asia Pacific Journal of Management, Forthcoming, July 25, 2009.

⁹ David Lee, *Maximizing employee performance while minimizing employee stress*, HumanNature@Work , March 2005

¹⁰ Cecile Peterkin, *Mentoring in the Workplace*, http://www.selfgrowth.com/articles/Mentoring_in_the_Workplace.htm. Copyright 2008, Cecile Peterkin. All rights reserved.

¹¹ Marsha Sinetar, *Marsha Sinetar Quotes*, ThinkExist.com Quotations, www.thinkexist.com/quotation/life-s_up_and_downs_provide_windows_of/184337.html. Copyright © ThinkExist 1999-2009.

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