Early Career Members

“Dinner for Six” at the Annual Meetings

Attending the ASA, CSSA, and SSSA Annual Meetings provides valuable opportunities to learn about the latest innovations and research in our sciences. It is also a good way to meet people who share your research and career interests. However, when was the last time you reached outside your usual social and professional circles to interact with young researchers and students who are beginning their careers? Or, if you are a young professional or student, when was the last time you had an opportunity to hear about career paths, or share stories of your job or research, all in a friendly and relaxed setting? For those readers who have been attending the meetings for years, take a moment to think back to your first meetings, when you may not have had the social and professional connections that you now have. Do you recall being something of a wallflower at a social event, perhaps even eating your meals alone?

At the 2012 Annual Meetings in Cincinnati, a new event was quietly introduced—the “Dinner for Six” concept, spearheaded by Society member Kate Withers and other members of the Women in Agronomy, Crops, Soils, and Environmental Sciences Committee in cooperation with our staff. This event gave conference attendees the opportunity to sign up to share a dinner with five other people. Participants signed up online prior to the meetings and were then matched up into groups of six, with the group leader providing the name and location of a local (Cincinnati) restaurant where the group would meet for dinner.

If this is the first time you’ve heard about “Dinner for Six,” it’s because this concept was piloted last year in a low-key manner, and advertising of the event was limited. However, the first year of “Dinner for Six” was a resounding success! Participant Melanie Szulczewski (University of Mary Washington) reported, “I loved this opportunity. It gives you a chance to talk to people you wouldn’t normally encounter. Our group never stopped talking the whole evening, with conversational topics running from baseball to the upcoming election to countries to put on your “must visit” list. I am looking forward to signing up for it again.” Xiying Hao (Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada) wrote, “The experience is great—it is a good opportunity to meet others in a more relaxed setting.”

“Dinner for Six” in Tampa

We are pleased that “Dinner for Six” will be continued at the 2013 Annual Meetings in Tampa. Feedback from the 2012 event encouraged greater promotion of this event on the Annual Meetings website, and these voices have been heard. Please visit the “Dinner for Six” sign-up page at: www.acsmeetings.org/travel/dinner. Once conference attendees are signed up, groupings will be arranged by the day participants are available to attend (Monday, Tuesday, and/or Wednesday night) and their preferred price. The host will select the restaurant.

Finally, the success of “Dinner for Six” depends on willing hosts! If you are interested, you will select a local restaurant based on pricing criteria provided by your group as a guideline, and the staff will provide you with a list of five participants interested in gathering for dinner. The host is responsible for contacting the group and making a reservation but is under no obligation to pay for any meals other than his/her own. Please see the “Dinner for Six” sign-up page (URL above) for additional information on hosting.

Please consider taking part in the second year of this innovative event. You never know who might end up sitting next to you. You will undoubtedly make some valuable contacts, but just as importantly, you might make a new friend or two.
