

## **OBITUARY: Debra Creel (1953-2022)**

Ms. Debra Creel, an energetic technician and assistant of the collections at Beltsville Agriculture Research Center and ardent defender of her home state of Maryland's sports teams, departed on 30 July 2022. For those who experienced her sense of dedication and love for the collections, her departure has left a deep gap inside the walls of our lab. Entering her office was like walking into a Disney studio with ruby dyes and arcane tools for identifying insects or entering them into the vast Smithsonian Collections. Every day was an adventure inside her office, and her microscope surrounded by all kinds of arcane tools, from forceps to insect pins. She was a dedicated ARS technician working at Beltsville for the past 30 years. During that time, she prepared thousands of specimens, recorded their collection data and curated countless collection items. Just as importantly, she also made sure that the scientist's did our paperwork on time and corrected our errors in processing collection material. If we made an error returning a specimen or filing a reference in the collections, she would firmly but politely say, "Don't do that again!"

Ms. Creel, Debbie to all she worked with, was born in Maryland, a state with all the beauty of the seasons to enjoy sports including Baltimore Oriole's games. Her computer monitor was decorated with "Fear the Turtle" decals for her University of Maryland sports teams. She received a B.S. Biological Sciences degree. She joined the Systematic Entomology Laboratory and worked there for more than 29 years.

Debbie was recognized worldwide in the scientific community for her services on the 1,112 transactions she performed involving specimens of scales, aphids, white flies, thrips and mites from 1996 to the present. She also helped the lab to answer requests for information from around the country and all over the world. She did work with and support the scientists with all their national and international visitors that came to collaborate or interact with the Smithsonian collections. Many of the scientists from Australia, Brazil, Costa Rica, Argentina, China, Austria, Germany, Poland, Spain, South Africa, and the Philippines were impressed and grateful to have such a knowledgeable person helping them to work inside the collections. She helped shape and integrate the programs and regulations for processing collection material, she was the unsung hero of the glass slides of the US National Smithsonian Collections with more than a million slides and close to 5 million specimens hosted a BARC. Debbie was a liaison for SEL to keep us interacting efficiently with other laboratories and in support of APHIS-PPQ's safeguarding mission. She helped with more than 1,500 identifications of insects of quarantine importance. And if anything needed repair in our facilities, minor or major, she was the person to go to get it done so we could keep working.

Debbie is survived by her husband John Creel and two daughters: Carolyn and Gina. Debbie is also survived by her brother, Thomas W. Dispenza, who worked for many years at the BARC Credit Union. Her funeral services will be held Friday August 5 at the Collins Funeral home. We will always remember her smile.

Cortesía del Dr. M. Gates, Research Leader, del asistente Sr. A. Ulsamer y Dr. Ronald Ochoa, del Systematic Entomology Laboratory.