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Email the LookOut Staff

LookOut Archives

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**ORS Picnic survives stormy weather**

Storm clouds threatened to put a real damper on this year's ORS picnic. When would the worst of the storms pass through? Because everything for the picnic needed to be set up well in advance of serving food, the EPC opted for a safe, dry location. So, thanks to some quick contingency planning, everyone was able to stay dry (at least while they were eating!) by using Conference Rooms A and C in GOB for the annual food and fun fest. Attendees enjoyed sub sandwiches, all kinds of salads, fruits and veggies, "Family Best" dishes, and yummy desserts.

Mother Nature finally cooperated by early afternoon, clearing the way for many of the planned outdoor events. While those attending the picnic weren't able to burn off their energy playing cricket, volleyball, or horseshoes as they have in past years, other planned activities kept people interested and involved. Many moved outside to test their skills in several fun outdoor games while others stayed indoors to play cards and board games, or just socialize. The uncertain weather kept EMPAC on its toes for the kickoff game. What was planned as a race with raw eggs on spoons, morphed into ping pong balls on spoons (to avoid broken eggs on the floors if we had to stay inside), to water balloons on spoons when the wind added an unanticipated challenge to the game. But our innovative team spirits rose to the occasion!



[View more pictures from the 2009 ORS Picnic.](#)

By far the most entertaining activity was the Great Race event! Laughter erupted from all sides as team members raced through the course's "typical" daily events: first station - shaving (either face or legs); second station - getting ready for work by dressing in oversized clothes, then grabbing a briefcase and baby in a mad dash to work; third station - dropping off baby at day care by successfully tossing the baby doll through the opening in a pitch-back net; fourth station - performing a work activity by arranging binders in the proper sequence; then returning to pick up the baby, change out of "work" clothes, put the baby down for the night, and pass the torch to the next team member.

**Calendar**

**September**

Employee Recognition Event	3
Labor Day	7
MPSERS Board Meeting	10
SERS Board Meeting	17
Space Walk	17
Central Perk Cleaning	30

**On the Horizon**

- All Staff Meeting -

October 27

**Quick Links**

- [ORS Member Website](#)
- [ORS Employer Website](#)
- [Knowledge Library](#)

**Commonly Used Acronyms**

AST	Application Support Team
BLA	Business Leadership Assembly (EPC, BPOs, and BPLs)
BPD	Benefit Plan Design
BPL	Business Process Leader
BPO	Business Process Owner
CE	Customer Education
CSC	Customer Service Center
DB	Defined Benefit
DC	Defined Contribution
DIT	Department of Information Technology
DMB	Department of Management and Budget
EPC	Executive Process Council (Phil, Laurie, Tim, and Anthony)
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
FLB	Forms, Letters, and Barcode
ORS	Office of Retirement Services
PRIM	Preretirement Information Meeting (public school employees)
PRO	Preretirement Orientation (state employees)
PS	Process Support
SME	Subject Matter Expert
T&T	Tools and Technology

Some picnic-goers did end up getting wet -- at the hands of their partners -- as they participated in a different type of water balloon toss. Team members aimed water balloons at the top of an umbrella hat worn by their team partner. The twist here was the special disk on the top of the umbrella hat which had sharp tacks sticking out to pop the water balloons. Winners were those who got the greatest number of water balloons to pop on their partner's hat within a given amount of time.

Stuffed animals went flying in one of the other team-toss games as one side tossed stuffed animals backwards to their partner who had to catch as many as possible in a laundry basket. Those with the greatest number of animals in the basket won.

Special thanks to everyone who brought a special dish to pass. The diversity of food available was enjoyed by all. Also, thanks to the EMPAC members who made this fun-at-work event so successful: **Mary Anderson, Rosemary Baker, Lisa Barrone, Clarissa Cram, Leza Rebera, Matt Torok, and Pam Ward**, and to the special helpers who pitched in to help with setup and cleanup and everything in between, our picnic day volunteers **Travis Peake** and **Dick Pennington**.

## August is Teamwork month

ORS is celebrating our values of teamwork, excellence, inclusion, integrity, fun and growth. Monthly, each process looks for examples of how their team lives the values. To begin the six month project, August was named "Teamwork Month."

DMB defines teamwork as:

- We actively cooperate to achieve common goals.
- We take responsibility for our actions.
- We carry our fair share of the team's workload.

Examples of teamwork from each process include the following:

### Benefit Plan Design

- Benefit Plan Design staff coordinate with their partners outside of ORS, including the Office of Financial Management (OFM), Civil Service/HRMN, and ING to process adjustments for veterans returning from active duty to ensure they receive their DC employer contributions for the time they were serving our country.
- While **Kerrie Vanden Bosch** was on maternity leave, **Kathy Tober, Angie Schrauben** (CE), and **Laura Williams** worked together to make sure her duties were covered.
- Benefit Plan Design staff coordinate with each other, our health care contractors, and DMB-Purchasing to put new health care contracts in place.

### Process Support

- The document management team has worked together to exceed their imaging metrics for two consecutive months. As a result, other staff members are getting retirement applications, service credit requests, and correspondence to staff in less than a day.
- The space/renovation team coordinated with fellow ORS staff, other state agencies (DIT, Telecom, Facilities, and Mail & Delivery Services), and vendors (DBI, various construction contractors) to successfully complete renovation efforts in B-Wing and the new training room.
- The new-hire process team is comprised of multiple staff in PS. They work



UAT User Acceptance Testing

together to smoothly bring on new staff. It requires frequent communication among the team and other processes.



### Customer Service Center

- CSC students, as a team, cover the front desk, review retirement applications, answer the forms mailbox, and process work via workflows. This allows permanent staff the ability to focus on processing to help members receive pension payments and billing statements on time.
- Many staff in CSC have been cross-trained to do work across the process. They willingly work together to get the job done and cover for one another given the work volume. The cross-training initiative and teamwork has allowed for work to be completed on time, and provide opportunity for flexible schedules and vacations.

### Employer Reporting

- The web coordinators worked together to plan, design, and present employer training.
- Member account staff have been involved in team training in SERS processing. This effort was led by **Mary McGlashen**.
- On a monthly basis, employer statements are mailed. Due to the short time frame between availability of the printed statements to mailing, ER staff have come together as a team to ensure the statements are mailed timely.

### Customer Education

- Renovating the Knowledge Library was a huge cross-process undertaking led by CE. The site premiered as scheduled and is becoming a daily tool used by ORS staff, which helps ensure all are using the most up-to-date policies and procedures.
- CE team members consult with each other regularly to solve problems, brainstorm creative approaches, and to expand their own skills. The team works side-by-side to produce the best products by deadline.



## Final Payroll Detail saves time and \$\$

On June 8, ORS stopped printing and mailing paper Final Salary Affidavits and introduced the new Final Payroll Detail report, allowing payroll officers to electronically submit the last bits of information needed to start a pension. This new online feature resulted in a higher percentage of public school retirees receiving a pension payment in July and eliminating printing and mailing costs.



In addition to making the process more user-friendly for the employers, the old, manual paper driven process is now green! Previously a batch program would run twice a month and generate thousands of documents that had to be printed and manually faxed or stuffed into envelopes for mailing. By eliminating this piece of the process, we estimate a savings of at least \$5,000 for June, July and August.

We are continuing to refine the Final Payroll Detail report to gain even more efficiencies for next year.

## Detroit Education update

Customer Education continues to assist members in southeastern Michigan by providing services to small and large groups at employer and union sites and in the

Cadillac Place building through the Ready, Set, Retire (RSR) sessions. Providing retirement information and education in groups allows CE's **Joy Bartell** to maximize the number of members served while still providing confidentiality to those who require it.

"We're receiving more requests for RSR sessions at employer and union sites, which is great because our members find them valuable, and they let me serve more people than the time-consuming and repetitive one-on-one meetings," says Joy.

Joy now meets with walk-in customers twice a month in conference room L-450 on the first floor of Cadillac Place rather than in the suite on the fourth floor. Customers without an immediate need are encouraged to use miAccount or register for a scheduled Ready, Set, Retire meeting, online webinar, or a PRIM (Pre-retirement Information Meeting).



"We now have so many great tools for customers. We want them to use these tools to access personal retirement account information themselves without having to visit ORS," says Joy.

Walk-in hours on the first and third Tuesday remain 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., with the office closed from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. If you have any questions about the Detroit Education Center, feel free to see or email any of the Customer Education staff.

## Knowledge Library

[Click here to go to the Knowledge Library now.](#)

### Knowledge Library - your everyday tool

The new Knowledge Library premiered August 3 and has been hailed a success by users.

"I never used to use the Knowledge Library, and now I love it!" said **Angela Bryan**. "If I have a customer calling about insurances, I can quickly pull the policy to help me. Plus, the password is so easy now. I used to have to reset it each time I wanted to try to use it. It's so easy now."

**Johnny Moore** agrees. "The new and improved Knowledge Library is very easy to navigate through. Information is virtually a click away and it is nice to know that so much information relating to my everyday job is in one central location. Hats off to everyone involved in making my job easier."

The new tool was redesigned, and each policy and procedure was verified through a signoff process. The site, located at <http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/ors/kl> offers an accurate search function, frequently asked questions, process-specific pages, and much more.

If you haven't saved the Knowledge Library to your desktop or your favorites, do so today. Once saved, right-click on the saved favorite or desktop icon, go to Properties, and paste in the URL: [www.state.mi.us/dmb/ors/kl](http://www.state.mi.us/dmb/ors/kl). Click Apply and then Save (a feature of the secure site is the actual web address changes with each visitor, so users must paste the URL into properties to open the site on repeat visits.)

Remember that your Knowledge Library username is the same as your GroupWise username. Start using the Knowledge Library for all your policy and procedure questions!

## Thank you ING

Congratulations to all who completed the ING training sessions. The three sessions came to an end this past week and were deemed a huge success.

**Lisa Schmidt**, an avid user of the ING Advisory Service, said: "I like going out there every once in a while to visit my money and see how it's doing. I think it is a very valuable tool because otherwise I would be a big old worry wart not knowing if what I did with my funds is wise. Excellent job by ING. I feel very comfortable in my financial future because of them and the service!"

Thank you to **Lynne Bemrose, Eddie Carrington, Heidi Schiller, and Kathy Van Fussen** for providing excellent training to ORS staff. For those of you who were not able to complete the training, future make-up dates will be provided soon.

As registered investment advisors, the local ING staff can now meet with you one-on-one to provide personalized advice on where to invest your funds. An appointment can be scheduled by calling (517) 636-6071.



For 24/7 access to your account, log on to the ING website. If you wish to use the Professional Account Manager Service by phone, call 1-800-748-6128.

## business briefs

### Annual Superintendent Certification mailed

Earlier this week, we sent over 700 annual Superintendent Certification forms to reporting units across the state. Every year, superintendents (or the equivalent) for all of our school employers must complete and return this document certifying they are aware of and responsible for the accuracy of the wage and service reports submitted for their employees. They also verify the accuracy of their web administrator and employer contacts. Superintendents have until September 15 to complete and return these forms to ORS.

### Employee Recognition event

The 11th annual DMB Employee Recognition event is Thursday, September 3 from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the General Office Building. Join DMB staff for a free pizza lunch with live entertainment as we celebrate the accomplishments of our Employee Excellence Award recipients and individuals with 30 and 35 years of service in state government.

[View the DMB Employee Recognition event invitation now.](#)



Process Support bid farewell to **Zena Johnson** on August 20. Zena accepted a position at Kraft Foods in Grand Rapids where she will market various products in stores throughout Michigan.

**Laura Williams**, Benefit Plan Design, accepted a position with Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration at the Department of Energy, Labor, and Economic Growth. Laura's last day was August 20.

Customer Service Center bids farewell to **Michelle Johns** today, August 28. She will be rejoining her family in Ohio to help with their family business.

**DMB Mission:**  
Partners in achieving excellence

**ORS Purpose:**  
We are an innovative retirement organization driven to empower our customers for a successful today and a secure tomorrow.

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## Minding your manners online

Here are some tips from Jacqueline Whitmore, the foremost authority on business etiquette and protocol taken from <http://www.etiquetteexpert.com/>. When you send an email, be sure it represents your personal brand as professionally as you'd like.

Jacqueline offers these guidelines to help ensure that you send a professional email every time:

- Craft a compelling subject line.
- Treat e-mail like a business letter.
- Keep it short and simple.
- Never send an email when you're angry.
- Don't send anything confidential.
- Read it and check your spelling before sending it.

**Remember:**

Language and phrasing should always be civil and courteous; we are all representing ORS and we should never drop our standards. This applies to internal email as well as email to other parties.

Thanks for reading!!



**Note:** Because some of the links in this newsletter point to network resources, some of the links may not work if you are reading this outside of the organization.