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### Calendar

#### September

Labor Day	4
Grandparents Day	10
DMB Employee Recognition Event	14
Public School Employees Board Meeting	14
Autumn Equinox	21
State Employees Board Meeting	21

#### October

World Egg Day	7
Columbus Day	10

## 10th Annual picnic was a splash

The activities and the addition of a dunk tank to the annual office picnic proved to be a splashing good time!

Hawk Island Park, the new venue selected by EMPAC, offered a variety of activities for our staff. Many enjoyed digging their feet into the hot sand to play a game of volleyball or venturing to the pits to throw a game of horseshoes. As if the fun and games on land weren't enough, EMPAC also sponsored paddle and rowboat rentals from the park.

While the park amenities were fabulous and fun, it's safe to say that the dunk tank made the biggest splash. A special thank you to **Anthony Estell, Chris DeRose, Fred Covert, Brian McLane, Phil Stoddard, Jon Seeger, and John Donovan** for being the target of our hours of amusement.

Again, our hats go off to EMPAC for planning and executing a fun-filled afternoon for all staff to enjoy.



[Click to view the web gallery for a play-by-play of the event.](#)

## It's duck season

Most of us spend our workdays carrying out the ORS mission of delivering pensions, related benefits and services to promote the future financial security of our customers. And most of us probably answer many retirement questions off the clock for friends and family members. So what about you? Are your retirement plans in order? Or are you too busy helping others that you have jeopardized your own future financial security?

ORS and CitiStreet want to make sure we all practice what we preach, and will do so with the "Are Your Ducks In A Row?" campaign. The message of the campaign is that it's time to get your ducks in a row and become active in planning and saving for your retirement. Beginning Tuesday, September 12, CitiStreet advisors will kickoff a series of mini-seminars to help you become a more knowledgeable, active participant in your retirement planning.



Boss's Day	16
State Police Board Meeting	19
All-Staff Meeting	24
Public School Employees Board Meeting	26
Halloween	31

### Quick Links

- [ORS Member Website](#)
- [ORS Employer Website](#)
- [Policies and Procedures](#)

### Commonly Used Acronyms

AST	Application Support Team
BLA	Business Leadership Assembly ( <i>Consists of the EPC, BPOs, and BPLs</i> )
BPD	Benefit Plan Design
BPL	Business Process Leader
BPO	Business Process Owner
CED	Customer Education and Development
CSC	Customer Service Center
DIT	Department of Information Technology
DMB	Department of Management and Budget
EPC	Executive Process Council ( <i>Chris, Laurie, Phil, Tim, Anthony, and Kathy</i> )
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
ORS	Office of Retirement Services
PRIM	Preretirement Information Meeting ( <i>public school employees</i> )
PRO	Preretirement Orientation ( <i>state</i> )

The campaign consists of eight seminars. Most of them will run 10 to 15 minutes each, with the exception of the Advisor Service seminar where participants get the opportunity to use CitiStreet's online financial planning resource that is free to state employees. The seminars are set to run at various times through September and the first week of October to ensure everyone has a chance to attend.

Remember, you are also an ORS customer, so making sure you are financially ready for your retirement is helping meet the ORS mission. Look for a seminar schedule next week in your GroupWise mailbox.

## Don't duck your secure financial future

- Many financial experts say that retirees will need at least 70 to 80 percent of their preretirement income to live comfortably in retirement. ([401khelpcenter.com](http://401khelpcenter.com))
- 88 percent of workers ages 25-35 have less than \$50,000 saved for retirement. (Employee Benefit Research Institute 4/06)
- Research shows that individuals age 55 who live to age 90 would need to have accumulated \$210,000 (by age 65) just to pay for insurance to supplement Medicare and out-of-pocket medical expenses in retirement. (Employee Benefit Research Institute 4/06)
- A 401(k) can yield more than a traditional pension, but only if you play it right. Given control of our finances, half of us haven't a clue what to do. (*Newsweek*, "Your Retirement: How to land on your feet," Feb 14, 2005)
- It is estimated that married couples, age 65 or older, will spend 35 percent of their income on health care in 2030. (*Newsweek*, "Your Retirement: How to land on your feet," Feb 14, 2005)



**on**  
**Brian McLane**

Did you know that an Araucana is a type of domestic chicken from South America that lays pale blue, green, or pinkish eggs and is sometimes called an Easter egg chicken?

**Brian McLane** does, and he can show you the eggs to prove it. Brian and his family are the proud caretakers of four chickens. Brian and his wife, Lori, jokingly refer to themselves as "urban chicken farmers" because they live in the city of Lowell.

Brian ordered the four chickens from a local feed store, which in turn got them from a hatchery in Zeeland. Brian's children, Hannah, 12, Emma, 9, and Connor, 5, were allowed to pick a breed and Brian and Lori picked a breed out as well.

Hannah is proud owner of Dorothy, or Dot, the Araucana who is named after Lori's grandma. Emma chose a Plymouth Barred Rock and named her Suzie Q, and Loosey Goosey is a Rhode Island Red belonging to Connor. Brian and Lori have a Buff Orpington who is officially named Aunt Fanny, but Connor has dubbed her Aunt Smally because of her size. Recently, he bumped her up to Aunt Medium.

	employees)
PS	Process Support
T&T	Tools and Technology

"Part of the reason we got the chickens was to teach the kids responsibility. But we also wanted to help connect them to where our food comes from," said Brian.

When the chickens first arrived, the McLanes kept them in a large dog crate in the house under a heat lamp. Brian got busy building a house and coop for them. They moved into their new outside digs when they were about eight weeks old.

Dot was the first chicken to lay an egg, and Hannah had the honor of eating it. "I was surprised at how excited and willing she was to actually eat it," Brian said. He said the kids are still pretty energetic about taking care of the chickens and are thinking about entering them in the Kent County Youth Fair.



Aunt Fanny, a.k.a. "Aunt Smally" or "Aunt Medium."

Brian said that the chickens usually roam the yard while the family is outdoors, and they help keep bugs and grubs down in the yard. "I have noticed we have a lot less hostas being eaten by bugs since we got the chickens."

Brian does have some advice for any would be urban chicken owner – check local ordinances before getting too far along in your plans. Brian had to file for a variance to be able to have the chickens in his yard.



## Online process leads to annual certification

Before web reporting, public school reporting units were previously required to submitted quarterly affidavits to certify that the wages, hours, and other reporting activities conform to the requirements of the Retirement Act. Now that schools report their wages and hours on a pay cycle basis using the internet, payroll processors are certifying the accuracy of the information each time they report their data. In addition, ORS asks superintendents each year to certify the retirement activities of their reporting unit.

In mid-August, Employer Reporting sent a letter and certification form to all reporting unit superintendents asking them to complete the form and return it by September 1. Besides acknowledging that their reporting unit employees are complying with the reporting requirements set forth in Act 300 and the *Reporting Instruction Manual*, we've asked superintendents to verify who serves as their web administrator and who their employer reporting contacts are.

**Joanne Masarik**, ER manager, comments on this new approach. "We believe that requiring the superintendent to complete this certification to ensure that the wages being reported are accurate. Combining the verification of authorized users with the certification gives us more accurate contact information and makes the process more efficient for the schools and our ER staff."

## History of the Mackinac Bridge walk

This weekend is the big Mackinac Bridge walk from St. Ignace in the Upper Peninsula to Mackinaw City in the Lower Peninsula. Did you ever wonder when it all started?

Before looking at the first walk, you need to know a little about the Mackinac Bridge itself. Construction on the bridge officially began with ceremonies at St. Ignace and Mackinaw City on May 7 and 8, 1954. Three and a half years later, on November 1, 1957, the world's longest suspension bridge at the time opened to traffic. Before then, the only way to travel between the Upper and Lower Peninsulas was by ferry.

The following year, on Labor Day 1958,





pedestrians started across the bridge during the early morning hours. According to records, only 68 people walked across the bridge that first year. Although it was an annual event, it took some time before the bridge walk became popular. In the '60s, traffic jams were prevalent because of the pedestrians. To increase awareness (and participation), organizers recruited the governor to kick off the walk.

Since that first affair in 1958, walkers have continued to cross the Mackinac Bridge every Labor Day. Over the years, attendance has risen to an average of 50,000 participants. The greatest number of walkers was during the 1992 presidential election campaign when President George H. W. Bush led approximately 85,000 participants across the bridge in an attempt to win over Michigan voters for his reelection bid. (Bill Clinton won Michigan that year.)

### ***Bridge walk trivia***

**Start time** – The general public can begin walking any time after the governor's party starts the walk, at approximately 7 a.m. The last of the participants must start by 11 a.m.

**Route** – Participants travel from St. Ignace south to Mackinaw City using the traffic lanes on the east side of the bridge. Vehicles continue to cross the bridge using the west lanes.

**Distance** – It's approximately five miles across the bridge, and the average time to walk the bridge is about two hours.

**Participants** – Anyone can participate, but those under 18 have to have a parent or guardian's permission. Wheelchairs and baby strollers are allowed, but no bikes, roller skates, skateboards, wagons, or anything similar are permitted. The only animals allowed are seeing-eye dogs.

**Getting there or back** – For a small fee, bus service is available before the walk for those who wish to park in Mackinaw City and ride over to St. Ignace, and for those who park in St. Ignace, busses will take participants back across after the walk.

**Cost** – There is no charge for the walk itself.

For more information about the bridge, visit [michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov) or [mackinacbridge.org](http://mackinacbridge.org).

## ***Comings & Goings***

**Kelsie Thelen**, student assistant in the director's office, worked her final day at WDRA August 18. Kelsie is returning to school at the University of Michigan and hopes to return to ORS next summer. Other students returning to school and leaving WDRA are **Caitlin Hitchcock** and **Kylie Cherpes**. Many thanks to them for their hard work and efforts during their summer break from college.

In addition to our farewells to the students in our office, we wish the best to **Janet Wesner** who has left CSC on August 23 to pursue other work opportunities. Also, fellow CSC employee **Brandi Branson** will leave the office on September 8 to accept a new position with the Department of Treasury. Brandi commented on how wonderful it was to work with everyone here and leaves us with this: "Bye-bye sisters and brothers! Remember, the tax filing deadline for individuals is April 15, 2007; please do not call looking for extensions. 🙄."

## ***Office Etiquette 101***

Ever been in the restroom confused and appalled by the person in the next stall trying to chat with you, only to find they aren't talking to you at all, but rather they're having a conversation on their cell phone? Now that is a major etiquette faux pas!

Going back to our normal [dress code](#) isn't the only thing to consider when you come back from the long Labor Day weekend. In addition to ditching the summer sandals, it may help to keep a few other office etiquettes in mind.

### ***That was then, this is now***

Offices used to be a place where legions of similarly dressed people arrived at the same time, sat in neat rows of desks and performed nearly identical tasks. At noon, everybody vacated the office, then returned in exactly one hour, refreshed and ready for an afternoon of highly predictable behavior. Sound familiar? I didn't think so.



Today, casually dressed people come and go at different times. There is a kitchen on-site where employees make their own meals anytime. People are snacking, hopping to meeting spaces mixed in with cubicles, creating "teamspace" environments, and tend to work part-time, flex-time, as temps, or on contract.

Although this relaxed work environment has many advantages for worker recruitment, retention, and productivity, new work conditions can create confusion, frustration, and stress when noise and other distractions are common. As casual workspaces and meeting spaces are mixed with more traditional offices, workers have a greater number of distractions to deal with, while at the same time common behavior rules become blurred.

### ***Surviving a "Cube Life"***

58 percent of American offices use some type of open plan layout. Commonly called cubicles, these workstations offer some privacy, but typically do not have doors or ceilings.

Although open plan layouts increase collaboration, they also require basic consideration of others. Below are a few highlights on the best tips to surviving the cubicle environment:

- Respect others' privacy. Don't borrow items from other peoples' workstations or hover over their shoulder while they finish a phone call. Never open drawers or cabinets in other peoples' stations without permission.
- Be respectful to the next group to use a teaming space or places like Central Perk. Always clean up.
- If you do have permission to use someone's PC, remember that settings should not be changed without the owner's knowledge. Email and files should be considered confidential and off limits.
- WDRA has rules about decorating and other protocols to follow in your personal area. Check with **Linda Reznick** if you have questions or [click here](#) to obtain the written policy. Pictures or other items that could offend coworkers are never a good idea.
- Music should be played on headphones, not speakers—tastes in music vary too much for anyone to choose for a whole group.
- If you share a cubicle, remember to clean up after yourself each time you leave and store shared materials where the coworker will be able to find them.
- When using a shared printer, reload paper when it's your turn and save huge print jobs for times when your work group will not be in a hurry for printed documents. If you print something, pick it up – it's that simple.
- Just because you have some visual privacy, don't assume your annoying habits are a secret. Chewing ice, clipping nails, going barefoot, etc., are not exactly ways to make friends in open plans.

- Respect your coworkers' concentration. If you see someone deeply involved in typing, reading or thinking, come back later or send an email if possible.
- If you have to eat at your desk, choose "quiet" foods. Cut back on the crunchy stuff. Stirring ice tea with a vengeance is also hard on group peace. Also think twice about foods that have strong odors – remember that other people will have to live with those odors all afternoon.
- Using speaker phones keeps your hands free, but ties up both ears of every coworker in your immediate area. Not a good tradeoff—pick up the receiver, or get a headset.
- In some places it's OK to carry on a discussion with someone ten feet away. In others, that would cause distraction. Pay attention to the conduct in places like crossroads.
- Dressing for success no longer means formality. But if you are meeting with customers or others who expect more formality, dress appropriately. Follow the dress code of DMB/WDRA.

This information was taken, in part, from a ©Haworth, Inc. publication. Review these and many other important etiquette tips in their [full publication online](#).

**ORS Mission:**  
We deliver pensions, related benefits, and services to promote the future financial security of our customers.

**ORS Vision:**  
Fast, easy access to complete and accurate information and exceptional service.

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Thanks for reading!!

## ***A Blood Drive for the Ages***

A special thank you to the 49 donors who, at the August 25 GOB Blood Drive, helped rank this drive as the fourth largest (based on units of blood produced) in the last seven years. The Red Cross also experienced the highest participation rate in over three years. It attributed the collection of 41 units of blood, which easily surpassed the pre-drive goal of 30 units, to the generous outpouring of donors.



Here's how the August drive measures up with the top ranking secondary complex drive:

<i>Drive</i>	<i>Donors Presented (Rank)</i>	<i>Units of blood produced (Rank)</i>
August 25, 2006	49 (4th)	41 (3rd)
Record: September 2001	88	66

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