

Year 2000



616 Days

ORS Look Out

April 24, 1998

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Public school retirees receive Hospital Performance Profiles

When a retiree or their family member faces a serious illness, the hospital they choose to provide care may be one of the most important decisions they will ever make. Public school retirees are getting a tool to help them make that decision.

The 1998 *Southeast Michigan Hospital Performance Profile* was mailed this week to 88,450 public school retirees who participate in the health insurance plan in the United States and Canada.

The book, which was featured in a front page article in the April 17 *Detroit Free Press*, evaluates the performance of 46 hospitals in a seven-county area in Southeast Michigan, based on the outcomes and costs of various medical procedures and patient perceptions on quality of care.

The book was prepared by a consortium of major health care purchasers in Southeast Michigan, including MPSERS, the State of Michigan, the big three automakers, Detroit Edison, First Chicago NBD Bank and the Michigan Educational Special Services Association (MESSA).

Fred Covert, the MPSERS liaison

to the consortium, said the book is designed to assist users facing a hospitalization.

"It's another tool people should use when making this decision," he said. "For instance, if they have a condition detailed in this book, they should, in consultation with their physician, see which hospitals are best at dealing with that condition."

The book is divided into sections on medical care, surgical care and childbirth care. Each details treatment for numerous conditions and procedures.

"It includes childbirth care because a significant part of the consortium's audience is active members," Covert said. "Our retirees may not be candidates for childbirth care, but they may have family members who would find this information useful."

Although the scope of the book is limited to Southeast Michigan, it remains relevant for retirees everywhere, Covert said.

"We know that large numbers of our outstate retirees come to Southeast Michigan for certain kinds of medical care," he said.

ORS looking into videoconferencing technology for remote meetings

When Ken Wright's Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) meeting for Alpena Community College staff ended April 14, he avoided the usual three-hour drive home and was back in his Lansing office within minutes.

How is that possible? The ORS jet? Teleportation? Obviously not. The solution is videoconferencing, a technology that allows virtual face-to-face conversations between individuals many miles apart.

Ken hosted the Alpena ORP meeting from a videoconferencing studio in Erickson Hall on the Michigan State University campus. See *Videoconferencing*, page 3

Thought for the Day

One of the most powerful sentences is comprised of ten 2-letter words:

"If it is to be, it is up to me."

- Anonymous

Internet will change everyday life

The Internet will change our lives in ways we are only beginning to imagine, the Automation Services Division (ASD) staffer who monitors developing technology predicted recently.

Joe Kunk, manager of ASD's Technical Support Section, addressed a meeting of ORS staff April 14 with predictions of how he believes the Internet will develop.

Among his predictions are:

- Teledesic, a series of hundreds of low-orbit satellites, will be in place by 2003 to allow computers to connect to the Internet at high speeds. He compared it to the reverse of a cell phone which passes its signal from transmitter to transmitter as the user travels. In the case of Teledesic, the computer user would be stationary and the signal would be passed from satel-

lite to satellite as they circled the earth.

- Verbal interaction with computers — computers that respond to voice command — will become more pervasive.
- Portable computers will sell for under \$1,000 within a year, and desk top units will be under \$500.
- Internet business will expand significantly. For instance, Amazon.com, a virtual bookstore, is able to sell 30% of all books in print. He said that Internet sales exceeded \$1 billion in 1997.
- The use of business on the Internet will fuel a rebirth of cottage industries who can sell globally with negligible startup costs.
- Smart cards and electronic wallets, with an imbedded computer chip that allows numerous financial transactions, will become more common in this country.

- In the near future the Internet will be used either to research products or make purchases 80% of the time, even for purchases like groceries. Kroger has already tested grocery sales on the Internet in the Detroit area.

He said there were 112 million Internet users world-wide in January 1998, with 70 million of them in the U.S. and Canada. He said 53% of users are male and 47% female.

Joe also discussed the importance of version control. He views the construction of an electronic paper trail as being crucial for such things as Web pages. For legal purposes it will be necessary to document which version of a Web page, for example, a customer viewed.

He demonstrated a program called Visual Source Safe that gives version control of anything than can be saved as a computer file. It allows users to archive each versions, with notes explaining the differences.

Number of beneficiary nominations shrinks

The large number of beneficiary nominations awaiting processing was eliminated, thanks to the efforts of some Operations Division staff.

A few weeks ago, the number had reached about 7,500 individual beneficiary nominations, Claims Processing Unit Supervisor Carla Price said.

"In reducing this number, we had the assistance of a great crew of report processors," Carla said. "They started working on it in mid-April, and in about two weeks, they've cleaned it up. What they did is pretty impressive."



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ORS looks into videoconferencing

Continued from page 1

Using telephone lines to transmit video images and voices, Ken was able to meet with an audience in a similar facility on the Alpena Community College Campus in the Northern Lower Peninsula.

During the meeting, Ken was able to see his audience on a television monitor and hear their voices through a speaker. They were able to see and hear him the same way.

ORS is investigating this technology to see if it holds promise for increasing our ability to serve remote audiences, Customer Service Manager Laurie Hill said.

"We believe this technology has tremendous potential to help us increase our presence around the State," she said. "If we can address distant audiences without the travel necessary for a face-to-face meeting, that's a benefit to us that translates into a benefit for our customers."

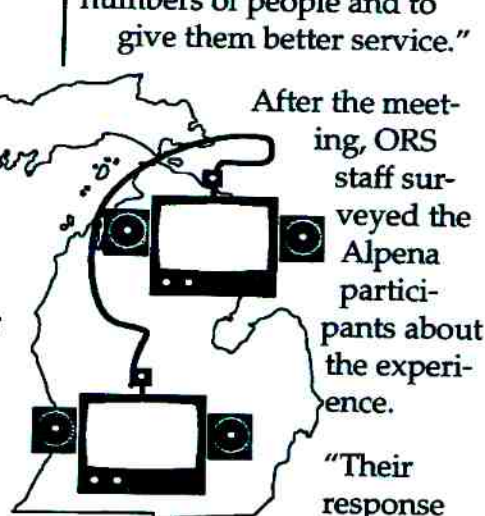
Ken, who has participated in a similar meeting once before, admits he was skeptical

"....I found that it's very, very much like being right there in the same room...."

- Ken Wright, ORS Videoconference presenter on his impressions of the experience

before trying videoconferencing.

"But I found that it's very, very much like being right there in the same room," he said. "You lose a little of the interpersonal contact, but I think that is far outweighed by the ability to serve greater numbers of people and to give them better service."



After the meeting, ORS staff surveyed the Alpena participants about the experience.

"Their response was positive and enthusiastic," Laurie said. "Basically, we asked them if they felt in any way disadvantaged by having Ken present from here instead of there. They indicated they were very satisfied with the experience."

Videoconferencing facilities exist at nearly all colleges and

universities in Michigan. In recent years, a growing number of K-12 school districts and intermediate school districts have also added facilities. In addition, commercial enterprises such as Kinko Copy Centers also have facilities available for rental.

A pilot program to further test videoconferencing is in the planning stages. It will involve pre-retirement meetings at other remote locations and may expand to include one-on-one retirement counseling.

ORS Director Chris DeRose, who watched the Alpena meeting and helped survey the participants, said if the pilot program is successful, we will begin implementing to a broader audience.

"If we know there's a demand for it and that our customers will accept it, this will become one more tool in providing education to our customers," he said.

Comings and goings in ORS

Terry Jacobson joined the executive office as an executive secretary. She comes from the Legislative Council, and previously was with the House Business Office for a year. She grew up in Lansing



Terry Jacobson

and went to Alma College. She lived in Connecticut for 16 years before returning to Michigan in 1996. She lives in Okemos with her son.

Charla Clifford joins the Customer Information Center as a student assistant. She is a student at Lansing Community College, where she studies human resources. She worked in the Dean's office there before joining ORS.



Charla Clifford

Kristen Dubois joins the Information Technology and Reengineering Section as a temporary employee



Kristen Dubois

working on the Y2K project.

Michael Sandretto, a temporary employee in the Information Technology and Reengineering Section, left April 17 to pursue other opportunities in New York.

Jodi Kibiloski, a student assistant in the Customer Service Division, leaves April 29. She will graduate from Michigan State University in May and has accepted a position with an advertising agency in Detroit.

Jennifer Meyer, a student assistant in the Customer Service Division, leaves today to accept an internship in an accounting position in Southfield.

Chris Herzog, a student assistant in the Operations Division, leaves April 30. He graduates from Michigan State University in May and has accepted a position with the Medstat Group.

6W2W off to a good start

With 57 participants and a full slate of events, ORS' 1998 Six Weeks to Wellness (6W2W) program is off to a flying start.

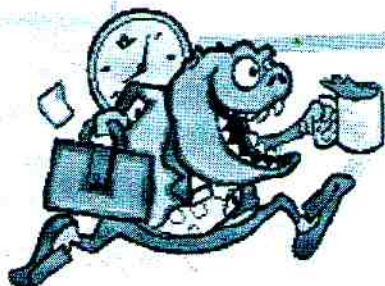
Monday at noon, a seminar on Exercise with Rubber Bands is available in room M. The session is free, but rubber bands cost \$2.

On May 4, a seminar on Healing with Magnetism will be available

at noon in room M.

The healthy bake sale scheduled for today has been postponed to Friday, May 1. Please bring healthy baked goods that day. Proceeds go to the summer picnic and other EMPAC activities

Participants should check the calendar for other upcoming events.



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Can you solve this scramble?

Just when you think you're winning the rat race, they bring in faster rats. So, what do you do to stay in command of your daily challenges? If you can solve this issue's scramble, you'll have a pretty good idea. Talk it over with your co-workers and see what strategies you can come up with. Here's the scramble:

het creeniffed teenweb dogo nad targe
si sujt a tiltel traxe fotfer!

The unscrambled posters will be on display in three areas next week.