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Email the LookOut Staff



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Calendar

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On the Horizon

- Judges Board Meeting

2011 Spring All-Staff Meeting recap

At this year's first biannual All-Staff Meeting, held April 12, we welcomed new faces, exercised our brains, and got a refresher course on planning and investing from ING.

Once everyone had their fill of cookies, fresh fruit, and water, our host **Katelyn Henika** introduced **Tim McCormick**, **Laurie Hill**, and **Anthony Estell** who welcomed new staff who have joined us this past year.

Director's message

ORS Director **Phil Stoddard** then took the floor. He began with a moment of silence in honor of dear friend and past ORS employee Erik Ferden. He then used some time to address the staff, including some of the questions and comments submitted in advance.

Though stormy seas may be the new normal, both inside and outside of ORS, working together with open communication is the key, he said. With so much change in the business, it can be difficult to keep our spirits up. But the quality of service we provide to our customers, and staff skill and initiative, are sources of pride we can draw upon as we move forward.

You can find the details from the [Director's Message on the DO Online page under the News tab](#).

COMING SOON!

The Power of Perspectives Experience

- The power of diverse perspectives
- Ways to examine the world critically
- How inclusion and diversity lead to creativity and innovation

Dress for Success

Juren Ekwejunor-Etchie and **Amita Das** switched gears and presented some tips and tricks for how to look sharp in the workplace by showcasing the Dress for Success video. This video highlighted many ORS employees, and encouraged us to dress for the position we want, not necessarily for the position we have. The video will be available in an upcoming *LookOut*. If you'd like to check out ORS's current appearance guidelines, [click here and search for appearance guidelines](#).

Yes, we make widgets

To be capable ambassadors of the retirement system we have to know our stuff, so **Robin Stremlow** led a small group exercise to give staff the tools and confidence to respond to common myths about public retirement plans. Later in the week, staff were emailed [a hard copy of the facts and responses](#).

Communication quiz bowl

- May 12

- State Employees Board Meeting
- May 26

- Memorial Day
- May 30

Quick Links

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

Commonly Used Acronyms

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

You may be able to communicate with our customers, but how about with colleagues? To test our memory on the details of Strategic Objective 13, **Erica Quealy** took to the stage for a short ORS communication tools quiz. The audience members with the best memories were handed – not thrown! – a candy bar for their right answers.

Planning for retirement on a budget

The widget message focused on the value of pensions, but another key piece of a successful retirement is personal planning. Wendy Young Carter from ING introduced Mike Perkins, a senior vice president with ING Investment Management. “I don’t know what the future of social security is going to be,” he said. “I don’t know what the future of public pensions is going to be. [...] But I do know that it matters if I take control.” Throughout his talk, he challenged the audience to get involved and break away from the pack.

“If a financial advisor tries to convince you that he knows the market’s future, run away from him!” he advised. Although the market is unpredictable, learning, saving, and planning now makes you better prepared in the future. By living that message and delivering it to our customers, we are empowering them for a successful today and secure tomorrow.

After the meeting, everyone received a follow-up survey. To view the results from that survey, and the results of the employee satisfaction survey, [head to CE Today](#) and [click on the Surveys tab](#). The BLA team will be meeting next week to review the satisfaction survey and develop action plans. Stay tuned for more information.

All-Staff Planning Team:

Thank you to the cross-process team that made the meeting a success: Amita Das, Juren Ekwejunor-Etchie, Katelyn Henika, **Martha Mackie**, **Nicole Podgorski**, **Pam Kenney-Garver**, and **Tony Mills**.



CS will add more phone resources

Because phone volumes fluctuate by time of day, season, and events, balancing processing time and phone time is always a challenge in CS. Recent studies of other call centers and of call center best practices found that an ideal way to meet this

T&T	Tools and Technology
UAT	User Acceptance Testing



- **Innovate and Improve Customer Service**
- **Best In Class Business Practices**
- **Instill Confidence in Staff Through Quality Communication**
- **Engage Top Talent to Realize Potential**
- **Continuously Renewed Business-Driven Technology**
- **Build Business Capacity Through Education and Development**
- **Proactive Policy Development and Legislative Strategy**

challenge is to hire part-time employees who can add hours during the times we need them most.

Together **Deb Grescowle**, **Letitia Levi**, and **Laurie Mitchell** presented a part-time staffing solution to the EPC, who embraced the solution and advocated for it with DTMB leadership. This week, approval was received from the DTMB Director's office to recruit and hire part-time staff.

**NOW
HIRING!**

Once hired, these new permanent employees will be trained in phones and message board activities only, and primarily for retiree questions. **Elaine Scott** is working on a quicker, modified training plan for the new hires, and CS's analyst team will only route calls to the part-time staff for which they have been trained. One group of part-time hires will work Monday through Wednesday, 8:15-1:15 and the other group will work Thursday and Friday, 8:15-1:15.

Deb Grescowle is now working with DTMB HR to get these positions posted. These positions will also be posted on several college websites. If you know anyone who may be interested in part-time work, have them be on the lookout for the upcoming posting. Deb will let staff know when the positions are posted on the [SOM vacancy website](#).

Insurance improvements in motion

Subject matter experts in CS and BPD are making sure the data exchange with our insurance partners (the 834 file that delivers insurance enrollment, disenrollment, and address change information) is accurate and reliable.

Front-line phone center staff are receiving additional training to address insurance issues and questions in the first customer contact.

Each insurance vendor will have a main point of contact in CS to provide consistent communication.

Finally, **Kris Morris** is leading a new team that is making great progress on insurance workflows; they've already begun to document what they've learned from the insurance SMEs in our office.



Hardware and software upgrades coming

This May, Clarety, Siebel, miAccount, and the employer reporting website will operate faster thanks to some new hardware and software upgrades. There will also be new application servers installed, and we'll see an upgrade to FileNet (an application that allows staff to image and view member documents).

Jim Rademacher is coordinating testing between Clarety and the new upgrades. He said, "The simplest way to understand the impact is to think of yourself getting a new desktop PC. As long as your programs are properly installed you will not notice any difference except that your programs will most likely run faster and take less time to load."

Meanwhile, we haven't forgotten about the Office 2010 upgrade. Right now, that upgrade is tentatively scheduled for a mid-June migration date — more details to come.

Take Your Child to Work Day next week

Thursday, April 28 is Take Your Child to Work Day at the GOB! Kids will participate in organized activities with the planning team between 1:00 and 4:15 p.m. in Crossroads.

Activities include participating in an ORS Office Expedition, asking questions of our Process Stars about their work experience, and watching Mom or Dad work and reporting back to the group about their observations. We will finish the day by preparing workplace snacks in Central Perk.

By participating in this event, children will:

- Learn about an array of job possibilities for their future and formulate ideas about future career paths.
- Expand their learning from the classroom into the work environment, and make the connection between academic success and success in the work world.
- Experience their parent's place of employment, meet their parent's coworkers, and understand job opportunities here at ORS and within the state of Michigan.

Things to keep in mind:

- Children, grandchildren, or close relatives of ORS employees are invited - ages 6 to 18 only please.
- Employees are responsible for transportation to/from the GOB. Make sure to coordinate an annual leave request with your supervisor for transportation time. Children should arrive no earlier than 1:00 p.m.
- Children will be away from their relatives during most of the event, but will sit with them from 3:15 - 3:45 and from 4:15 to the end of the day.
- Call center staff who wish to participate should inform their supervisor. Based on the age and temperament of the child, you may want to request that you process workflow or respond to the message board while your child is with you.

If you'd like to participate in Take Your Child to Work Day, please email the names and ages of the participating children to [Elaine Scott](#) or [Sara Hoppes](#) by noon on Wednesday, April 27.



No new long-term care policies through MetLife

Starting April 1, no new long-term care policies will be available for employees and retirees through MetLife; however, coverage will continue for those currently enrolled. If customers have billing issues, they should call MetLife directly at (800) 438-6388. We will be updating the ORS websites to remove the old information.

How to communicate our widget

As discussed at last week's All-Staff Meeting, communicating the value of public employees and their retirement plans is an important task for each of us. In addition to using the communication methods we developed, we should use tips from other retirement experts.

Last fall, the executive director of the [National Institute on Retirement Security \(NIRS\)](#) presented four ways to help "bridge the information gap" at an annual employee benefits conference. By keeping these things in mind, we can spread ORS's widget message more effectively:

1. Be clear, concise, credible, and consistent.
2. Speak for yourself, or someone else will.
3. Use facts and data to make the case.
4. Anecdotes and analogies help make your message stick.



Use these tips, and [the *Myths vs. Truths* document](#), to be successful ambassadors for the value of public retirement plans.

Got a widget idea? Send it to the [LookOut](#).

Comings & Goings

We join ING in welcoming **Colleen Beaumont**, the new Pension Plus consultant. Colleen began on April 4, and will primarily work with employers to make sure they understand the plan and how to report to ORS. Colleen is not new to ING — she has worked as a plan consultant since 2008 with focus on the State of Michigan 401(k) and 457 plans. She is a Michigan State University graduate and lives in Ferndale



AST welcomes manager **Tanis Lerash**. Tanis started on April 13 and, although she is not new to this department. She began her state career as a developer in 1988 with the Department of Natural Resources and has been in a manager role since 1997. Under DTMB, she has worked on SharePoint enterprise and MI360 projects. She has a bachelors degree in Computer Information Systems from Ferris State University and a masters degree in Management from Aquinas College. In her spare time she enjoys spending time with her 17-year-old son Cody and taking in movies.



We wish the best to the following employees who have found new employment opportunities:

Charla Drysdale accepted an analyst position in the Department of Energy, Labor and Economic Growth, Michigan Occupational Safety and Health Administration (on the second floor of the GOB). Her last day is April 22.

Linda Hartwick will join the Department of Treasury, Collection Division. Her last day is April 29.

Catherine Jones accepted a position with the Department of Human Services, Office of Child Support; her last day is April 29. Catherine will be working in the Special Initiatives Unit.

April Long's last day is April 29. She is returning to her previous position as a stay-at-home mom. Sounds like a good gig!

Leza Rebera's last day with ORS will be May 4. She is taking on a project management opportunity with a private company.

AST bid farewell to **Druvitha Kolluri** on April 8, and **Ravindra Kovelamudi** on April 13.

Update

AST welcomed developers **Prathusha Kamma**, **Sivani Kasukurthi**, and **Deepika Rayapally** last year. We apologize for missing their arrival.

Prathusha enjoys tennis, reading, and traveling – her favorite destination so far is California.

Sivani also loves traveling and enjoys reading books and listening to Bollywood music.

Deepika likes to watch movies in her spare time. She also said that she enjoys the

environment at ORS and that she's learned a lot since she began working here.



Complete the ORS Interest Survey

From party planning and technology testing to process mapping and article writing, if you're interested in helping out in ORS activities, there's probably an outlet for your skills. Be sure to respond to the ORS Staff Interest Survey (that was emailed to you yesterday) by 6 p.m. on Friday, April 29. Select a few activities of interest and you just may find yourself on a committee, like next year's All-Staff Meeting planning team!

ORS's claim to fame

If you've ever met a celebrity, we want to know! Share your photos or stories with the *LookOut* staff by COB Monday, May 16, and be included in a special ORS Spotlight article.



Today is the 41st annual Earth Day — a day to recognize and honor our planet. To celebrate, make a commitment to living a greener life or check out local Earth Day events.

You can reduce your carbon footprint and avoid high fuel prices by walking or riding your bike more often (lobby your local officials if you don't have adequate sidewalks). Or, for your daily commute, carpool with others.

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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Thanks for reading!!



Below are some local Earth Day events you and your family can take part in over the weekend.

Party for the Planet. Go to [Potter Park Zoo](#) tomorrow from noon to 4 p.m., to celebrate Earth Day at the zoo! You'll meet various education animals and learn about conservation with demonstrations throughout the zoo. You can also recycle your old cell phones and athletic shoes (athletic only please, and shoes must not contain metal). Visitors must pay Potter Park Zoo's general admission prices.

Lansing's Spring Scrub. [Head to Old Town tomorrow](#) from 11:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., to spruce up the area for the

summer season. Teams of volunteers will help in a variety of important projects, including cleaning the river banks, repairing and refreshing the Preuss Pets employee parking lot (including their murals), painting a new mural, and repainting the signs that welcome visitors to Old Town. For more information, [visit Old Town's website](#).



The GOB flower bed, donated and maintained by ORS staff, is in need of perennials. Contact [Michelle Thompson](#) for more information.

Corrections

The *LookOut* editorial staff apologizes for an omission in last issue's article, *New online trainings assist employers*. The article did not point out that staff in DTMB's Office of Financial Services' Retirement Section contributed to the creation of the employer tutorials. Without their efforts, the project would not have been successful. Thanks for all your efforts.

Also, the graphs in *Major increase in ORS web traffic in 2010* have been corrected and can be found in [the LookOut archives](#).

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.