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Calendar

September

The Health and Safety salad luncheon 30

October

All Staff Meeting 7

ORS vision celebrated with great honor

ORS staff gathered with friends and business partners to celebrate the completion of Vision ORS, a systematic approach to improve the people, processes, and technologies of our business. The September 23 celebration marks the end of an eight-year project we began in 2000.

Vision ORS led ORS to a great number of efficiencies and best-in-class services for nearly 600,000 customers. Highlights noted at the celebration included creating an online reporting system for over 700 school officials; streamlining hundreds of forms and adding automated features for customers and employees; launching miAccount, our new online account access tool; removing paper files and placing all customer information within a click of a button for our call center representatives; implementing imaging processes for customer correspondence; and creating a customer database with our insurance vendors.

"Together, we found the expertise to complete this project," said **Phil Stoddard**. When reflecting back on some of budgetary hurdles faced during the project, DMB Director **Lisa Webb Sharpe** said, "The reason we were able to move forward with Vision ORS is because of a track record of proven results."



On June 4 the Midwest Technology Leaders group recognized the state's Department of Information Technology, Department of Management and Budget, Office of Retirement Services, and STG for cooperative work developing miAccount. The MCA08 Collaboration award was bestowed on this group for their outstanding information technology collaboration project.

Anup Popat, CEO of Systems Technology Group (STG) spoke of the impressive recognition received by an outside industry, the 2008 Midwest Technology Collaboration Award by the Midwest Technology Leaders Council. He also went on to joke that miAccount, a major technology project and the last piece of the Vision ORS puzzle, was launched in April. "And," he added, "Any

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Quick Links

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

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
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 (<i>Phil, Laurie, Tim, and Anthony</i>)
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
ORS	Office of Retirement Services
PRIM	Preretirement Information Meeting (<i>public school</i>)

time a project launches and they want to thank us after five months, it's a good thing!"

Nate Lake, Cabinet Secretary representing Governor Granholm, expressed how Vision ORS aligns with the Governor's priority for better government. "We put you on a pedestal of what state government can do," he said.

Phil closed by saying, "You've done what most can't. It was never a one person show. There were hundreds, and they were you. Thank you for everything."



[View more pictures from the celebration now.](#)

Message from the Director

Laurie Hill talks about the importance of maintaining safe security practices on a regular basis.

With our busy daily routines it is important to balance proper security practices with getting our work done. It is critical that we take the time to make security a top priority.

After completing our Security Awareness Training, I hope you are aware of the risks we face, how we must manage them, and what will happen if we fail. In addition, we are working on a security plan that will provide us with policies, procedures, and standards needed to manage information appropriately. Monitoring and compliance will be necessary, but we look forward to emphasizing and encouraging good habits.

In recent weeks I've observed a few security incidents and I'd like to share them as a reminder of actions we need to avoid:

- Do not leave your desk with sensitive information displayed on your computer. (This is a difficult habit to break – I often have to remind myself about this one!)
- Do not leave documents with sensitive information on printers, copiers, or facsimile machines.
- Do not send emails containing confidential personal information (or emails with unencrypted attachments containing confidential information).

We are taking several actions to protect the confidentiality of our members. For instance, we're working on our configuration of multipurpose machines in secure areas, we're adding confidential recycling bins, and we are working with DIT to design a filter to help us manage outgoing emails containing sensitive information.

It is essential that each of us is doing our part to ensure an appropriate level of security every day for our 580,000 customers.



Laurie Hill

Celebrating DMB Successes

DMB held its 10 Annual Employee Recognition Event on Friday, September 16 on the grounds of the General Office Building. The event announced the winners of the 2008 Employee Excellence Awards and recognized various milestones, and honored those with years of service.

Comp Time, a band comprised of DMB employees, showcased its talents before and after the presentation. In addition, DMB Facilities manager **Larry Franklin**, sang

	employees)
PRO	Preretirement Orientation (<i>state employees</i>)
PS	Process Support
SME	Subject Matter Expert
T&T	Tools and Technology
UAT	User Acceptance Testing

the National Anthem to kick off the program.

DMB Director **Lisa Webb Sharpe** shared the following accomplishments:

- DMB reduced the state's carbon footprint by 18 percent, which was 8 percent beyond its goal of saving \$45 million.
- DMB led a statewide workforce planning endeavor.
- As a department, DMB raised \$41,000 towards the 2007 State Employees Charitable Campaign (SECC).

Milestones

Among the many who have met service milestones, ORS has a few that were highlighted.

- 35 years – **Mary Picken**
- 30 years – **Brenda Prast** and **Linda Reznick**
- 20 years – **Eve Baumgart, Erik Ferden, Kris Morris, Kathleen O'Connell, Peggy Shinn, Michelle Thompson, and Anne Watros**
- 15 years – **Lois Musbach, and Joyce Weber**
- 10 years - **Tony Contu, Ray Fleming, and Terri Rideout**
- 5 years – **Charla Drysdale, Jennifer Dunavant, Sean Evans, Laurie Mitchell, Cindy Mooney, Aimee Ross, Taylor Stiles, and Erica Quealy (Waltmire)**

Excellence Award Winners

Each year, employees in DMB nominate their colleagues for the department's most prestigious award. ORS is proud that two of our own have been awarded this honor.

Charles Leik, Innovator Award

Charles, who works as a call center representative in CSC, tackled a special accounts receivable cleanup project. He simplified the process of collecting pension overpayments to deceased members. Charles' system is saving hundreds of employee hours and contributing to the timely collection of hundreds of thousands of dollars.



Charles Leik



Kris Morris

Kris Morris, Living the Values Award

Kris, a Process Support supervisor, consistently demonstrates DMB's values. She focuses on developing opportunities people and improving processes. She developed and piloted a student co-op program and directed the very successful conversion of 750,000 paper files to electronic images.

Special Guest

Lieutenant Governor **John D. Cherry Jr.** wrapped up the event by thanking DMB employees. "Within the confines of state government, we are well aware of the commitment you've made. Thank you."

Faster Information Exchange with Insurance Vendors

Thanks to the efforts of the 834 project team, **Lila Christiansen, Joanne Masarik, Angela DeRose, Jon Seeger**, and AST's **Vivek Menon**, sending insurance transactions to Blue Cross Blue Shield just became much faster and easier. As of September 2, 2008, paper became a thing of the past as electronic transaction transfers became the future. Now, standard insurance transactions, such as adds, deletes, and changes can be updated to Blue Cross overnight.



The extraordinary efforts of this team resulted in the following:

- Immediate processing
- Fewer delays
- Increased accuracy

Paper processing is still necessary for the coordination of benefit (COB) information, disabled child, MPERS and SERS mental health disabilities, and adult insurance changes received after application set-up.

Also, beginning October 1, transaction processing for the new MPERS vision care provider, EyeMed, will also be paperless.

Congratulations and thank you to all the innovative staff who worked so hard to make this project a success, enabling our customers to have a successful today and a secure tomorrow.



Sounding Out is a way for ORS staff to share ideas, viewpoints, gripes, praises, and concerns. Email your opinion (300 words or less, if possible!) to ORS-LookOut@michigan.gov.

Here **Fred Covert** shares a life changing experience.

How long have you known me? If you have just recently met me, you wouldn't know that I was a much bigger guy than I am today. I've lost 95 pounds since November of 2007. If you've known me for a few years, you know that I have successfully lost much weight, only to see it creep (or even leap) back onto my frame! The majority of my life I've battled the beltline bulge with varying timeframes of temporary victory. Ultimately though, Mr. Obesity has always seemed to strong-arm his way back into my life.

While I never let that be a big part of who I was (viva la dunk tank!), weight gain was certainly taking a toll on my physical health. I had high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and was working to avoid diabetes. I consumed a handful of medications each day and took shots in the morning and in the evening to avoid the onset of insulin. Still, I was losing ground.

For years, my family physician (who is as much family as he is physician) had suggested the best tool in my arsenal might lie in a gastric bypass procedure called the Roux-en-Y. This major surgery scared the heck out of both my wife and I and made me not want to take the risk. I looked for alternatives and tried many. Finally, when insulin was ready to become a major part of my life, I decided I needed to do something else. I "pursued the roux," and with the good Lord's guidance, it's been a life changing decision.



Fred Covert before the Roux-en-Y gastric bypass procedure.

There are several different sources online that describe this specific procedure including [Duke University Health System](#) and [the University of Rochester Health Center](#). Both of these sources contain good descriptions of this new tool I pursued in managing my health.

In many cases, the Roux-en-Y can result in significant improvements in diabetes. The duodenum is also where the body absorbs sugar. Since it can no longer absorb sugar, the body stabilizes the descent into diabetes. Simply put, my diabetes went into remission. I like that idea! It's why I pursued this procedure in the first place. I no longer take any medications and my blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes have all stabilized to normal levels.

Don't get the wrong idea; this procedure is not a silver bullet. It was and still is a lot of work. There were risks that I had to weigh against the potential benefits. My wife and I spent a lot of time reading, studying, and praying. Due to the reduction in absorption, I take extra vitamins and drink daily protein, but my diet and my life have returned to normal. For the first time in my memory, I'm not worried about my next meal and I'm not worried that if I eat, I will lose to Mr. Obesity.

Interestingly, shortly after I had my surgery in November, a number of medical journals published articles highlighting the various benefits of this procedure. Some of the articles are based on the specific physical health factors, like diabetes and others discussed mental health improvements. In fact, just a couple weeks ago (September 8th), [an article was published in The Wall Street Journal detailing some of the financial benefits of the procedure.](#)

Having said all of this, the jury is still out! I'm told I have a 15 to 18 month honeymoon period, while my body and mind adjust. The weight loss has been substantial and typical. However, it's possible and not hard to put weight back on. To reduce these chances, I weigh in weekly, attend monthly support group meetings, and continue to ask God to help me make this work for my family and me. I appreciate all the kind words I have received from the folks in the office. If anyone has questions, I am more than willing to share what I have learned. Just ask!

Give What You Live

The State Employees Charitable Campaign (SECC) kickoff began with an apple on Thursday morning. **Dena Orsborn** and **Joan Schneider** are the ORS representatives leading the SECC efforts this year. SECC is the only annual fund-raising drive that supports a variety of causes including health care, education, the environment, and programs for kids and seniors. To donate visit MI HR online or use the paper pledge form distributed to staff. Visit www.misecc.org to track our progress and look for more fun SECC events.

Look for flyers next week to purchase a wristband for a casual week October 13 to the 17. The ten dollar donation will benefit Hospice of Lansing, the Capital Area Humane Society, the Michigan area Special Olympics, or you can designate a different charity if you choose.



Above: **Joan Schneider** gives **Julie Schafer** an apple and card promoting the SECC campaign and website address.

Up-close and personal with an endangered species

More than a 150 feet above the Board of Water and Light (BWL) Eckert Power Station nests Lansing's only pair of Peregrine Falcons. Until recently, the only way to witness this endangered species was



through the use of binoculars. But not anymore. The BWL and the students from Moores Park Elementary School unveiled Lansing's very own FalconCam. The FalconCam consists of two cameras strategically placed around the nest giving up-close footage of the habitat and happenings of the falcons.

How did they raise the money for the FalconCam? The Moores Park schoolchildren as well as the BWL participated in the fundraiser "Pennies for Peregrines" to help buy the cameras. Those contributions, as well as a donation from the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy, were enough to buy the remotely operated cameras for the FalconCam.

"The FalconCam will be a great learning tool for all of Lansing's schoolchildren," said BWL General Manager J. Peter Lark. "Peregrines are an endangered species of bird. Our FalconCam literally provides a window on their world, which hopefully will give children a greater appreciation of this bird and its place in the environment."

Check out the [FalconCam](#) to see what's happening lately.



Annual Audits

Last week, auditors began working on-site to conduct their annual audit. The purpose of this audit is to ensure that the financial statements for our pension and health systems fairly represent the financial status of those systems. Auditors will contact select staff and may ask about our work. ORS supervisors are doing their best to provide advance notice so you may plan accordingly.

Lisa Webb Sharpe is a 'Woman to Watch'

DMB Director **Lisa Webb Sharpe** was named one of the [2008 Women to Watch by Crain's Detroit Business](#). She spearheads Gov. Jennifer Granholm's Buy Michigan First initiative, which encourages Michigan businesses to bid on state contracts, ultimately boosting competition and helping the state contain costs. "The goal is to spend our money here in the state," Webb Sharpe said.

Technology joins Process Support

Prior to Vision ORS, our technology liaisons were part of Process Support. Now that the project is over, it again makes sense to bring the T3 staff back to PS. In addition to the existing team members, a Department Technician 7/8/9 and a Departmental Analyst 9/10/11 will be recruited. These additional resources will provide the level of support necessary to respond to the technology needs of all our processes.



Megan Steele's (AST student) last day was September 10.

BPD welcomed **Michele Dwyer**, a project coordinator with GRS (Gabriel, Roeder, Smith and Company, our actuarial and benefit consulting partners), to their staff on September 22. Michele is a Michigan State University graduate and lives in East Lansing with her eight-year-old son.

Staff on the move

Anthony Estell accepted the Organizational Support Division Director position. His appointment was effective September 22.

Anthony has solid experience in project management, technology development, strategic planning, budgeting, and continuous process improvement.

Joanne Masarik will work directly with Anthony Estell. She will continue her focus on employer reporting and her experience will provide valuable assistance across the Organizational Support Division.



Michele Dwyer

Think about the upcoming flu season

You've probably heard this before: "I'm not going to get a flu shot because I know someone who got sick after getting one!" According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the influenza viruses used to make the vaccines cannot cause the flu because they are either killed or in a weakened state.



Last year a total of 10,000 state employees were vaccinated through the State of Michigan's on-site flu vaccination program. This season a record number of flu vaccine doses are expected to be available in the United States for the 2008-09 flu season.

What is influenza (flu)?

Influenza, commonly known as "the flu," is a contagious illness caused by the influenza virus that infects the respiratory tract. Unlike many other viral respiratory infections, such as the common cold, the flu causes severe illness and life-threatening complications in many people. The best way to prevent the flu is to get a flu vaccination each year.

What are flu vaccines?

Currently there are two types of flu vaccines:

- The "flu shot" is an inactivated vaccine (containing killed viruses) approved for use in people older than 6 months and is given with a needle, usually in the arm.
- The nasal-spray flu vaccine is a vaccine made with live, weakened flu viruses approved for use in healthy people 2-49 years of age who are not pregnant. Each vaccine contains three influenza viruses. The viruses in the vaccine change each year based on scientists' estimations of what they see happening medically around the world.

Why should you consider getting vaccinated?

According to federal government, pandemic influenza has the potential to cause 30 percent of the workforce to miss as much as three weeks of work, generating economic losses similar to a recession. When the vaccine and the virus strains are well matched, the vaccine can reduce the chances of getting the flu by 70 percent to 90 percent in healthy adults.

Why do I need to get vaccinated annually?

Reasons to get vaccinated annually:

- The immunity built up from having the flu because of one virus strain doesn't always provide protection when a new strain is circulating.

DMB Mission:
Partners in achieving
excellence

ORS Purpose:
We are an innovative
retirement

- A vaccine made against flu viruses last year may not protect against newer viruses. This is why the influenza vaccine is updated every year.
- After you get vaccinated, your immunity to the disease declines over time and may be too low to provide protection after one year.

Clinics will be held from October to November in many worksites across the state. All State of Michigan employee health insurance carriers will cover the cost of the flu vaccine, if you bring a copy of your State of Michigan health insurance card. The only exceptions are employees with Grand Valley Health Plan & Total Health Care HMOs who offer flu vaccines with your primary physician. If you have children less than nine years of age or older adult family members, talk to your healthcare provider or local health department to find out where and when the flu vaccine will be available.

**organization driven to
empower our
customers for a
successful today and
a secure tomorrow.**

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[Click here for more information regarding influenza](#) or [click here for locations of clinics administering flu shots](#).

Brown bag lunch reminder

On October 7, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in GOB conference room B, DMB will be sponsoring a brown bag lunch hosted by Lisa Webb Sharpe. If you are interested in attending, [please register now](#).



Fall plant and harvest sale

This year EMPAC and the Green Team will be hosting a fall plant and harvest sale on October 14. Bring in your garden leftovers to help raise money for fun employee activities. Stay tuned for more information in the upcoming weeks.

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.