November 22, 2006   **Volume 10, Issue 23**

Email the LookOut Staff   LookOut Archives

Calendar

November

Thanksgiving Holiday	23-24
Enrollment ends for 2007 Flexible Spending signup	28
Public School Employee Board Meeting	30

December

Silent Auction &

Detroit Office partners with DFT

On December 5, our Detroit office will again begin special-request PRIMS for the Detroit Federation of Teachers (DFT). CED staff **Joy Bartell** and **Chuck Simpson** will share responsibility for four special meetings at DFT's new office, located a mere two blocks from WDRA's Cadillac Place office. Additional meetings are scheduled for March 5 and 27, and May 7, 2007.

DFT is a teacher union that serves nearly 12,000 members. Our Detroit staff has conducted special DFT PRIMs for many years and enjoys a good working relationship with DFT staff. Our relationship with the union is vital because many times the union representative is the first point of contact for members seeking retirement information. DFT's financial analyst Patrick Falcusan schedules the PRIMs with our office; he is the person DFT members usually turn to with retirement related questions before they contact WDRA.

DFT gets the word out about retirement in other ways as well. The staff sends out meeting notices to each Detroit school notifying members of upcoming PRIMs. Because of this, DFT PRIMs consistently have very high attendance, even when held during Detroit Public Schools' winter and spring breaks. Meeting attendance usually averages around 90 participants.

The Holiday Tree has arrived! Be sure to take an angel or two and pick up a special gift for one of our sponsored youths. You can make their holiday special this year!

The WDRA/DFT connection also helps **Joy**, **Chuck**, and **Tawny Anderson** keep abreast of events that may affect the everyday operation of the Detroit office. For instance, during scheduled school breaks and/or periods of work stoppage, they

On the Horizon

- Deadline for WDRA Excellence Awards Nominations March 1, 2007
- Spring 2007 All Staff April 17, 2007

Quick Links

- ORS Member Website
- ORS Employer Website
- Policies and Procedures

Commonly Used Acronyms

AST	Application Support Team
BLA	Business Leadership Assembly *(Consists of the EPC, BPOs, and BPLs)*
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 *(Laurie, Phil, Tim, Anthony, and Kathy)*
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting

know to be well stocked with retirement application packets, publications and forms, and to expect increased walk-in traffic.

"Besides being excited about our PRIM meetings that carry us all around the state," said Joy, "we're also excited about our upcoming PRIMs with our partners a few blocks away."

Sounding Out

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 **Lisa Schmidt** shares her experiences with reengineering process mapping.

Mapping Application Processing, by Lisa Schmidt

When I was chosen to participate in the mapping process I really didn't think anything of it, but was glad to have a break from my normal, everyday job. It didn't occur to me to ask what mapping was or why were doing it. I was just going to show up and do what was necessary with no expectations.

On the first day, I found out we were going to flowchart the job I did, step by step, and identify what could be done better or be eliminated. Since I've always been the type of person who has taken up others on the request of offering suggestions, and since I've always had good responses from management when I do, I was ready to jump right in. Goodness knows there were changes needed.

Lisa Schmidt

But there was one sticking point. Someone wanted to eliminate a vital tool, our input data sheets (GASP). My first thought was "it'll never work and no one in Application Processing will buy this." My second thought was "wait, give it a chance."

As time wore on, and disagreements abounded, we were told that we weren't going to be left hanging without this vital tool. It could be replaced, but how? Ideas sprang forth, and we developed a way to make things work that everyone was happy with. Once staff training occurred, everyone seemed to like doing pre-apps a lot more because of the way we fixed it; the work flowed quicker and seemed to be more efficient. My coworkers bought it after all.

Now, as we work on close-outs and audits in mapping, the bugs are being worked out doing the next step of the process without the input data sheet, which was once so vital to our job. We're finding some stumbling blocks; however, yet again, everyone is combining thoughts and solutions in order to make it work well for all concerned.

For as much as I claim and try to be a positive thinker, I'm like everyone else who has a counterproductive thought on occasion. The key is catching yourself, stopping, and saying "Wait! Give it a chance," instead of moping around allowing awful thoughts to run your mind. I know that most of the time, in the end, everything works out for the best. I also know in the 10 years I've worked here no one has ever told me "no" to an idea. I've always been told one of two things "Let me look into it" or "Try it. See what happens. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work." I've come from organizations where "NO" has always been the first and final answer so I know how lucky we are to be a part of the process changes and not a victim of them.

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
WDRA	Workforce Development and Retirement Administration

Balanced Scorecard

[Click here to view the latest Balanced Scorecard.](#)

For as indifferent as I was in the beginning, my interest and attitude changed when I realized how fortunate I was to be chosen as a person who had valuable input in how to transform what exists now to what could be, in a near-perfect world. I realized how fortunate we all are to have management who listens. Lastly the mapping process was a great re-learning experience in opening my mind and letting ideas flow. The lesson was: Try it. If it doesn't work, it doesn't work. In my life so far, it's worked!

# New letterhead template available for 2-window envelopes

A new electronic Word template is now available to create letters that fit in the new two-window envelopes recently distributed.

As you may remember, with the implementation of Stage 3.2, Clarety letters were redesigned to fit in these new envelopes; additional letters and forms will be redesigned as part of Stage 3.3C. CED's **Rosemary Baker** developed the new template to make it easy for staff to create or convert letters they're currently using to the two-window letter format. "By taking these simple steps," says Rosemary, "you'll not only make our communications more consistent, you'll only have to stock one type of envelope in your office."

To access the template, open Word, go to File/New, and select the General tab from the Template window. Scroll down and double-click on *ORS 2-window letterhead.dot* and you'll have a letter format that will fit in the two-window envelope. The name and address block portion has fillable fields—just tab through the boxes to fill in the information. In the lower portion of the template you can compose your message and use the suggested closing or create one related to the content of your letter.

If you can't locate this template file from Word, your PC may not have the workgroup templates set up on it. Follow this procedure to connect to the workgroup templates. The template is located in the directory on the *Restrict on 'DMBors' (G:)* drive.
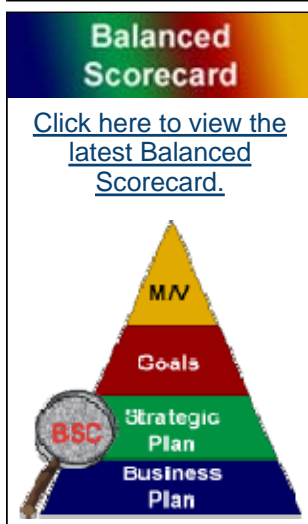
ORS receives Public Pension Standards Award

Dan Mackey of BPD announces that ORS has received the Public Pension Standards Award for fiscal year 2006. Dan comments, "We're pleased to have received this award every year since 2004. We will be including the certificate in our 2005-06 CAFRs [Comprehensive Annual Financial Report]."

The Public Pension Coordinating Council (PPCC) gives this award to those who meet professional standards for pension plan design and administration in six key areas: general benefits, funding, financial auditing, actuarial valuation, investment principles, and member communication. PPCC is a coalition of three national associations that, combined,

serve the retirement systems that provide pension coverage for nearly every state and local government employee in the United States. PPCC's standards are a benchmark by which all defined benefit public plans can be measured.

New server means new locations for folders

David Travis, End-User Computer Coordinator, announced this week that our data files will be moving to a new server the first weekend of December. His recent emails to staff provide information about which shared drives will be affected. What does this mean for you? It depends on where you store your work files on the shared drives and what shortcuts you've created to quickly locate frequently used files. As part of the server replacement personal folders will be moving as will some of the public folders, so you may have trouble finding your files and folders.

Before December 1st, you'll want to make sure that you backup any important files you have on the shared drives either to a CD or to your hard drive. Also delete any old files and folders that you're no longer using. Just like when you're organizing your office or your home, you want to get rid of the things you don't need so they're not taking up valuable room and cluttering up your space.

You'll also want to check to see where your GroupWise emails are being archived. If you archive them to one of the shared drives you'll want to change your archive location before December 1st and transfer your files to that new location (like your hard drive).

One of the benefits to moving to this new server is that our server won't slow down or crash when we reach the limit of our allocated space. However, if we exceed our allotted space, we will get charged for each extra gigabyte we use. So, as before, it's important to regularly review the files you have on our shared drives and burn or delete those you no longer need.

On Monday, December 4th, with the conversion complete, a DIT technician will be available from 8:00-10:00 to make sure you can log into your DMB logon screen and access your network drives.

If you have any questions about this project, please contact David at 322-6848.

'Tis the Season

The Holiday Tree is up in Crossroads, and decorated with gift tags! This year we're adopting 15 children from St. Vincent's home. Each tag has one requested item, ranging in cost from $1 to $50. If you wish to participate, select a tag from the tree and return the purchased gift, unwrapped with the tag attached. If you would like to receive a tax deduction receipt for your purchase, be sure to complete the information on the back of the gift tag.

Gifts should be placed under the tree before December 14.

If you have any questions please see your EMPAC representative:
Angela Bryan - CSC
Michele Childs - Director's Office/BPD
Sean Evans - CSC
Robert Glennon - CED
Alice Semevolos - Process Support
Suzanne Wright - SC / ER

Veterans recognized in November iDMB

Several veterans work among us and were recently acknowledged in the *iDMB* newsletter for their dedicated service. Do you know who they are? Check out the article on the DMB intranet. Log in at http://connect.michigan.gov, then click on the front cover of the November *iDMB*.

Too many interruptions?

It happens to us all—coworkers who pop their heads over a cubicle wall and say "Do you have a second?" In truth, the visit never really takes a second. Interruptions in a cubicle environment are a daily hazard. How can you stop interruptions when you need to?

Cubicles are great for encouraging collaboration and controlling building costs, but the downside is that "in person" interruptions greatly increase and are significantly harder to control. Consider that every time you are interrupted, you lose 5 to 10 minutes getting back to the level of concentration you were at prior to the interruption. Multiply that by the number of interruptions each day and you have a significant productivity loss.

Here are some ideas to politely let passers-by know you are engrossed in your work and don't want to be disturbed:

- Use a picture showing a person deep in thought, that when posted outside your cube means "Do Not Disturb." You can print a copy of this sign to use as well.
- Display flags that when lowered mean interruptions are okay and when raised mean no interruptions.
- Put caution tape across your doorway.
- Put up color-coded cards that represent different things: do not disturb, available, only if urgent, etc.
- Wear headphones when you need to concentrate and avoid distractions around you.
- Strategically locate an inbox outside your cubicle with sticky notes and a pen for leaving items and messages without interrupting.
- Post a small whiteboard with pen for messages outside your cubicle wall.

Another thought—avoid encouraging people to drop by and hang out. Some common pitfalls are keeping a candy jar on your desk, cartoons on your bulletin board, your chair facing the entrance to your cube.

No matter what solution you choose as an individual or team, make sure you communicate to your coworkers what the signs mean.

Taken in part from McGhee Productivity Solutions at http://mcgheeproductivity.com/index.html.

ORS Mission:
We deliver pensions,
related benefits, and

Get ready, get set, for Black Friday

You have planned your entry strategy. The final route has been discussed for more than a week. You've reviewed all the data, highlighted the most important areas of

focus, and have your team assembled. Now all you need to do is wait. It's almost here. Black Friday. You can smell the shopping success. You can almost taste the flavor of your victory over the Retail Merchant opponents!! Ready, set, SHOP!!!!

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!!

In recent years, the day after Thanksgiving has become renowned for its special deals and the lure of great holiday shopping bargains. But is it really the greatest shopping day of the year? Not always. In fact, according to retail sales figures compiled by ShopperTrak and reported by the International Council of Shopping Centers, the day after Thanksgiving has been the top shopping day only two of the last 13 years. The rest of the time, it's typically the last Saturday before Christmas that holds the greatest allure to American shoppers.

According to the International Council of Shopping Centers, the top sales shopping days for each of the last five years have been:

- 2005: Friday, November 25
- 2004: Saturday, December 18
- 2003: Friday, November 28
- 2002: Saturday, December 21
- 2001: Saturday, December 22

Because Christmas falls on Monday this year, it's very possible that Saturday, December 23 may top Black Friday. But for the best selection, get your ads lined up, decide which freebie or great bargain is the most important for you, and plan to burn off some Thanksgiving Day calories by running from store to store on Black Friday. Good luck!

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.