



February 11, 2011

Volume 15, Issue 3

[Email the LookOut Staff](#) [LookOut Archives](#)

- In This Issue...**
- Incentive successes - focus on CE
  - CS puts 21,805 customers on payroll!
  - ORS rallies to support DPS workers
  - ORS director makes international news
  - 2010 miAccount improvements
  - The ORS Staff Resource Tool needs you!
  - Business briefs
  - ORS retirees receive survey by email
  - Comings & Goings
  - Sounding Out
  - Green Scene

**Calendar**

**February**

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Valentine's Day                   | 14 |
| Spacewalk                         | 17 |
| President's Day                   | 21 |
| Business Meeting                  | 24 |
| All Staff Meeting suggestions due | 28 |

- On the Horizon**
- State Employees Board Meeting - March 4

## Incentive successes – focus on CE

Congratulations to everyone on the great success of last year's incentives. To wrap up the Incentive Successes *LookOut* series, we'll focus on Customer Education. If you want a recap on each process's key accomplishments during the state employees' incentive, follow the links below: [Employer Reporting](#), [Process Support](#), [Application Support Team](#), [Customer Service](#), [BPD/Director's Office/ING](#).

During last fall's incentive, CE partnered with each process to make sure accurate and timely information was delivered to our customers. Below are some of CE's efforts:

- **Customer walk-in service.** For seven weeks, CE took over the walk-in area, allowing CS staff to process public school incentive applications and respond to phone and Message Board inquiries. CE assisted 2,155 customers with questions, miAccount technical support, and the online application process.
- **Web updates.** CE kept ORS's online content up-to-date with the legislative changes in the FAQs, What's New, and in the regular web content.
- **Meetings for members.** CE presented 13 Incentive and Reform webinars and four Pension Planning webinars to 835 people. CE also held two Preretirement Information Meetings during the incentive period, but meeting attendance throughout the entire year more than doubled from 2009. This signals that state employees were curious about the possible incentive, and wanted information long before the bill was passed.
- **Letters to customers.** CE sent notification letters that described what the legislation was, and explained what members should do if they wished to take action.
- **Retirement Reform and Legislation summaries.** CE wrote summary documents about the new legislation and made these available to members and employers.
- **Vendor and customer checklists.** CE created checklists to help customers prepare for the miAccount application, and to make sure that they submitted all required documentation after applying for retirement.
- **Employer notifications.** CE notified Human Resource offices, Civil Service, and department directors of the new legislation, important dates to remember, and of how their departments would be affected because of retiring staff. CE also helped employers identify and report retirees who were granted extensions.
- **Publication control.** CE monitored our publications to make sure that we had enough and that they were revised as needed.

"I thought it was amazing how every CE staff member talked with pride when they reflected on their customer support role during the incentive," said **Connie Morse**,

- Public School Board Meeting - March 11
- Daylight Saving's Time begins - March 13
- St. Patrick's Day - March 17
- All Staff Meeting - April 12

BPL. "Typically their work is behind the scenes, but it came as no surprise to me when they delivered top-notch, face-to-face customer service."

Great job, CE!

## CS puts 21,805 customers on payroll!

All members who retired during the public school and state employee incentives are on payroll – 17,063 public school and 4,742 state employees total! We congratulate the tremendous feats of CS staff and everyone at ORS who helped accomplish this task. Give yourselves a giant pat on the back – great job!



| Quick Links |                                      |
|-------------|--------------------------------------|
| •           | <a href="#">ORS Member Website</a>   |
| •           | <a href="#">ORS Employer Website</a> |

| Commonly Used Acronyms |   |
|------------------------|---|
| AST                    | Application Support Team                                    |
| BLA                    | Business Leadership Assembly (EPC, BPOs, and BPLs)          |
| 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 (Phil, Laurie, Tim, and Anthony)  |
| EPO                    | Executive Process Owner                                     |
| ER                     | Employer Reporting  |
| FLB                    | Forms, Letters, and Barcode                                 |
| ORS                    | Office of Retirement Services                               |
| PRIM                   | Preretirement Information Meeting (public school employees) |
| PRO                    | Preretirement   |

## ORS rallies to support DPS workers

Last week, ORS learned that Detroit Public Schools is outsourcing nearly 800 custodial, building trades, and operating engineer positions, effective February 21. CE quickly developed a communication plan that includes:

- Holding an Open House at Cadillac Place in Detroit on February 15, from 10:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., for members to learn about their options, fill out forms, and ask questions.
- Sending letters to affected employees based on their status in the retirement system (eligible to retire, eligible with service credit purchase, vested, and not vested). These letters were mailed with brochures and supplemental information on Friday, February 9.
- Attending three union meetings for all affected workers to provide information.



The CE Assembly Line, with help from **Lynne Bemrose**, stuffs *Retirement Readiness* booklets and letters for DPS customers.

In less than twelve hours, CE wrote the letters and delivered them to Rapid Copy, Rapid Copy printed the letters and got them to Mail and Delivery Services (MADS), and MADS stuffed and mailed about 600 letters! CE also worked to stuff the final 200 envelopes in less than 15 minutes, just in time to make it into Friday's mail.

Because the affected members have difficult decisions to make in a short time frame, CE wanted to provide them information as soon as possible. CE achieved its goal and provided great customer service.

Kudos to **Amy Wheeler** and **April Long** for letting CE know what CS staff needed, **Jim Rademacher** for collecting and sorting customer data, ING employee **Lynne Bemrose** who helped stuff envelopes, and Rapid Copy and MADS for their speedy service. Great job, everyone.

## ORS director makes international news

On February 6, the London-based business newspaper *Financial Times (FT)* published a story that quoted ORS director **Phil Stoddard**. The article, "US Public Sector Schemes Adapt to Falling Asset Values," discusses the US public sector's trend to move away from defined benefit pensions, increase contributions, or reduce benefit levels to decrease cost and compensate for the recent decline in investment returns.



|     |  |
|-----|--|
|     | Orientation ( <i>state employees</i> ) |
| PS  | Process Support                        |
| SME | Subject Matter Expert                  |
| 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**



According to the article, only Michigan and Alaska currently have primary DC plans for their state government workers. And, although many states are introducing DC-only plans for their new hires, many have created hybrid plans like Michigan did for its public school employees hired on or after July 1 of last year.

Phil explained how the new Pension Plus plan will save money while still providing a modest benefit for its members.

“We took several steps to make the DB portion more conservative,” reports Michigan’s Mr. Stoddard. “The basic benefit is still 1.5 per cent of final pay multiplied by years of service, but now the earliest retirement age is 60, and the automatic cost of living increases are gone as well. It’s less expensive right away, and designed to remain less expensive, and be less volatile in terms of contributions.”

## 2010 miAccount improvements

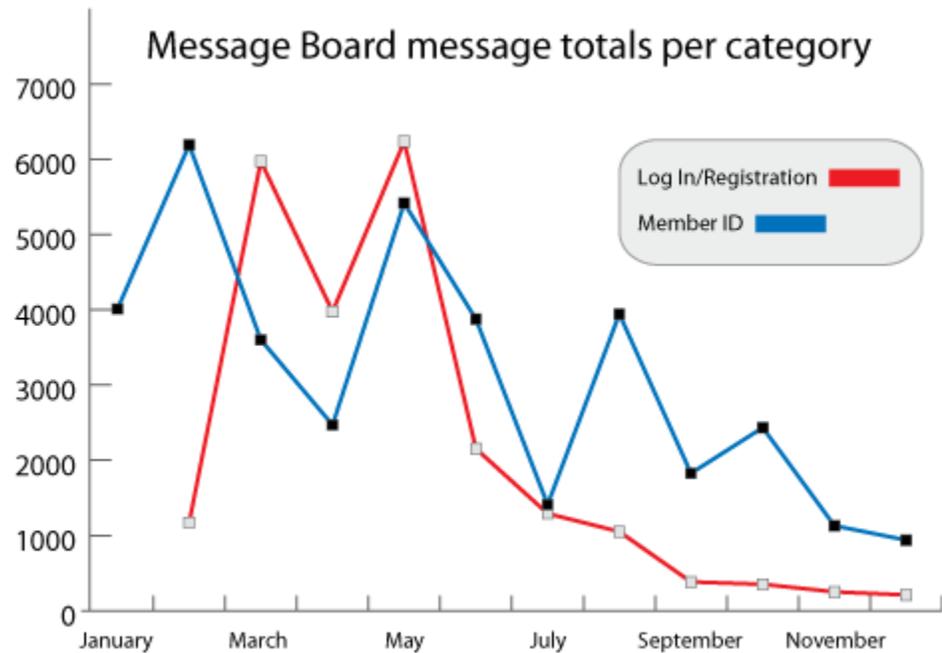
Many significant improvements were made to miAccount in 2010. While some changes were planned, others happened because of incentive requirements.

### Planned changes.

Last year’s planned enhancements focused on making it easier for members to access miAccount. The most helpful miAccount improvement was the updated password process, which involved four main changes:

- During the initial registration, a user no longer needs to leave miAccount, open an email, then copy and paste a temporary password to gain access.
- Because we are no longer emailing temporary passwords, PS created a welcome letter that notifies new users that their information was used to access miAccount.
- When users forget their user name or password, access is gained through an email that contains an embedded link, again eliminating the extra steps required to copy and paste a temporary password.
- If active or deferred members do not have their member IDs when registering, now they simply click a link and the letter is automatically generated and mailed.

We saw a significant decline in the corresponding Message Board categories due to these changes, as you’ll see from the graph below. The login process changed in late August when we pushed for all active state employees to register in miAccount, which explains the spike in Member ID inquiries.



#### Incentive changes.

The incentives and legislation affected the way miAccount would have to function. Therefore, AST and PS worked tirelessly to make these changes for our customers:

- The miAccount retirement application was customized to accommodate the new retirement rules the day the legislation was signed into law. Users were able to estimate their pension based on real time employment information and to select the incentive retirement options in the estimate and application.
- The Retirement Application Benefit Summary and the Retirement Checklist were added to the application process to help members send in correct documentation.
- New earnings limits were added for public school members who retire on or after July 1, 2010.
- Users are now able to check the status of their retirement applications online.
- The insurance pages are easier to navigate, and users are able to skip past the insurance pages if they indicate they do not want insurance.
- Public school users can enroll in an HMO and report additional insurance coverage.
- miAccount was programmed to accommodate the new Pension Plus members.
- Users have the ability to rescind a retirement application online.

We also expanded miAccount's operating hours to 5 a.m. to midnight, and fixed many browser compatibility issues.

PS is now working on enhancement plans for this year. Stay tuned for more information.

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## The ORS Staff Resource Tool needs you!

The [ORS Staff Resource Tool](#) is a database that maintains all ORS and AST staff information. This includes your cubical location, telephone number, responsibilities, and your picture. The resource is a self-managed tool, which means that you are responsible for updating your personal information.



A newly revised procedure, *Updating the Phone Resource Database* will guide you through the process. Please check the tool and make sure that your information is accurate. Consider making a desktop shortcut to the tool so you can find your ORS colleagues more easily.

## business briefs

### Spots available for MS Office 2010 training

There are still spots available for Microsoft Office 2010 training on Monday, February 14, and Tuesday, February 15. Training will be held in conference room T. To register for training, talk to your supervisor and sign up on the [MS Office training sheet](#), or call **David Travis** (322-6848) or **Kim Marton** (322-6071).

### All-staff suggestions due February 28

It's that time of year again — the spring All Staff Meeting is April 12! If you have any topic suggestions, please put your ideas in the coffee cans located at each printer station, or email **Pam Garver** or your process representative by Monday, February 28. The following people are representing each process in helping to plan the All Staff Meeting:

|                               |     |
|-------------------------------|-----|
| <b>Juren Ekwejunor-Etchie</b> | BPD |
| <b>Tony Mills</b>             | CE  |
| <b>Nicole Podgorski</b>       | CS  |
| <b>Katelyn Henika</b>         | ER  |
| <b>Martha Mackie</b>          | PS  |
| <b>Amita Das</b>              | AST |

### February 2011 *Retirement Times* will publish today

[Retirement Times](#) will be posted to the employer website later today. This newsletter is published a few times per year; it contains important information for public school reporting units, and plan-related information and tools employers can use to help prepare their employees for retirement.

### Don't forget the LookOut archives

The *LookOut* was first printed 14 years ago, and 5 years ago we began sending the newsletter electronically. It has always been an important source of business and personnel information at ORS. Did you know that there are almost 350 issues of the *LookOut* in an online, searchable archive? If you've never browsed the [LookOut archives](#), take a few moments to check it out.

## ORS retirees receive survey by email

Last week, 6,826 retiree surveys were delivered to members; about half of them were sent by email. Because this was the first time ORS used email to distribute this survey, we first wanted to check our retirees' internet use. We learned that:

- 29 percent of all ORS retirees are miAccount users.
- 72 percent of retired miAccount users prefer to be contacted by email.
- 40 percent of miAccount users are retirees.
- 43 percent of miAccount Message Board users are retirees.

We also looked at current research on older adults and the internet from U.S. Census data and the Pew Research Center. In many places, our numbers reflect national trends. About 42 percent of adults 65 or older use the



internet. Almost everyone in this group uses email, and 26 percent use it for other things like music, Facebook, Twitter, and message boards — that number is only three percent less than our number of miAccount retiree users.

The research also shows that internet use by older Americans keeps growing, especially in the Baby Boomer generation (ages 50-64). The number of Baby Boomers who did more than email online almost doubled from April 2009 to May 2010.

As the data suggests, emails and the miAccount Message Board will continue to be important ways to reach our retired members.

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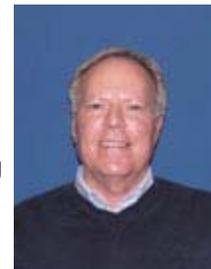
## Comings & Goings

Customer Service welcomed **Steve Cary**, **Tom Schwab**, and **Moctezuma Vanegas** in September.

Steve is a Lansing resident and a Central Michigan University graduate with a degree in business management. He previously worked in the call center for Michigan's Unemployment Insurance Agency (UIA). Steve enjoys spending time with his family and friends.



Also a former UIA employee, Tom brings with him over 17 years of experience as an environmental consultant. In addition, he and his wife spent time owning and operating a Biggby franchise. In his spare time, he enjoys playing golf in the summer and watching his 13-year-old daughter's sports.



Moctezuma, a Chicago native, graduated from University of Michigan in 2008 with a degree in Japanese language and studies. He has worked for Treasury's call center and enjoys spending time with his dog, Grizzly.



BPD welcomes health care consultant **Jawwad Baig** to their team. Prior to joining ORS, Jawwad pursued his passion for health care while working for a home health care agency. He is a University of Michigan graduate with a background in public policy. In his spare time, he plays basketball and collects diecast cars.



**Robin Keene's** last day with ORS is February 18. She is looking forward to "a new adventure," as she takes on a Financial Analyst position with the Department of Community Health.

**Angela Bryan** is moving on to explore new horizons with the customer service section of DTMB's Security and Emergency Management. Her last day with ORS will

be March 4.

CS staff continues to bid farewell to a number of temporary employees. We thank **Josh Grant** (January 28), **Denise Brownlee** (February 1), **Anthony Wallace** (February 1), **Cherelle Croffett** (February 3), **Jenaca Hobson** (February 4), **Chris Lane** (February 4), **Kristi Riley** (February 4), and **Gerald Bullard** (February 9) for their support.



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](mailto:ORS-LookOut@michigan.gov).

**Laurie Mitchell** tells about her recent time away from ORS when she was on loan to the Michigan Business One Stop.



Laurie Mitchell

**So, Laurie! Where've You Been???**

This is the question I get asked often now that I'm back at ORS. And the first answer that comes to mind is: "Well, it certainly wasn't Kansas!" But I've tapped my red shoes and returned home to great colleagues, customers, and work that makes a daily difference in people's lives. It's great to be home.

Last February, ORS loaned me to the Michigan Business One Stop as their Communications Manager. The One Stop is one of Governor Granholm's initiatives to simplify the steps for starting a business in Michigan. Primarily, it is a website ([michigan.gov/business](http://michigan.gov/business)) that prospective businesses can use to learn about their licenses, permits, fees, and other steps needed to get started. Once a business gets started in One Stop, the owner can continue to manage whatever business needs to be done with the state through the One Stop website. The team had built the website, but didn't have many users yet. They needed to get the word out and drum up business!

My role was to develop a communication plan and deliver it. Simple, right? During the year, I developed relationships with the small business development community, the chambers of commerce and a host of associations that support different business types and could spread the One Stop message to their members (and Facebook friends). I crossed the state several times demonstrating the One Stop to groups ranging from 5 people to 150 people. In addition, I wrote news articles, created brochures, rewrote much of our customer-directed instructions and worked closely with the development team to make application changes that businesses would like. I even had my first live radio interview!

Probably the most challenging part of the job was to work with agencies on their internal change management plans so when a business owner came to them through the One Stop, the customer would get excellent service. Change is hard for many people and I learned to listen, understand where the barriers to change were, and help people work through them. This was fun ... but tough!

This is a great chance to thank our leadership for giving me the opportunity to test my skills and build new ones. I return to you with a wider vision of our enterprise, stronger strategic and communication skills, and a deepened respect for what you do every day. It really is good to be home.

**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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Director: Phil Stoddard  
Edited by Customer Education



Thanks for reading!!



### **Message from the Green Team**

**Bring in your bags.** Please bring in your large plastic bags (like shopping or dry cleaning bags) to line our recycle bins. Your used bags make it possible to keep our area clean and help us easily remove the recyclables.

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**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.