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## Staff shows a heartfelt giving spirit!

Continuing our traditions from past years, staff again stepped up to the "plate" (the Giving Tree) and demonstrated the stuff we're made of. Through our connections with St. Vincent's Home, we "adopted" 15 children to bring a little Christmas cheer their way.

This year we provided 12 gifts each to 12 boys and 3 girls, for a resounding 180 gifts! Some of these kids live at St. Vincent's Home, while others are in foster care. Several of them will be moving out on their own within the year as they reach age 18, so they were looking ahead and asked for various household items they will need. If a specific requested item wasn't available, the individual was given a gift card to purchase it at a later time.



**Jessica Cain** and **Lauren Holten** prepare to deliver the gifts to St. Vincent's Home.

### Calendar

#### December

Christmas Holiday	23-26
New Years Holiday	30

#### January

New Years Day	1
Public School Employees Board Meeting	11
Martin Luther King Day	15
State Police Board Meeting	18
State Employees Board Meeting	25

### On the Horizon

- Deadline for WDRA Excellence Awards

The silent auction and bake sale, plus some generous donations, resulted in a total of \$633.32. Part of this money was used to purchase some more expensive gift items that had tags still left on the tree. The balance, over \$350, was presented to St. Vincent's for the kids to go out to dinner and a movie or participate in some other activity they otherwise wouldn't be able to enjoy.

Santa's delivery elves this year were **Angela Bryan**, **Jessica Cain**, **Fred Covert**, and **Lauren Holten**. With the help of **Christina Bishai**, **Jennifer Morrissey**, **Joyce Weber**, and **Suzanne Wright**, the gifts were loaded onto sleds (carts) and transported to the four waiting sleighs (4-wheeled vehicles) for delivery last week.

## Holiday Gala tops off the season

EMPAC did a great job planning and coordinating the annual Holiday Gala. Staff enjoyed a wonderful meal of turkey with all of the trimmings, a beautifully decorated setting, great conversations, and lovely Christmas carols strummed by **Jim Rademacher** and **Mike Sysak**.

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 ( <i>Consists of the EPC, BPOs, and BPLs</i> )
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 ( <i>Laurie, Phil, Tim, Anthony, and Kathy</i> )
EPO	Executive Process Owner
ER	Employer Reporting
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

### ***Did the Secret Santas keep their identities hidden?***

Secret Santas were actively at work behind the scenes this year coming up with interesting gifts for their 19 Santees (those getting the gifts) and finding a way to deliver their presents without being caught. This year EMPAC also shared in the fun by giving each Santee a special gift.

Secret Santas revealed their identities at the Holiday Gala by personally giving their Santee one final larger gift. Those who participated enjoyed both the excitement of covert giving and the anticipation of what special gift they'd receive each day. It proved to be another successful Secret Santa event and a great finish to a rewarding holiday experience!

Thank you EMPAC for all your hard work!



Click [here](#) to view the pictures from the holiday party and the basket auction.

## ***Online employer reporting - TDP Adjustments***

A recent enhancement to the online employer reporting program now allows school employers to process TDP adjustments. For periods after October 1, 2002, employers previously had to rely on ER staff to make any TDP adjustments. Now ER staff will only need to manually process those transactions before October 1, 2002.

The enhancement was announced to reporting units with step-by-step instructions added to the [online RIM](#) on December 14.

## ***So long, Sylvia***

WDRA reluctantly said farewell to **Sylvia Maat**, who will retire January 1, after 21 years of dedicated service. On December 13, staff gathered in Crossroads, which was filled with flowers, to wish her the best.

"It never fails," said **Joanne Masarik**, ER BPL. "Our surveys always come back with comments like, 'Thank God for Sylvia,' or 'Where would we be without Sylvia?'" In addition to the well-wishes and kind words, the EPC presented her with a certificate of appreciation and staff presented beautiful scrapbook pages, gift certificates, and a quilt.

Some of her fellow process workers teamed up to write and sing a song, "[Live from ER](#)," that illustrated her daily trials and tribulations at the office.

Sylvia looks forward to having free time to spend with her children and grandchildren and to help out in the community. She hopes to volunteer for the Community Assistance Program through her church, and work at the MSU gardens if time permits. And though she doesn't have specific travel plans yet, Sylvia is hoping to get out and see more of the world.



Above, Joanne Masarik congratulates Sylvia and presents her with a gift. Click [here](#) to view more pictures of Sylvia's retirement party.

T&T	Tools and Technology
WDRA	Workforce Development and Retirement Administration

Though we won't see Sylvia on a daily basis, the flower garden that graces the entrance of the GOB throughout the blooming season will remind us of her. Thanks, Sylvia, for your time and commitment to ER and WDRA, and we wish you the very best in your new adventures.



*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).*

Here **Elaine Scott** shares her experiences on the consolidation team.

## ***Creating the mission and vision statements*** ***by Elaine Scott***

This fall I volunteered to work on the Consolidation Team to develop a mission and vision statement. Our task was to review the answers to the questions that were proposed during the first step of the Strategic Plan meetings.

In the original ten meetings in October, ORS staff members answered some key questions.

- Who are our stakeholders?
- What services do we provide to each of our stakeholders?
- What services do we need to provide to our stakeholders five years from now?
- What can we do to better serve our stakeholders?



**Elaine Scott**

Before the first meeting of our consolidation team I remember thinking that this would be a nice break from my day-to-day job in the call center. This was my second year answering customer calls in the call center during the fall. The second year I found myself repeating some of the same things, over and over. "Yes, we have your retirement application." "Your insurance cards will arrive soon. Save your receipts if you have expenses before your insurance cards arrive." I was feeling a little disconnected and "routine" in my job. I liked the brainstorming work from the initial strategic plan meeting we all attended in October. I was ready for some time off the phones and working face to face with people who didn't need my help.

After the first few meetings of the consolidation team, I realized my work on the team would be more of a challenge than I had anticipated. Every 3 x 3 yellow post-it note that was contributed in the original 10 meetings had been saved for the consolidation process. My head was swimming in post-it notes. Understanding the content of each 3 x 3 tidbit of information, while a lofty goal at first, became the essential part of our work. As a team, we reviewed, compared, grouped and regrouped the comments written by WDRA staff in the brainstorming sessions. At night, I dreamt we were given a needle and thread and told to create a quilt using the 3 x 3 post-it notes. All the notes had to be used. No notes could be discarded. If we didn't know how to sew, we would take time for lessons. I was relieved when my post-it note dreams did not come true. I was amazed when the end result of our efforts as a team was a list of potential mission and vision statements that reflected the thoughts expressed on those 3 x 3 post-it notes.

I am by nature a word person. Writing down my own ideas is interesting and fun. Consolidating a collection of ideas from so many people and then working with a group to write potential mission and vision statements is challenging. So many thoughts, so many words, some words have more impact than others. Some words



have been overused so much they are in the Cliché Hall of Fame. As a team, we went on to propose potential mission and vision statements that reflected the major themes from the post-it note comments. Then WDRA employees voted to select our new mission and vision statements.

The process the team used to come up with potential mission and vision statements was challenging and exciting. We started with some ground rules for how we would operate. The ground rules boiled down to “everyone participates” and “be good to each other.” Even though I didn’t know all of the team members when I started, I felt safe expressing my opinion, offering suggestions. We brought our own perspectives about the work we do at WDRA. I found my own feelings about the work I do were changing. Finding new and innovative ways to deliver excellent customer service to all of our customers was a goal shared by more people than I had anticipated. I met some amazing people. We had some team members who had a lot to say, others who held back and would then offer little gems of thoughts that would move a bogged-down process along. I was pleased to work with a team of talented employees who share my commitment to the organization and our customers. In our meeting with the EPC where we presented our work for feedback, **Phil Stoddard** reminded me that WDRA is full of people, equally talented and committed.



**WDRA Mission:**  
We are a customer-focused organization that serves members and employees today and prepares them for tomorrow.

**WDRA Vision:**  
Empowering people for a successful today and a secure tomorrow.

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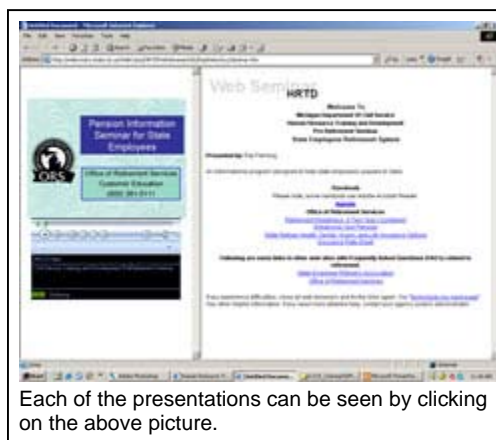
Thanks for reading!!

For a few days I got to think about where we are going. When the work of the consolidation team was done, I went back to my call center job. I felt reenergized, refocused and recommitted to my work on the phones with customers. My work world is much larger than the walls of my cubicle. My work world includes people I pass in the hall every day that I may not know by name but contribute to WDRA success, people I call to help me resolve problems for customers, people who create and deliver the tools I use to perform my job.

Thanks for the opportunity to renew and refocus.

## ***New state employees preretirement seminar video online***

In the fall of 2004, the entire Civil Service preretirement orientation (PRO) became available in streaming video on the Civil Service website. Recently a new version was filmed and updated online. Multiple topics are covered by a variety of presenters (ORS, CitiStreet, SSA, etc.) at a PRO. One enhancement to the new video is the ability to view only the presentation that interests you.



Each of the presentations can be seen by clicking on the above picture.

The presentations can be viewed under Training and Development at the Civil Service website at [www.michigan.gov/mdcs](http://www.michigan.gov/mdcs).

**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.