

LookOut

November 26, 2003

Volume 7, Issue 24

ORS Mission:

We deliver pensions, related benefits and services to promote the future financial security of our customers.

ORS Vision:

Fast, easy access to complete and accurate information and exceptional service.

ORS Calendar

November

Thanksgiving
Holiday 27th-28th

December

Pearl Harbor Day 7th
EMPAC Silent &
Basket Auctions 11th
Holiday Party 16th
State Employees
Board Meeting 18th
Christmas Holiday ... 24-26th

Customer Accounts pilots cordless headsets

Remember the days when the only type of telephone you used had a cord attached to the base? Now many of us have cordless phones in our homes and carry around a cell phone to stay accessible when we're away from home. But here at work, corded phones still rule.

That might change in the future.

Customer Accounts' Anne Watros is conducting a pilot test of a cordless headset to evaluate the value of "cutting the cord" and helping determine if the benefits offset the additional cost of using these types of phones.

The special resource staff members need to be available to assist their Customer Accounts coworkers in the call center. Resource folks typically have more years of experience dealing with out-of-the-ordinary customer questions and problem callers, which is why they have been selected to help share their knowledge with other call center staffers who are trying to respond to unusual customer inquiries.

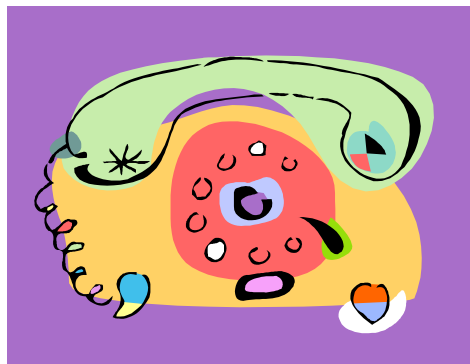
The number of people in Customer Accounts who answer the phones has grown substantially over the past year or two. As more staff have been added to the phone center the resource people have found themselves working farther and farther away from their cubicles. In

the past, this meant that they also had to aux out, thereby removing themselves from the phone queue.

Anne shared some of her personal experiences with the cordless headset she is

using. "When I'm using the cordless headset, I have greater freedom and flexibility. If someone needs my help, I can go over to that person's cubicle and help answer questions and still be available to take an incoming call."

"Similarly, if I need to verify for a customer that something has been received or is being processed or mailed, I can continue talking to that customer and answer other questions or concerns while I'm physically checking the status of the first



Headset

continued from page 1

inquiry. I don't have to put the customer on hold for several minutes to go check and return with the answer. I can stay in contact with the individual and provide enhanced customer services."

When Anne needs to walk to the fax machine to send something to a member or an employer, she's still accessible at a moment's notice to help the rest of the staff or to take an escalating call on her cordless headset. She can also keep taking calls from the queue even though she's not at her desk.

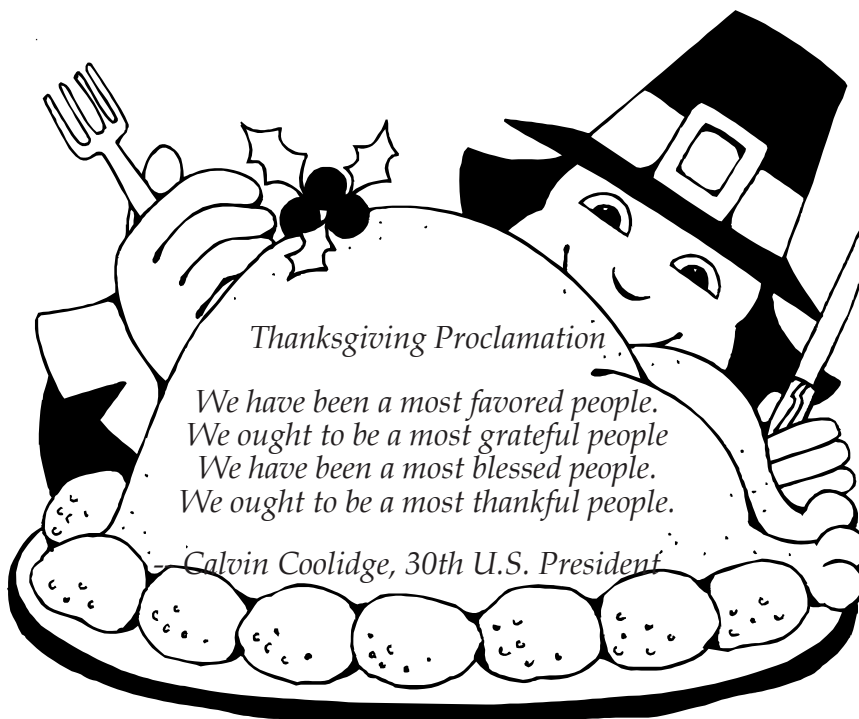
Jon Seeger, Business Process

Leader (BPL) of Customer Accounts, provides some insight into this pilot program. "We've seen in a few other organizations where call center supervisors and other resource people found remote headsets to be cost effective, so we set up this pilot program to test them in our environment. Anne has been testing for about four weeks now. While Anne is getting comfortable using the headset, we are exploring different ways that these wireless headsets could be incorporated into our work processes to provide greater efficiencies or better customer service.

"We will continue this pilot through December. Based in

part on Anne's evaluation and recommendations, we will then determine if this is worth pursuing," Jon explained. "Regardless of the end results of this pilot, we don't foresee cordless headsets replacing our regular phones for the majority of ORS staff – it would be cost-prohibitive to use these headsets for anyone other than individuals where accessibility is an important function of their jobs."

The cordless headset is another step to help meet ORS' vision of "exceptional service" by aiming to provide employees with the latest technology to perform their job both effectively *and* efficiently.



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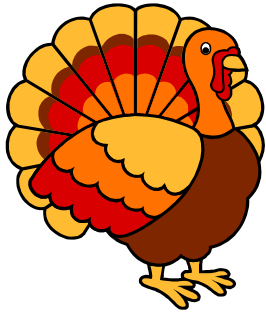
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Turkey tales



Last edition of the LookOut asked for your turkey tales and here is what coworkers had to say about memorable Thanksgivings past.

I'd been married all of 6 weeks and my new husband was very excited to invite his

family to our home for Thanksgiving!

Since we were newly married and I'd never cooked a turkey before, I sought advice from experienced cooks. I decided on an updated approach - putting the turkey in a brown paper grocery bag in the microwave. I was told the turkey would brown and remain very juicy. Well, as you can guess, this didn't work. With about 15 family members observing I revealed my ugly bird for all to see. The wings were so crisp they snapped off and the legs were crunchy right up to where they connected to the rest of the turkey. We've had many laughs over that bird - and I never cooked one in the microwave again! Advice to newlyweds - never volunteer to do a holiday dinner the first year - instead spend the time with another cook to see how they do it!

-Submitted by **Pam Ward**

My sister always loved to live in the heart of Detroit. In 1987 I convinced her to go to the Thanksgiving Day Parade on Woodward, a short walk from her apartment. I had wanted to go for years! I was always stuck watching it on TV and it was only a 10-minute drive from our house I grew up in.

I had gone to class the night before and went straight to my sister's place from school. I hadn't eaten dinner and thought we were going out. No such luck. It was late (about 9 pm) and I was starving. The only thing she had to eat in her bare fridge was a Stouffer's frozen spinach quiche that she let me have. That thing didn't fill me up. I went to bed hungry, woke up hungry to

no breakfast either!!

She had invited my brother, sister-in-law and their children to meet us at the parade. So there we all were - in the freezing cold, rainy, windy weather and me starving. As badly as I wanted to be at the parade I couldn't wait to go home. I don't remember anything about the parade because I couldn't see a whole lot behind the crowd and I was too focused on my hunger. Plus, being right on top of the parade made the floats way too big and you really couldn't take it all in. I was so glad when it was over!

That day taught me to sympathize with the starving people of the world. If I was that hungry for 18 hours, what would it be like for days? I've never taken a meal for granted again and I can't imagine going to bed hungry every night. I also realized how important it is to be with your family "just because." We didn't necessarily talk or interact but just being together and being able to say they were with me at the then-Hudson's Thanksgiving Day Parade in 1987 means something to me.

-Submitted by **Lisa Schmidt**

Share your knowledge

Have you taken a great training class that you would recommend to your coworkers?

If so, the LookOut wants to hear from you.

If you have taken a Civil Service class or other training offered by the state that you have found valuable, e-mail the [LookOut](#) staff and share your experience. Your e-mail should include the skills you learned from the class, who you feel would benefit from taking the class and why you enjoyed it.

If you don't have a favorite class, maybe you have a favorite instructor, if so, we would like to hear about that too. Let us know what you liked about that instructor or about the instructor's teaching style.

We will publish your comments in a future LookOut to help other ORS employees when enrolling in training classes.

Coming soon to a monitor screen near you

On November 6, members of the Project Team invited staff from Benefit Management and Customer Accounts to a special sneak preview.

The premiere took place not on a silver screen but on a monitor, and not in a theater but in a

conference training room. The production was not an original release, but a remake. And the audience also played roles as users, producers, and critics. The

show? Clarety 2—an improved version of the Retirement Processing Application (RPA). This tool, also known as “J Clarety,” is used by ORS staff to

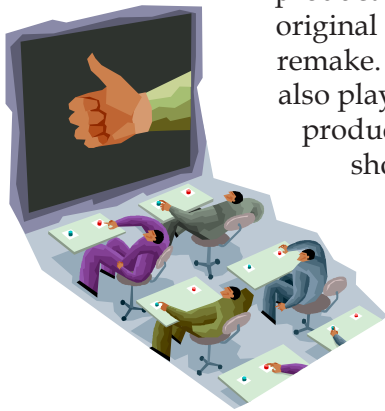
process information, calculate benefits, and manage workflow.

The screening demonstrated the new design and functionality of RPA and solicited feedback and suggestions from staff who use the application. Some of the planned features include hot keys, shortcuts, summary screens, customization, and less need to change screens to find what you need.

Initial reviews indicate a potential box office hit. Here are some of the audience comments:

“I’m excited about the changes that are coming. These are things staff have been asking for. It will make the system much easier to use.” — **Jon Seeger**

“It’s much more personalized and user-friendly. We’ll be able to personalize the screen to fit our individual job tasks.” — **Jeff Dumroese**



“The startup screen will have all the key info we need. We won’t have to do as much clicking and drilling down. We’ll be able to tell at a glance if there’s notes attached to the file, too. It’s going to be awesome!” — **Sandy Blommer**

“Wow! This just might be the light at the end of the tunnel. It’s going to be great.” — **Josey McCloud**

“I think staff are going to be pleased with the enhancements. The look and feel is much more user friendly. It’s a step in the right direction.” — **Mary Ann Vicini**



Norma Simon and Ginnie Gibson gather tags from the Adopt-A-Family tree.

Gift Basket Reminder

Just a reminder, EMPAC is accepting donations for the Winter Basket Auction as well as baked goods and donated items for the silent auction. Both take place on December 11 from 9:00-3:00. The proceeds from the baskets will go to EMPAC to help fund our fun-at-work activities. Funds raised from the silent auction and bake sale will be used to purchase L&L gift certificates for the Adopt-A-Family holiday dinners.

You can view a list of the items still needed to complete the baskets at:

<F:\Staff\SCHMIDT\Empac\Winter Basket Auction.doc>.

Construction update



Universal Buy-in (UBI) and Change of Information requests continue to headline the Road Crew work. At least an hour each day is spent completing the over 400 requests/day we are receiving. Customer Accounts staff can confidently tell all callers that their "bill is in the mail."



After completing the daily UBI and Change requests, the Crew moves on to reconciling retiree pensions against their wages. These reports take some 20 hours/report to reconcile and often result in pension adjustments. The Crew is more than halfway through this effort and hopes to be 80% complete before the Thanksgiving break.

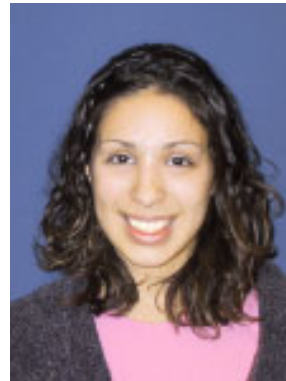


Thanks to some serious research by Employer Reporting folks, Human Resources Management Network (HRMN) record errors have been sorted by type and priority. In doing this, we found that some of them could be resolved programmatically. The Project Team was able to resolve over 7,800 errors, and procedures have been developed so the Road Crew can bulldoze the rest of these errors out of our way!



More kudos to the Project Team for resolving the program problems that prevented us from transferring state employees service into public school employees service. These transfers are hot because bills to buy this service need to be created to beat the 12/31/03 deadline. Staff in Customer Accounts are fast-tracking the analysis on these transfers, then handing them off to the Road Crew to key as quickly as possible.

Comings & Goings



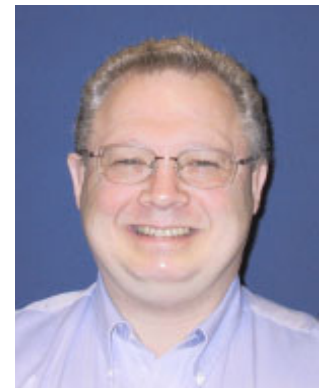
Melissa Flores

Melissa Flores joined the ORS Employer Reporting staff on November 12 as a student assistant. She attends Lansing Community College, and will transfer to Davenport as a Business Major next semester. Melissa has a four-year-old daughter named Natalia, and spending

time with her family is a priority.

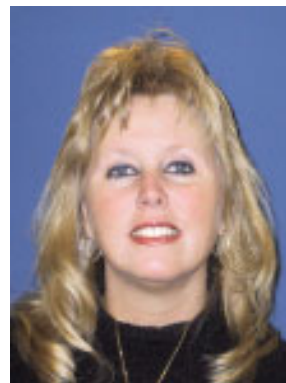
Daniel Terry and **Cheryl McKinch** came to us from CareerQuest on November 19 and are assisting in the Benefit Management area.

Dan has been involved in Computer Operations for most of his career. After spending some time living in earthquake



Dan Terry

country, Dan is glad to be back on terra firma. He is passionate about researching his family's genealogy.



Cheryl McKinch

Cheryl has three children, Cher, Dakota, and Taylor. She also has two grandsons, AJ and Jayson. She enjoys classic cars, Harley motorcycles, and her horses, Bint and Daisy.

ORS welcomes you aboard!