



LookOut

May 2, 2003

Volume 7, Issue 9

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

May

American Red Cross
Blood Drive 7th
State Employees Board
Meeting 15th
Judges Board Meeting ... 20th
Memorial Day 26th

June

Public School Employees
Board Meeting 12th
Pension Paydate 25th
State Employees Board
Meeting 26th

All-Staff Meeting brings fun and information

How well do you know your neighbor? Thanks to special programming on ORS Broadcasting last week, everyone had a chance to learn something new about their neighbor – whether it was something personal or something work-related – and get an update on the Vision ORS news front, all in an atmosphere of fun!

A new, lively Mr. Rogers, **Ed Helzerman**, brought **Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood** to ORS for this year's ORS All-Staff Meeting. The audience was prepared for a great time, thanks to free bags of popcorn for everyone.

Mr. Rogers welcomed ORS Director **Chris DeRose** who took a light-hearted video romp through ORS, checking out how our dedicated staff creatively solves problems.



Above: Mr. Rogers (Ed Helzerman) and Chris DeRose play along in a skit that opened the All-Staff Meeting.

Chris then turned to more serious business – the state of ORS. “We’ve done a lot of things to make this more of a neighborhood. We have the photo board in the Crossroads and we introduce people in the *LookOut* when they come on board, and flash their pictures on the screen during All-Staff Meetings.” Chris

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Travis announces birth of 40 new 21-inch monitors

On Monday, April 29, David Travis announced the birth of 40 new 21-inch monitors. The stork delivered each of the 67 pound, 4 ounce bundles of joy in the 1st floor closet.

Beginning Monday, May 5, the monitors will be delivered to their parents in ORS to help them see more information on their screen within the new software applications.



All-Staff

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took a few minutes to introduce our new neighbors that have moved in since the last All-Staff Meeting.

Chris shared welcome news that he returns to ORS full time as of this week, and he thanked **Laurie Hill, Phil Stoddard**, and all of the Business Process Leaders and Owners (BPLs and BPOs) for stepping up in his absence.

During his time on special assignment as Deputy Director of DMB, Chris had an opportunity to work a little with **Governor Granholm**. These are his impressions of her from his interactions:

- "She is *inclusive* - she includes people in the decisions; she wants to know what people think; and she expects a lot from everybody.
- "She cares about employees.
- "She's in a very tough spot.
- "Her e-mails and overtures



Above: Ben Louagie and Phil Stoddard played the Blues Brothers (Blue Cross and Blue Shield) in one of the videos shown at the All-Staff meeting.

are genuine." Chris reinforced this by reading an excerpt from one of her recent e-mail messages to state employees.

Chris turned next to our new DMB Director, **Mitch Irwin**. "He's one of the most down-to-earth people I've ever met, and very likeable," Chris commented. ORS staff got to meet Mitch Irwin and Deputy Director **Phyllis Mellon** during a walking tour of ORS on May 1.

Mitch's background is ideally suited to his position in DMB. Besides serving 12 years as a state senator, Mitch has been developing land and hotel projects for the private sector for the past 12 years. Chris reminded us, "A good part of what DMB does has to do with land, real estate, and development."

While serving as acting deputy director, Chris worked a frenetic pace to help orient Mitch to DMB operations. Chris also helped identify the reductions that needed to take place across



Above: Connie Morse greets DMB Director Mitch Irwin while Laurie Mitchell looks on. Mitch, DMB Deputy Director Phyllis Mellon, and DMB Communications Director Michael Shore visited ORS on May 1.

the state - e.g., cars, cell phones, literally *every* contract with the state. He also took part in hiring new leaders within DMB, including Phyllis Mellon.

During this time, ORS reached an important juncture in Vision ORS. "I knew we had the organization and neighborhood to handle anything that might come long, but I don't pretend to know what you've experienced or are experiencing. Let me just throw out some words and see if some of them characterize some of the things that you're feeling or hearing:

Frustration, tears, hysterical laughter, anger, excitement, relief, and surprise (in some ways not good surprise and in some ways there's actually been some positive surprise) were all feelings that staff agreed they had been experiencing.

Chris continued, "As we set this project up, we took the best

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All-Staff

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lessons we could learn from other large systems implementations. We built the best team possible, from the project managers that are with us from the Department of Information Technology, to the specific Business Process Owners who are on the team – these folks are working on the project full time – to the staff from the Department of Information Technology who have been assisting us and who will continue to support these new systems for us, to the Business Process Leaders, supervisors, and to each one of you – we had the right team in place. We also have one of the best vendors in the industry. We have sponsorship from the leadership – from me all the way down – on how important this was. We structured the project in such a way that it is going to be a success.”

Chris realizes that regardless of these efforts, there may still be some bumpy times, and we’re going through some of those right now. He again expressed his appreciation of the efforts staff has taken to help others and come up with clever workarounds to take care of problems until the issues can be fully resolved.

“This project has been much like a journey,” explains Chris. “There have been some sunny days that we love; and we have certainly had our surprises. We’re getting near to the end – maybe not on the schedule originally envisioned, or in the way it was planned, but that’s the nature of life and the nature of projects. We’re going to get to our Vision. I know we will.”

Then Chris issued a challenge. “Continue to find ways to help each other,” he said. “That is what has distinguished this organization from any other organization that I have ever been in – that people reach out and help each other. I would also ask you not to look at what we’re going through right now as the totality of our existence. Focus on what you can fix or improve *now, today*, not the larger issue. What is it that you can fix this minute, with this problem, with this person, and then move on.”

Chris then proceeded to reflect on ORS’ 2002 accomplishments as shown on the display boards



Above: John Seeger, Steve Eckert and Joyce Weber bust some moves in the I-will-survive video shown at the All-Staff Meeting.

around the room and in the printed accomplishments document. This year only limited quantities of the printed document were produced in light of the budget constraints, so copies of it are available in Central Perk for staff to read.

Chris took a few minutes to provide some long overdue recognition to the Space Renovation Team composed of **Ann Beach, Laurie Hill, Terry Jacobson, Meg Leonard, and Linda Reznick**. Each was presented with a special certificate created from the old orange carpet salvaged from our former workspace.

The meeting continued with a Who’s Your Neighbor game show, hosted by **Fred Covert**, where participants were able to learn lots of interesting tidbits about their neighbors.

The meeting wrapped up with a series of questions that were submitted before to the meeting, with Chris responding, followed by a period of open questions and answers. All of these will be published and distributed to staff within the next few weeks.

Thanks go out to the following folks involved in the production of this year’s All-Staff Meeting:

Customer Accounts - **Sandy Blommer and Josefina McCloud**

Customer Education - **Charmain Collings, Fred Covert, Robert Glennon, Connie Morse, and Angela Schrauben**

Plan, Design, and Deployment - **Fred Doll**

Benefit Management - **Lisa Kalchik**

Process Support - **Lisa Schmidt**

Employer Reporting - **Peggy Shinn**

Communication aids introduced

"Employees are persistent in their belief that information affecting them and their customers is not shared early, often, honestly, and completely."

This statement summarizes results from several DMB-wide employee surveys over the past few years. And truth be told, many of us have said – and heard – this lament: "Why didn't anyone tell me? If only I'd known ..."

To help remedy communication gaps within ORS, two tools have been developed to help those with information (a *message*) decide who the information should be shared with (the *audience*), and how best to communicate the information (the *medium*).

Communication Request for Services

The first tool, the Communication Request for Services, is a reintroduction of one piloted over a year ago. It can be used by anyone in ORS who needs support from Customer Education for internal messages or external communication with our customers. The form provides a helpful checklist of audiences to think about, along with reminders of the various electronic, print, and broadcast media available to you. A supply of the new form and a box to drop off your request are just outside the Customer Education pod.

Communication Checklist

The second tool, the Communication Checklist, helps anyone with a message decide who should receive the message and the best way of communicating, depending on its urgency and importance as well as the action expected of the receiver. Like the Communication Request for Services, this tool suggests various media available for communicating your message. The Communication Checklist has been distributed to all supervisory and managerial staff for use whenever there is information to share but Customer Education services aren't required.

"In the Loop"

No tool will improve communication unless we all get in the habit of thinking, whenever we hear a new piece of information, "Should anyone else hear this?" Forgetting about who should be "in the loop" can be costly to an organization and frustrating to its professionals – especially in an environment of change. It takes practice, but if every ORS employee thinks this way and uses these new tools, we'll be better equipped to serve our customers (and we'll be happier, to boot).

ORS celebrates Bring your child to work day



Twenty-three children visited ORS to participate in Bring Your Child to Work Day. The national event provides young people with an opportunity to learn and dream about all the wonderful careers available to them. The children received a tour of ORS, watched the hilarious videos from the All-Staff Meeting, and learned a little about what their parents do at work. Thanks to all who participated and to **Ann Schneider** and **Lisa Naccarato** for their planning and hard work that made this event a success.

Left: David Hoppe pauses for a photo with his son Brandon Williams

SPOTLIGHT

on Judy McLean



Hippity hoppity Judy is on her way!

Every Easter since 1990 **Judy McLean** hosts an Easter egg hunt at her house for family and friends. While all of the hunting excitement only lasts about 30 minutes, the planning starts months in advance. Judy says, "It's a lot of fun planning the event, preparing each of the eggs and then hiding them around the yard. It's a great time for family and friends to get together, and the kids have a really great time!"

Judy sends out personal invitations to each child a few weeks before the event, decorates well over 100 eggs (some plastic, some wooden, and some real), and carefully hides each of them around the outside of her house.

All ages are invited to participate. The only requirements are that the hunter is old enough to walk, and young enough that an Easter Egg Hunt isn't silly. Attendance at the annual event has ranged from six to 32 children.

Fred Covert, a long time friend and coworker, has encouraged his children to participate for many years. **Ashleigh Covert**, Fred Covert's 12-year old daughter, stated that she would now like to help fill the plastic eggs (so she can still get the candy) but thinks she is too old to hunt.

The plastic eggs are each filled with a special treasure for the discoverer. Treasures include small toys, stickers, rub on tattoos, bracelets, pinwheels, and candy. Every participant gets a small stuffed bunny and a wooden egg, hand decorated by Judy with the year painted on the bottom. Children who return every year wind up with quite a collection.

At this year's event, Jessie, Judy's youngest niece (age 2) found a pinwheel during the hunt and said, "Look Aunt Judy, I found a blower!"

Policies and procedures continue to be made user-friendly

"If we want policies and procedures to be used in this office, they need to be in a format people can access easily and find what they want to know quickly." This comment is from **Lisa Schmidt**, the ORS policy and procedure coordinator, who has been working the last several months trying to do just that.

Here are the most recent changes.

- The index of procedures, once a long document in division/numeric order is now set up with links according to process or job type. Instead of searching by key word you can look at the link options such as "EDROs" or "Early Retirement," click on the link and be placed in the section that includes all procedures specific to that process or job. Each procedure is linked to the Adobe Acrobat version of the document for instant access.
- The g:\pol_proc\Adobe Documents for viewing directory is being divided into processes and then subdivided into job types instead of just document titles.
- Procedures with multiple tasks are being broken down into several procedures. For example, the Training Registration procedure (ORS49) is now several procedures, each specific to the various training options.

"I saw a need to do this based on my coworkers kindly implying 'tell me what I need to know plainly and simply.' No one has the time to analyze a 10-page procedure. I continue to get good ideas from the people who use procedures, and I am open to suggestions for further change," Lisa explained.

Coming soon will be a joint work effort with each business process to eliminate obsolete procedures, identify needs for new ones, and work on updating existing ones. Lisa warns this is still a work-in-progress and probably will be for a while, so your patience is appreciated. Stay tuned for further updates!

New Tracker is a success!

On April 22, Process Support unveiled a new file tracking system, affectionately called the Tracker. Our ORS Man On The Street (MOTS) spent some time chatting with **Mary Sheltraw** who was heavily involved with the new Tracker. This is her story.

MOTS: For those of us who don't use the Tracker, what is it? What does it do?



Mary Sheltraw

Mary: The Tracker helps us keep track of more than 70,000 paper files here in ORS. Soon it will help us track microfilm too. The documents are original documents, some dating back to 1987, and in some cases the only copies of documents we have on file for these members.

MOTS: What's new about this new Tracker?

Mary: One of the great things is that it now keeps an unlimited history of where each file has been. It tracks who had the file, when it was moved, and the date and time it was received. The previous Tracker only kept track of the last five places the file had been.

MOTS: Anything else?

Mary: Yes, it's a lot faster and easier to use. The old Tracker would only let us search by social



MOTS
(Man On The Street)

security number. The new Tracker allows us to search by social security number, first name, last name, date the file entered the system, its location, the retirement system, payroll date, effective date of retirement, and the ORS staff member's name who has the file. Originally it would take about 25-30 seconds to look up a file on the old Tracker. With the new Tracker, we can look up a file in about five seconds!

MOTS: I understand you were quite involved with the design of the new Tracker. What was that like?

Mary: Well, we started talking about the new Tracker last fall. At first I had my doubts about the whole thing. I wasn't sure we'd be able to come up with something that was even halfway acceptable. The Tracker is not something that is used in every office environment. So we were working with programmers who, at first, didn't have a clear understanding of what we really wanted or needed. After a few months of working with them, things finally started to make sense and fall into place. Now we have a new Tracker that is just terrific!

MOTS: That's great. It sounds like you really enjoy this new Tracker.

Mary: Yes! However, with implementing any type of new technology, there are a few bugs still to be worked out. But, overall, I think the new Tracker is fantastic. Kudos to the folks from the Department of Information Technology and Covansys who helped us build the new Tracker! It makes our work a whole lot faster and easier!!!!

Earth Day

Congratulations to the Earth Day winners. Contestants were asked to guess the number of pop can tabs in a recyclable jar. There were 914 tabs in the jar.

In first place: **Janet Darling** (guess 896)

In second place: **Ann Schneider** (guess 938)

In third place: **Fred Doll** (guess 1024)

Thanks for all the participation and please remember to recycle!



Left: Avid recycler Janet Darling (note the bag of styrofoam ready to go home with her) won top prize in the Earth Day pop tab guess contest.