

ORS Look Out

Year 2000



112 Days

September 10, 1999

Volume 3, Issue 4

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.

Cross-training efforts underway

Have you noticed the "Detour" signs between Conference Rooms M and N and wonder what was going on? Cross-training of Claims Processing staff has begun to provide all Claims Processors with the skills they need to handle every aspect of the retirement application process from beginning to end for all four retirement systems. This effort will help to further unify staff as all work towards the same goals - quality service to *all* ORS customers, regardless of their retirement system.

Mary Ann Vicini, Claims Processing Manager, shares the details of this

training program. "Each training group consists of six staff members who have been taken out of the work distribution for a month so they can focus all of their attention to learning these new tasks.

"The training is very comprehensive and covers every aspect of the work they need to do on a day-to-day basis. Topic areas covered in the training include service credit, eligibility, final average compensation, estimates, handling correspondence, code sheets, benefits processing, set-ups, and close-outs.

See Cross-training on Page 5

ORS Calendar

September

Public School Employees

Board Meeting ----- 17th

Pension Paydate ----- 25th

All Staff Meeting ----- 30th

October

State Employees Board

Meeting ----- 7th

U of M/MSU Day ----- 8th

Public School Employees

Board Meeting ----- 15th

State Police Board

Meeting ----- 21st

Pension Paydate ----- 23rd

Halloween Party ----- 29th

Enhanced Internet estimator coming soon!

Did you know you could get an estimate of your State defined benefit pension on the Internet? The web-based estimator has been available for some time for State employees, but soon it will feature additional enhancements - like estimating disability benefits, death benefits, and early reduced benefits. The new estimator will also offer on-line help descriptions for most fields to make it more user-friendly.

Joanne Busley, Project Lead from ITR, explained why this project is so exciting. "We needed to update the old version of the State pension calculator to make it Y2K compliant, so while we were at it, we decided it was an ideal time to add features

which would be useful to a wider assortment of State employees. The additional options reach those Defined Benefit members who may qualify for something other than a regular retirement pension."

The site is scheduled to be functional in the next couple of weeks. We'll keep you updated about its kick-off date.

In the meantime, work continues on the new Internet pension benefit estimator for public school employees. This new estimator will take the place of XPEP, the site-based pension estimate program provided to Reporting Units. Plans are to have the new public school version done before the end of this year.

Spotlight on Office of Retirement Services Board members

Rudy W. Stefancik, M.D., Public School Employees Retirement System Board



Rudy W. Stefancik, M.D. Dr. Stefancik has enjoyed "being able to provide a voice on behalf of the hundreds of school boards and charter schools, universities, and community colleges that report to Michigan Public School Employees Retirement System," for the last year and a half.

Currently, Dr. Stefancik is a board-certified pathologist at Portage Health Systems in Hancock. He also serves as Medical Examiner for Houghton and Baraga Counties.

Dr. Stefancik serves on other boards including the Michigan State Medical Society, the Michigan Republican State Committee, the Hancock School Board, and the Michigan Doctors Political Action Committee. He is also a Hancock Rotarian with 11 years of perfect attendance, a past Grand Knight of the Hancock Knights of Columbus, and an adviser for the Alpha Phi Omega National Service Fraternity at Michigan Technological University.

For his service, Dr. Stefancik has received the Michigan Association of School Boards Award of Merit. "I really enjoy the people I've met through my service on our school board and on the MPSERS Board," he said.

Dr. Stefancik and his wife, Sue, have lived in Hancock for 11 years. In his spare time, Dr. Stefancik enjoys fishing and hunting. He is also interested in studying health care delivery.

Captain Marie L. Waalkes, State Police Retirement Board

This is Captain Waalkes' first year serving on the Board, representing Col. Michael Robinson, Director of the Department of State Police. So far, she enjoys the "ability and opportunity to learn more about our department's retirement system and become actively involved in decisions significantly affecting enlisted members of the Michigan State Police." She added, "Although I am fairly new to the board, I have enjoyed working with members of the Office of Retirement Services and look forward to a continual successful relationship as an active Board member."



Captain Marie L. Waalkes

For 22 years, Captain Waalkes has been a member of the Michigan State Police, and she currently holds the rank of Captain and Human Resources Director. Her responsibilities include Recruiting and Selection, Classification, Payroll, Labor Relations, and Disability Management. Captain Waalkes graduated from Michigan State University with a B.S. degree and earned her J.D. degree from

Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

Captain Waalkes also served on the Michigan State Police Association Hardship Fund, the Personnel Directors Council and the Michigan State Police Safety Committee. She is a member of the Michigan State Bar and the FBI National Academy of Associates, Central Michigan Law Enforcement Association, and the West Michigan Law Enforcement Association.

In her free time, Captain Waalkes enjoys "camping and sailing in the summer months and skiing in the winter."

Thought for the Day

If someone were to pay you ten cents for every kind word you ever spoke, and collect five cents for every unkind word, would you be rich or poor?

– Anonymous



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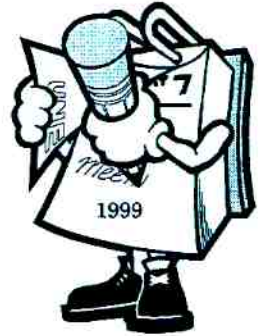
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Mark Your Calendars for Fun-at-Work!

As 1999 enters its last quarter, the Employee Action Committee (EMPAC) is hard at work planning ORS annual events, with extra fun thrown in.

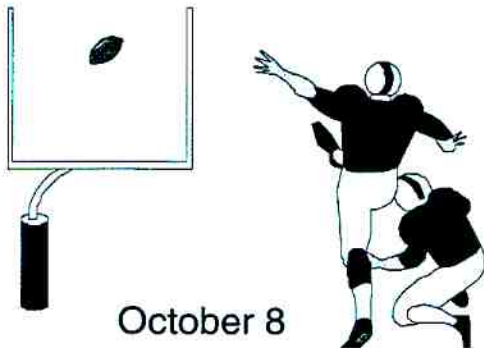
On Friday, October 8 we will celebrate the annual U of M / MSU rivalry with the usual decorations and wearing of the chosen school colors. EMPAC will be sponsoring a lunchtime tailgate party and punt, pass, and kick contest (alternate games will be planned in case of rain). Be true to your school, have a hot dog, and maybe win a prize!



Friday, October 29 is the third annual ORS Halloween Bash. EMPAC will provide a ghoulishly grotesque lunch and punch at noon. We are asking staff to bring a devilishly delicious dessert to share and scare. Start planning your costume to win first prize in the costume contest now!

Wednesday, December 15 we will celebrate the upcoming holidays with our Holiday Party in Mary's Café. We will again have an auction to benefit the Adopted Families. Since EMPAC is doing so well with the snack bars, we plan to use **all** the money raised for the Adopted Families.

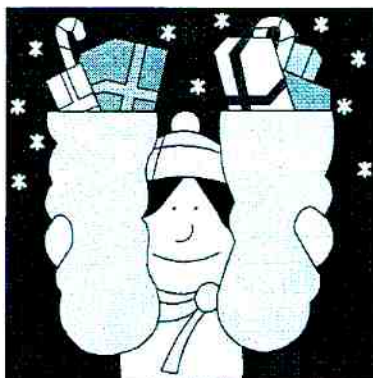
There you have it – the schedule of events! Keep your eyes and ears open for further details as each event gets closer. And don't be surprised if a little fun is thrown in between these events, because with EMPAC, when you least expect it, expect it!



October 8



October 29



December 15



January 1, 2000

It was Crazy Tops and Bottoms Day at ORS!!

Friday, August 27, ORS was energized by a number of staff who used their imaginations to make the first annual ORS Crazy Tops and Bottoms Day a success! We captured a few of these folks for your

viewing pleasure! Clockwise from below left, it's **Michael Zingsheim** from ITR; **Fred Doll** from CIC; **Joyce Buchanan** from ITR; and **Janet Graham, Mary Sheltraw**, and **Lisa Schmidt** from Finance and Administration.



Staff also identified what they've done this year to complete the ORS business picture. Following are some excerpts.

I helped with implementation of the diskette program for quarterly reports.

– Annette Ruiz

I got back \$1,300 owed from UPS for our office and re-engineered the Judges Supreme deposit.

– Al Juderjohn

I reengineered the telephone coordinator duties to eliminate redundant processes, apply technology creatively, eliminate unnecessary audits and save ORS money along the way!

– Lisa Schmidt

I come to work with a positive attitude every day and treat others with respect. I try always to keep an open mind.

– Michael Zingsheim

I was involved in the Orientation Manual and the Health and Safety program.

– Carol Keyes Baubie



I organized the Administrative Hearing process.

– Terry Jacobson

CPP is Y2K compliant, a new foundation is on its way, and ITR is nearly fully staffed.

– Fred Covert

I complied with all the deadlines given to report processing even when the deadline was shortened.

– Pat Jorae

I created the DMB Celebration video and tabloid.

– Matt Beha

I learned the Board mailing procedures for four Boards.

– Jaime Mosley

I have filled a void and am busy helping ORS to reach its goals. I am happy to be a part of the ORS team!

– Michelle Beckwith

I edited the Reporting Instruction Manual and the new versions of the Retirement Guidelines for both public school and State employees.

– Rosemary Baker

I'm always bringing a little ray of sunshine.

– Charla Clifford

Reporting Units will soon access data via the web

Public school Reporting Units will soon have the ability to access benefit plan information about their new employees, through the Internet rather than a telephone dial-up system. Now in the initial implementation stage, the new web site will allow Reporting Unit staff to enter their new employees' Social Security numbers to find out who participates in what retirement plan. This new web site is unique for ORS because it provides secure Internet access to specific member information by Reporting Units, using a designated ID and password.

Previously Reporting Units had to call the telephone dial-up system and use the telephone key pad to enter up to 10 employees' Social Security numbers per call. The new web site is designed to hold 10 Social Security numbers per page, with no limit on the number of pages. Information can be accessed quickly, in an easy-to-use format, which is especially beneficial for Reporting Units with large employee populations.

The current telephone dial-up system has been in place since January 1990 and is not Y2K compliant. The vendor who created it no longer provides support, so this was an ideal opportunity to replace it with current technology, through the web, and provide Reporting Units with improved access.

Reporting Units need to know the employees' retirement plan designations to determine if personal contributions are to be withheld from employee pay, and how much. By making it easier to identify the employee's correct plan initially, we anticipate more accurate withholding of contribu-

tions, which in turn, improves services to our members, and saves time correcting contribution withholding errors. Public school employees are either in the Basic Plan, which requires no employee contributions; the "Fixed" Member Investment Plan (MIP), where employees contribute a fixed percentage of wages; or the MIP "Graded" Plan which calls for a graduated contribution rate, depending on the amount of wages earned. And for retirees who return to work, no personal or school retirement contributions are sent to ORS.

The new web site is going live in mid-September and a select group of Reporting Units are part of the initial implementation. Later this month, we plan to provide access to business officials from all the Reporting Units. The telephone dial-up system will be continued until December, to provide the Reporting Units with a transition period from one to the other.

Our ORS customers will have improved service options thanks to the efforts of the following team members: Team leaders **James Anthony** from Information Technology Services Division (ITSD), **Carla Price** from Report Processing, and **Audrey Smith** from ITR; and team members **Chantele Geisenhaver**, **Pat Jorae**, **Annette Ruiz**, **Mary Picken**, **Lisa Naccarato**, **Sheila Patterson**, **Angela Sanborn**, and **Alice Semevolos** from ORS; **Bawa Harpreet**, **Srinivas Nidadavolu**, **John Knott**, **David Hobel**, **Danesh Manik**, **Dan Lamb**, **DeJin Chung**, **Sally Johnston**, **Donna Sivaraman**, and **Danesh Manik** from ITSD; and personnel from our participating "test schools."

Cross-Training

Continued from Page 1

"As each topic is wrapped up, each individual trainee meets with the trainer to do a self-evaluation of their comfort level in understanding the topic just covered. An assessment test in each area is also given at this time, requiring the trainees to apply their new knowledge to ten realistic examples. Upon evaluation, if areas are identified which still need extra attention, or if fewer than seven questions are answered correctly, additional training will be arranged to focus on the specific problem areas."

Tom Braun and **Cindy Nevins** have spent considerable time designing an innovative and interesting

training program for the 31 staff participants. Tom and Cindy have made sure they've added an element of fun to the training as well, like with their own special version of ORS Retirement Trivial Pursuit and other catchy techniques.

Once the trainees "pass" their training, they will begin using their new skills to process retirement applications. Auditors will review their work for about two months to make sure they're implementing the skills they've learned, and once they drop below a designated error rate, they will move from trainees to fully functional trained staff who are accountable for their own work.

Training is scheduled to run through mid-December. Best of luck in learning all these new skills!

Comings & Goings in ORS



Jennifer
Ashton

Jennifer Ashton has joined ORS as an accountant to work with the Defined Contribution/Deferred Compensation plans which are being transferred from Treasury to ORS as of October 1. Jennifer comes to ORS from Department of Treasury where she was an accountant for the Michigan Municipal Bond Authority.

Customer Service Division welcomes **Stephanie Buntin**, a new student assistant who will be assisting the Outreach staff. Stephanie is attending Lansing Community College and plans to go into elementary education.



Stephanie
Buntin



Nikki
DeMoya

Finance and Administration has added two new employees, **Nikki DeMoya** and **Tracy Thayer**. Nikki and Tracy work for the Advanced Temp Agency and will be working in the Report Processing Unit on a special project involving the State Employees Retirement System.



Tracy Thayer

Andrea Starmer has joined the Operations Division as the new Health Care Programs secretary. Andrea comes to ORS from the Adecco Temporary Agency. She will be working with Carrie Olger on Blue Cross/Blue Shield related issues.



Andrea
Starmer

Cartis Mandua's last day in Operations was September 3. She has accepted a position with the Department of Consumer and Industry Services.

Finance and Administration said farewell to **Don Miller** the middle of August. Don was assisting with some special projects for the Director's Office.

Barb Pawel from the Detroit Outreach Office, left ORS on September 6 to pursue other endeavors. Barb had been with the Retirement Office for 22 years.

Andy Wardach from Operations retired effective Friday, September 3.

Kudos missed: Last issue we neglected to recognize the contributions of **Nancy Quick** and her staff, as well as **Pam Kibby's**, in helping to set new records for processing Public School retirement applications.

Don't let the view distract you from this Scramble!

Your friendly Scramble editor just loves the great outdoors. In fact, while preparing for a recent camping trip he got in such a hurry that he ran through a screen door and strained himself. Because he likes to be outdoors, he got a job mowing a baseball field and became a diamond cutter. You'll shine when you solve this issue's Scramble. Ask your team members for help if you get stuck.

If you get stumped, check the unscrambled posters when they are put on display next week.

