

# ORS Look Out

Year 2000



448 Days

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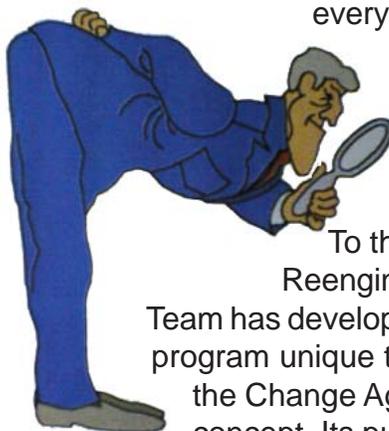
## Change Agent Training begins in ORS

ORS Director **Chris DeRose**'s approach to reengineering emphasizes the three "R's"—Reorganization, Reengineering and Retooling. The first, of course, has been accomplished with the melding of four retirement systems into the Office of Retirement Services. And Retooling, the upgrading of technology systems, is yet to come.

The present phase,

Reengineering, is involved in making sure that the work processes are as sensible and efficient as possible. It

involves training so everyone can contribute to reengineering.



To that end, the Reengineering Team has developed a program unique to ORS—the Change Agent concept. Its purpose is to reiterate reengineering

techniques and concepts, to present a format for proposing change, to formalize how suggestions will be handled, and to teach group problem solving.

Reengineering Team Members **Joanne Busley** and **Judy Simon** developed the Change Agent training and presented it to the ORS management team for feedback. Training kicked off last week with the first of two sessions for a group of 14,

**See Change Agent on Page 4**

## ORS reaches another Y2K milestone

Another major milestone was reached last week with the implementation of the Y2K-compliant Automated Retirement System (ARS). ARS is the Automated Retirement System which takes in all of the school reports. It is in this system that edits are performed and determinations made whether or not the information is accurate.

"**Carla Price** and her staff reviewed the production programs to validate they are in correct working order," says

**Audrey Smith** of the Information Technology and



Reengineering Division. "When they have decided that any one reporting unit's information is correct, they lock it. Finance and Administration staff then run balancing programs. When

**See Y2K Milestone on Page 6**

## **Public School board adopts health insurance initiatives**

The Public School Employees Retirement Board adopted three health insurance initiatives at its September 18th meeting following public review in July and August. The initiatives were designed to improve benefits for members and to help keep the plan affordable.

The first initiative raises the amount the plan will pay each year for dental coverage to \$900 in 1999 and \$1,000 in 2000. In addition, crowns placed on implanted teeth and materials used in periodontal tissue regeneration will now be covered effective January 1, 1999. A 10% copayment will be applied to diagnostic and preventative procedures beginning January 1, 2000.

And the Coordination of Benefits provision will be changed to match the Master Health Care Plan (MHCP) provision. Members with dual coverage will be allowed to decide whether to continue their secondary coverage.

The second initiative deals with the MHCP deductible, which will move from \$125 for an individual to \$145, and from \$250 for a family to \$290 in 1999. The respective deductibles will increase to \$165 and \$330 in 2000. This will help offset some of the very significant cost increases the plan is experiencing. In addition, the plan is currently administered such that if the deductible is not met during a year, then any amount paid as a deductible in the fourth

quarter is carried over to apply to the deductible for the next year. This so-called fourth quarter rule is contrary to the Board's policy and therefore will be eliminated January 1, 1999 so that there will be a true annual deductible.

The final initiative addresses physical therapy. For historical reasons, physical therapy has only been covered in a hospital, a hospital-based freestanding facility or a non-hospital-based freestanding facility.

Effective November 1, 1998, physical therapy will be covered in the offices of independent physical therapists (IPTs). This will give greater access to providers for members. Physician referrals and written treatment plans will still be required.

## **Customer Information Center rings up a record!**

A record 1,132 phone calls were received on Monday, September 28 by the ORS Customer Information Center (CIC).

What was the special occasion for the phone ringing off the hook? Days after checks are always busy—plus retirees are aware pension increases are coming up. Combine that with questions from many first time retirees and a growing interest about the Tax-Deferred Payment program from school employees and you have a new record.



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## *State Employees welcome UBI option*

On August 1, 1998, State employees became eligible to purchase Universal Buy-In (UBI) credit—and they have responded quickly. **Tim Simpson** is tracking the requests for these UBI billings. “Since August 1st, we have provided over 800 UBI billings to State employees,” reports Tim. “We’ve seen an overall increase in the volume of requests for service credit billings, and a large percentage of those are for the UBI. For example, since September 1st, 67% of all of our State employees’ requests are for UBI billings.”

Tim explains the appeal of the UBI credit. “For the first time, State employees can purchase additional service credit without tying it to any specific past employment or leave time. Some employees were never able to increase their service credit time, simply because they didn’t have any work or leave time which met the specific categories for approved service credit purchases. In addition, the UBI takes the place of several other types of service credit which were available before, but which required considerable paperwork to be completed before the employee could qualify. Sometimes it was a long,

involved process, and the cost for some of these other types of service credit isn’t any different than the cost for UBI.”

Now, to request a UBI billing, State employees don’t have to complete an application or request any documentation – they simply call ORS, and then decide how much time they want, or can afford, to purchase. As of September 30th, ORS has processed 116 UBI purchases. Most of the purchases were for “years” of credit rather than small increments, like months of credit.

Before UBI was available, about 25% of those requesting service credit billings actually purchased time, according to Tim. They had to invest a fair amount of their time, up front, to complete the application for the specific type of credit, and track down all of the documentation required to substantiate the credit.

So far, it appears about 11% of all those requesting billings actually purchase, but with UBI, it’s so easy to call and “get an idea of cost” without committing to a purchase.

Requests for purchases increased prior to October 1,

especially by those employees who are closer to retirement and wanted to increase their years of service credit using last year’s wages. (The cost of UBI is based on the previous fiscal year’s salary or income which changed with the beginning of the new State fiscal year, effective October 1, 1998.)

For ORS staff, having UBI credit available makes it easier to deal with service credit questions. If someone pursues the purchase of a specific type of service credit, but is unable to meet all of the criteria for it, staff can now offer UBI as an alternative. In addition, UBI can also be recommended to save employees extra paperwork required with some other types of service credit. With the UBI option, creating satisfied customers is now much easier.

### ***Thought for the Day***

**If the brightness on your screen is always at full intensity, you can’t tell what’s highlighted.**

**—Patricia Suelztz, IBM  
(On deciding what problems to tackle.)**

## Change Agent Training begins in ORS

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representing each division in ORS.

The Change Agent Trainers—**Cathleen Curran, Sue DeBor, Anthony Estelle, Robert Jackson, Terry Jacobson, Sara Mills, Mary Picken, Teresa Pilar, Lillie Wilson, Audrey Smith, William St. Amour, Kathy Tober, Patty Wethy** and **Ken Wright**—received their second training this week.

Joanne and Judy presented three of the nine reengineering concepts. The nine concepts are:

1. Build your process based on the rule, not the exception.
2. Identify and test assumptions.

3. Can sequential steps be performed simultaneously?
4. Apply technology creatively.
5. Eliminate unnecessary audits and reconciliations.
6. Eliminate hand-offs.
7. Identify and eliminate process redundancies.
8. Find your customers and learn what they want.
9. Consider whether the right person/organization is doing the job.

Now it is the responsibility of the 14 Change Agent Trainers to train the people in their divisions. The concepts will be presented in three modules—one module each month—for the next three months. Each module will be presented in two parts—Part 1) a session to explore three of

the nine concepts; Part 2) a brainstorming session to identify the areas that could be improved or that are problems and determine the best possible solutions for the issues identified.

Once training is completed in December, every team meeting will include an agenda item to address areas for improvement, problems and solutions to problems. This will allow teams to develop ideas and implement change.

Any recommendations from teams will go into the quarterly reengineering report, and Change Agents—those making suggestions that are implemented—will be featured in the newsletter.

## Connections *newsletter on its way to ORS retirees*

In March of this year ORS initiated the *Connections* newsletter to provide a new information link with our more than 155,000 retirees.

The first issue was sent out with the March warrants and EFT statements and, judging from the positive feedback we received, was a big hit with retirees. Since the plan was to send *Connections* twice a year, the second issue will be going

out with October warrants and EFT statements.

The newsletter will give retirees important information on EFTs and address changes, and urge them to find information on the ORS Web site.

Also going out with the October mailing are an insurance rate information sheet for retirees of the State Employees and State Police

systems, as well as an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) application to the retirees of all four systems who still receive warrants.

Incidentally, nearly 120,000 retirees now receive their monthly pension by EFT compared with slightly over 36,000 who still opt for a paper warrant. Maybe the EFT application will encourage more retirees to elect EFT.

## ***Fifty-two duffers enjoy ORS–ASD Golf Outing***

The Annual ORS–ASD Golf Outing was held at Ledge Meadows on Thursday, September 24th. Thirteen foursomes plus one beverage cart driver (**Anne Watros**) participated in the 18-hole event. “There

were a lot of ASD folks as well as ORS and a lot of spouses!” reports **Fred Covert**, chief organizer of the event.

First place went to the team of **Tim Droste, Tom Braun, Don**

**Dimitroff** and **Bill Motz**. Second place was nailed down by **Tom and Judy Therrian**, and **Fred and Julie Covert**. The team of **Tom Schaefer, Phil Stoddard, Barb Murphy** and **Tom Dimmer** came in third.

The banquet following the Golf Outing also served as the DMB Duffers League banquet: Steve and Bill Motz, Fred and Julie Covert, and Tom and Judy Therrian shared a three-way tie for first place in the league.



*Bill Motz, left, Tom Braun, Tim Droste and Don Dimitroff bask in the glory of first place at the annual ORS–ASD Golf Outing!*

Adds Fred, “We did something a little different this year for the outing. We asked everyone who was participating to consider donating items for door prizes. We had some wonderful door prizes donated and were able to keep the cost of the outing

lower. Usually we had to charge more in order to purchase door prizes. Several people made very nice donations, from golf balls, ball markers, T-shirts and coolers to a porcelain doll. It was great!”

## ***PC tips and shortcuts***

Have you wondered how to create a block of indented text, but couldn't figure out how to do it, other than using your TAB key to move the line of text over? There is an easier way – one where your text “wraps” within the paragraph even if you change the margins or the size of the text.

This paragraph demonstrates a hanging indent. The first

line of text goes all the way to the left margin. To create a hanging indent in Word, at the beginning of the paragraph, use your keyboard shortcut: Ctrl + t (If you need to undo the hanging indent, the shortcut is: Ctrl + shift + t).

As you type the text for the paragraph, just continue typing. The text will wrap

to the next line, which will automatically be indented. You don't need to use the TAB key. When you finish the paragraph text, press enter and you will be at the left margin, ready to type another hanging indent paragraph. If you want to turn off the hanging indent and return to a regular type of paragraph, press: Ctrl + shift + t to make the change.

## ORS reaches another Y2K milestone

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the ARS information is in balance, it is then updated to the Wang system where reconciliation programs are run. These provide billings and refunds to the schools.

“ARS is just one stepping stone to having the school employees’ history all Y2K-compliant,” Audrey explains. “After all edits are done on this platform, information will be transferred to the Wang Automated Retirement Management System (ARMS). ARS has four bridge

interfaces to deal with and three file conversions. Bridge interfaces are programs which take incoming data and change the format to either go to unremediated (non-Y2K-compliant) code or to remediated code. We have four bridges to take ARS remediated code and interface it to Wang unremediated code. When the Wang is Y2K compliant and implemented the bridges will be removed.

“ARS had three files that had their format expanded to include the century. These

files must be converted to the current system so the format in the current system will be the same. The files we have checked out appear to be in working order,” Audrey says.

“The first half of the ARS programs will be checked out as soon as we start receiving quarterly reports from the schools. On October 2nd, all wage and service programs were validated to be working correctly in production,” she says. “Any stand alone or on request programs will be checked as they come up.”

## Don't fall asleep solving this Scramble!

Your friendly Scramble editor had a strange dream the other night. He imagined that he was eating a giant marshmallow. And to compound the mystery, when he woke up his pillow was gone. Be that as it may, below is a mystery for you to solve—this issue's Scramble. There's a real kernel of truth to be found . . . if you can put the letters in the right order.

a meard si  
stuj a radem.

a aglo si a damer  
thiw a napl  
nad a neledadi.

Next Monday you can check your results when the unscrambled posters are displayed in ORS.

