



LookOut

October 6, 2000

Volume 4, Issue 6

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 October

ORS Tailgate Party Week
begins ----- 17th
State Police Board
Meeting ----- 19th
ORS Wellness Day ----- 25th
Pension Paydate ----- 25th
Public School Employees
Board Meeting ----- 26th
SECC Campaign ends - 30th

November

State Police Board
Meeting ----- 19th
Pension Paydate ----- 25th

Planning for renovation continues

As the space coordinators complete their programming surveys, you are seeing more and more dots appear throughout ORS. These brightly colored dots indicate the particular item they are on has been identified and logged to be considered in the space renovation.

All ORS staff are asked to check their own areas and see if they can find anything of significant size without a dot on it. Remember that individual offices were dotted once to include the whole office so don't identify anything within an individual office.

If you find an undotted item that you think should be dotted, e-mail Ann Beach with the item description (what it is) and location (include pillar number). Your help is appreciated!

This month a "bubble" diagram will be completed showing which processes need to be located near each other in the new office space.

Moves and renovations should begin sometime after the first of the year. Stay tuned to the *LookOut* for more information.

ORS' efforts to improve customer service are newsworthy

The *Greater Lansing Business Monthly* recently ran an article highlighting the improvements in customer service at ORS. A reprint of this article is included with this issue. Take a moment to read the article and find out how ORS is quickly fulfilling the vision of "Fast, easy access to complete and accurate information and exceptional service."



Office of Retirement Services—Removing Obstacles and Serving the Customer

Photo: Office of Retirement Services

ORS is committed to providing the highest quality customer service to our customers. We are currently in the process of renovating our office space to provide a more modern and efficient environment for our customers. We are also implementing new technology to streamline our processes and improve our service. We are committed to providing the highest quality customer service to our customers and we are confident that our renovation and technology investments will result in a more efficient and effective service environment for our customers.

Did you know... about COLAs?

At ORS the term COLA doesn't refer to a soda. Instead it refers to a Cost Of Living Adjustment (COLA).

Eligible pension recipients from Public School Employees, State Employees, and State Police Retirement Systems will see a COLA in their October pension payments. The retirement statutes provide for these increases, which accumulate, but are not compounded. Pension recipients must be retired one full year to be eligible. This year the retirement effective date must have been October 1, 1999, or earlier.

Applicable increase percentages and eligible recipient types are as follows:

Public School Retirees Increase: 3% (there is no maximum cap)

Eligibility:

- Member Investment Plan retirees OR
- Retirees with a retirement

except Duty Death and Duty Disability

State Police Retirees Increase: 2% with an annual maximum of \$500

Eligibility:

- all retirees are eligible

Retirement Cola

In most cases, Common Pension Payroll (CPP) will automatically calculate the increases. Accounts with active court

orders will be calculated manually.

Remember: For all three systems, this year the retirement effective date must have been October 1, 1999, or earlier.

effective date before February 1, 1987

State Employee Retirees Increase: 3% with an annual maximum of \$300

Eligibility:

- all retirees are eligible,

~ ~ ~ Thought for the Day ~ ~ ~

When asked why he was worth \$3,000 a day or \$1 million a year in salary, Charles M. Schwab responded, "I consider my ability to arouse enthusiasm among men the greatest asset I possess, and the way to develop the best that is in a man is by appreciation and encouragement, so I am anxious to praise but loath to find fault. If I like anything, I am hearty in my appreciation and lavish in my praise."

In a later interview, responding to a comparable question about his success, Schwab reiterated his conviction. "In my wide association in life, meeting with many and great men in various parts of the world," Schwab declared, "I have yet to find a man, however great or exalted his station, who did not work better and put forth greater effort under the spirit of approval than he would ever do under a spirit of criticism."



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SPOTLIGHT

on Mike Novak

by Marisa Nedock, Student Assistant



Mike Novak, Customer Outreach Retirement Analyst, joined the Peace Corps and traveled to the Philippines in 1976. This past July, 24 years later, Mike and his family

attended a reunion of Peace Corps volunteers and Peace Corps Language Instructors in Orlando, Florida.

In the Peace Corps Mike met his wife Salve, a language instructor for the Peace Corps. They were later married and came to the United States. Mike and Salve now have two daughters, Katrina, 17, and Michaelene, 14.

"It was a great experience to see friends from the Peace Corps and how much their lives have changed," Mike stated. "I was also glad to see my daughters make friends and learn from the other children with diverse backgrounds."

Joining the Peace Corps is something Mike had always wanted to do. In the Philippines, he helped create a program to disseminate health and nutrition information to the public. He used a popular medium at the time in the Philippines, which was comic books, to demonstrate health messages. These messages were used in 30 different dialects throughout the Philippines.

To learn more about the Peace Corps reunion you can visit the Balik Pilipinas' web site that Mike's daughter created at <http://www.geocities.com/balikipilipinas/>

PC Tips & Shortcuts

File Edit Search Help

With the arrival of your new computer you may have trouble finding the online phone list icon on your desktop. The following numbered steps should be followed to add the icon to your desktop.

1. In your icon tool bar there is a square with four multicolored boxes (not the one with the file folder). Right click on that box.
2. Choose "Customize."
3. Choose the "Buttons" tab.
4. Choose "Add File."
5. Under file name, type the following:
f:\admin\phonesgd.doc

6. Choose "Add."
7. This will add an icon that looks like a Word document (a piece of paper with a W on it). Hit "okay" to close.
8. Right click on the icon you just created. Choose "Properties."
9. Click on the "Shortcut" tab.
10. Click on "Change Icon."
11. Click on "Browse."
12. Choose the "nwizard" folder (not document) which is found to the very left of this screen and open it.



Some staff do not have the "nwizard" folder. If you do not, the proce-

sure ends here. Please leave your icon as the Word document icon and do not choose a different one.

13. Choose the "rch95" folder and open it.
Note: On some of the newer computers you may need to open the "Rcontr32" folder instead.
14. Double click on "rosnres.dll."
15. Scroll over to the telephone icon and click on it.
16. Click on "Okay."
17. Click on "Apply."
18. Click on "Okay" to close.

Comings and Goings in ORS

Welcome **Mike Katlin**, ORS' new Information Technology and Reengineering Division Director. Mike comes to us with years of experience in the project management, strategic planning, and technology fields. Mike's first day at ORS was Monday, September 25.



Mike Katlin

Suzi Luis' last day at ORS was Friday, September 15.

Denise Omo's last day at ORS was Friday, September 29. She accepted an accounting position with a school district in New Mexico.

Lori Powell's last day at ORS was Friday, September 22. She accepted a Trainer position within the DMB Office of Telecommunications.

Answer to last issue's Scramble

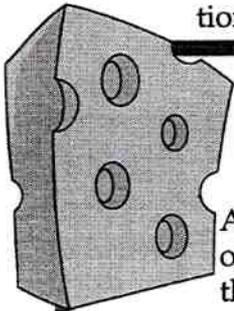


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- draxneela throckla

Attitudes are contagious. Is yours worth catching?

-Alexander Lockhart



The Cheese Corner

A recent story making its rounds on the Internet tells us the reason the boosters on the Space Shuttle can't be bigger is because of Roman Chariots.

That's not as far fetched as it might appear. It seems that a Roman chariot's wheels were spaced to accommodate two horses pulling it. The ruts in the dirt roads caused by chariots over 2,000 years ago resulted in wagon wheels being spaced the same width apart. That spacing was carried over when the first railroad tracks were constructed, and that's where the Space Shuttle comes in. Once the booster rockets are built they are shipped to Cape Canaveral by rail and, you guessed it, they have to be able to fit through a railway tunnel, which is just a few inches wider than the track.

So, what's the point we're making? Sometimes things are done because "that's the way they've always been done." But maybe the old way isn't always the best way. Take a look at the tasks you do and see if there might be an opportunity to change them for the better. See if you can get out of that same old chariot rut.

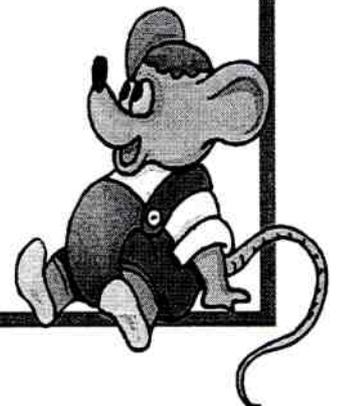
To help you look at things in a new way, try your hand at rearranging these brain teasers. The answers will appear in the next issue of the *LookOut*.

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Chris DeRose, director of Michigan's Office of Retirement Services.

Photo by Curtis Linton.

Office of Retirement Services—Removing Obstacles and Serving the Customer

by Amy Sands

Some may have doubted that Chris DeRose could make sweeping changes in the large government agency he runs, yet in just three years at the helm of the State of Michigan's Office of Retirement Services (ORS), efficiency has increased at astonishing levels. Individuals who receive their pensions from the State of Michigan are recognized as valuable customers who deserve excellent customer service.

"I joined the organization in 1997," said DeRose, director of ORS, a division of the Department of Management and Budget for the State of Michigan. "Part of the reason that I took on the challenge was I thought that if we were able to remove some of the obstacles that were in the way of people doing a good job, we'd be able to improve significantly what we were doing. It proves to have been right. We've really been able to make some significant improvements for our customers," he said.

The customers that DeRose refers to are 500,000 in number and are from four different areas. Those groups are public school employees, all state employees, judges in the state, and all state police officers, including those individuals currently employed in those positions and those who have retired.

"Our job is to provide them information on their retirement, help them when the time comes to retire, make sure that they get their check, make sure they get their money on time every month, help them with healthcare, address any problems or concerns they may have," said DeRose.

Several issues prompted the need for major changes at ORS. First, service levels at the center were less than desirable. At the same time, the Legislature passed an early retirement program and created a new Defined Contribution Retirement System. Finally, with the baby boom generation nearing retirement age, ORS expects a 40 percent increase in its workload by 2003.

"The biggest challenge that we have right now is that those folks that were born shortly after World War II are coming of



retirement age, and there are two challenges in there for us," said DeRose. "We are already seeing marked increases in the number of people that want to retire, increases in the phone calls and all the requests for information.

"The second part of the challenge is that most of the people that are getting ready to retire demand exceptional customer service. They are folks that compare us to Disney and Federal Express, or the State Employees Credit Union, or Fidelity Investments, and they expect that we provide that level of service to them," said DeRose.

The quality journey began with DeRose and his team envisioning an ideal organization. They did their best to determine what their customers wanted, analyzed the systems previously in use, and discovered ways to radically change (or reengineer) the way they do business.

"It was really daunting at the beginning," said DeRose. "What we found was, if you look at your processes, so you just know your business really well, you then reengineer them to make sure they are just as efficient as possible.

"Then you put really good people in charge of those processes. We have about 20 folks running 24 processes. Then you apply technology—that will be the last step. We really shouldn't have a significant problem handling that level of workload increase," said DeRose.

Reengineering is already paying off for ORS. One challenge for the organization involved handling the large volume of public school employees who wanted to retire July 1. Because of the typical school year calendar, the work of making sure people receive their first pension checks is not spread out over the year, but is concentrated at one time of year.

"We successfully put 3,045 people on payroll this month [July], which is a 50 percent increase over any other July 1 that we had ever done. We were just walking around congratulating everybody

involved. We knew we could get a 10 or 15 percent increase, but these folks really focused and came up with a 50 percent increase," said DeRose. "When you allow people to really focus on customer service and what the issues are, it's just amazing what they can accomplish."

DeRose is clearly impressed with the abilities of his staff and has found key ways to motivate them. A book entitled *Who Moved My Cheese?* by Spencer Johnson, MD, has been a helpful tool in talking about change in the ORS. Characters in the book move around a maze searching for the "cheese" to nourish and satisfy them. The parable shows how to deal with change successfully.

Colleagues in the ORS send each other "WOW" cards, complimenting one another on accomplishments. A monthly newsletter is distributed with a goal of keeping the 200+ employees informed.

"It [the newsletter] has been a very effective way to communicate with people," said DeRose. "We've learned that people like it and use it and read it. We've also learned that you can't just stop with this. People want that one-on-one, so we spend an awful lot of time with people."

DeRose also regularly schedules all-staff meetings, where they find an auditorium

and all 200 people get together and talk. They begin the meetings with a fun skit, and then move into more serious topics.

"Unless people understand where we're going and have ownership for what we're trying to accomplish, we'll never get there," said DeRose.

While DeRose concentrates his efforts on keeping his staff motivated, he can also easily express what keeps him enthused. "One is the people who work here. The most surprising but gratifying thing about coming to work here has been how much people care about each other and about the customer. I just draw a lot of energy and strength from these people," he said.

"The other thing is that I'm really tired of the negative perception people have of state employees in general, and the jokes you hear. It's just not my experience, and I think we're showing people what we can do, what State employees can do.

"We are making good use of taxpayer money and are providing excellent customer service, so that kind of drives me. It's fun to show and to talk to people about what's really possible. It's really fun to be in an environment where we're able to show what the public sector can do in terms of serving customers," said DeRose. ■