

Kent Connections



A Newsletter Published by Kent County Levy Court for its Employees

May 2005



Employee of the Month *Kathy Skinner*

The Kent County Employee Council has selected KATHLEEN M. "KATHY" SKINNER from the Department of Planning Services as the May 2005 Employee of the Month.

Kathy, a Kent County employee since September 2003, is a Secretary in the Division of Planning responsible for the monumental task of preparing detailed minutes from the Regional Planning Commission and the Board of Adjustment meetings that many times last into the early morning hours. She is also responsible for greeting and directing visitors in the office, answering and transferring incoming telephone calls, and responding to general inquiries from residents.

Kathy always handles her myriad of responsibilities with a gracious smile and an infectious sense of humor. Her upbeat demeanor makes her the perfect person to welcome citizens seeking planning and zoning information. She is especially adept at reaching out to the confused, angry, or lost customer.

Whenever Kathy is not transcribing minutes, answering the telephone, or greeting customers, she is the "go to" person in the office for information.

Congratulations Kathy on a job well done!

COMING NEXT MONTH:

- > *Final FY2006 budget figures—hopefully*
- > *Details on the annual employee appreciation picnic*
- > *Some engineering staff moves into WWF digs*

THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

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Kent Connections is published for the employees and retirees of Kent County Levy Court using Microsoft Publisher® & Microsoft PowerPoint®. Comments, suggestions and story ideas should be addressed to: Kent County Personnel Office, 555 Bay Road, Dover, DE 19901, or given to Allan Kujala, Sophie Dear, Cathleen McLean, or Carissa Zeiters. Or, call the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

County Complex opens house, as staff settles in

New security system activated

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

The big move to the new Kent County Administrative Complex at 555 Bay Road is complete and mostly without a hitch.

The Levy Court Commissioners, including two former Commissioners, officially cut the ribbon on the new home for Kent County government on April 19 and hosted a grand open house for the 100 or so dignitaries and guests in attendance. A Friends and Family Open House on April 22 was just as successful with close to two hundred relatives and residents taking the tour.

A few punch list items remain to be corrected in the building including some touch up painting and carpet repair, but the biggest project is expected to start the first week in May when all the exterior glass on the round Levy Court chambers is replaced. Last month, Levy Court agreed to settle a potential claim with the glass contractor at no cost to the County.

Apparently normal expansion of the glass supports was causing the curved glass to crack in some places. The solution approved by the Commissioners includes a full replacement with wire embedded glass. It is not expected to change the current look of the structure. The work will require one set of doors at the entrance to be locked and blocked for a short time during the replacement project.

The County's new security system, which when brought fully on line will be connected directly to the County's Emergency Communications Center (9-1-1), will be activated this month and staff members needing to enter the building on weekends, holidays or between midnight and 7 a.m. will be required to enter through the front door and disarm the system by entering a special code. Employees needing the code should contact the Personnel Office.

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Welcome to Kent County!



Name: KELLY BLANCHIES



Job: Secretary in the Sheriff's Office
Date hired: April 4, 2005
Education: B.A. in Political Science from the University of Delaware
What I like most about my new job: Everyone is so nice to work with
Greatest accomplishment: Graduating college
Greatest challenge or obstacle:

Remodeling my entire house

I'm most relaxed and happy when I'm doing this: Reading

Family: My parents, siblings, and grandparents all live in Delaware

Most recent movie enjoyed: Sahara

Favorite TV show: Law and Order

Favorite sport: Basketball

Favorite meal: Turkey, mashed potatoes with gravy, and strawberry pie

Favorite music: Alternative

Favorite saying or slogan: Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

Who has had the most impact on my life: All of my family

If I won a million dollars, I would: Travel

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Buy a house that needs a lot of work done to it

Words that describe me: Nice, quiet, easy-going

A Monthly Contest

A free movie ticket will be given to the first two employees who find the last four digits of his/her Social Security number in the current issue of Kent Connections and contacts the Personnel Office at 744-2310. STELLA PADILLA and KEITH POWELL in the Division of Wastewater Facilities found their numbers and claimed their movie tickets in April.

Remember Kent Connections is the County's primary source for communicating with its employees, so it is important to read it thoroughly each month. Besides, you could win tickets compliments of the Personnel Director. **1007** **1922**



EOM INSIGHT



Name: KATHY SKINNER

Job: Secretary, Planning Services

Years with the County: 1.75

Education: Graduated high school

What I like most about my job: The people I work with

Family: Husband, Jim; daughters Jessica (16), Jordan (13), Payton (9); son, Evan (3); and stepson, JT (14)

After work I enjoy: Being with my family and riding a motorcycle with my husband

Favorite old movie: Miss Congeniality

Favorite TV shows: Friends and American Idol

Favorite TV show as a child: Bugs Bunny

Favorite sport: Football – GO STEELERS!

Favorite meal: Filet mignon and lobster

Favorite music: Country

Favorite Kent County restaurant: Hibachi

Favorite Kent County event: NASCAR race

Three people (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Tim McGraw, Kenny Chesney, and my husband

I'm most proud of: How far I've come in my life

Pet peeve: Mean people

Motto: Live well, laugh often, love much.

If I've learned one thing in life, it's: Always do your best and don't let anyone hold you back.

A dream I have is to: Own a restaurant/bar

If I won a million dollars, I would: Pay bills, put in a pool, travel

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Hate scary movies

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: HAD KIDS!!

Three words that describe me: Fun, thoughtful, organized

Discount Movie Tickets

Discount movie tickets to Dover Mall's Carmike Theaters are available for sale in the Personnel Office.

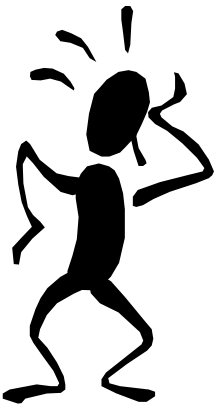
The discount tickets cost \$5.50 each and can be used at any scheduled time, but cannot be used during the first 14 days of any Sony® movie, but all other movie studios allows ticket use at any time.



Notice delays Levy Court budget action

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Although State law requires the County budget to be adopted by April 30th, it is an ordinance and as such a public hearing is required and must be properly advertised.



A timing mistake related to the move to the new Administrative Complex early last month prevented the budget hearing notice from being properly advertised, so the Levy Court Commissioners were obligated to postpone consideration until May 11.

The proposed Fiscal Year 2006 budget effective July 1, 2005 includes \$20.7 million for the general fund and \$12.8 million for the sewer fund (\$58.2 million total if 5-year capital budgets are included). About 31 percent of the anticipated revenues come from property taxes, another 31 percent various fees, about 7 percent from grants, and about 30 percent from other taxes—such as real estate transfer taxes.

The expected expenditures are committed to personnel related costs (61%), operating costs (18%), capital projects (7%), contingency (6%), service grants (3%), operating transfers (2%), debt service (2%), and open space preservation (1%).

The pending budget has incorporated a 3.5% cost of living adjustment pay increase for most employees in addition to the normal 2% step increase for effective performance and includes the addition of six new positions, reclassification of another four positions, and converting another nine positions from 35 hours per week to 40. Retirees will receive a 5% increase if the budget is approved as presented. The wage and benefits increases may not apply to some collective bargaining units.

The document incorporates an \$831,000 pension fund contribution, a \$370,000 post-retirement benefits fund contribution, as well as a 26% health insurance rate increase with a new 50% dependent cost sharing plan, and normal operating cost increases. No tax increase is proposed.

Administrative staff honored on special day Graham selected as "favorite"

By Carissa Zeiters, Personnel Technician II

Administrative Professionals Day, April 27, was an extra-special day for all members of Kent County's secretarial and clerical staff as each received a carnation and were honored by their coworkers and supervisors.

After the ballots were counted in the annual Favorite Administrative Professional poll, JENNIFER GRAHAM, Secretary in the Department of Public Safety/Emergency Medical Services Division was named "Kent County's Favorite Administrative Professional." She received a special flower bouquet.



The employees nominated for Kent County's Favorite Administrative Professional included: SHELBY BURD, Finance; CONNIE BUTLER, Library Services; DARLA DEMPSEY, Community Services; CHARLOTTE DONNELLY, Sheriff's Office; MARI FABRES, Wastewater Facilities; NAOMI GALLOWAY, Inspections & Enforcement; CYNTHIA GOLDSBORO, Sheriff's Office; JENNIFER GRAHAM, Emergency Medical Services; JILL JOHNS, Planning Services; EVELYN JOPP, Administration; GALE MAAS, Administration; JAN MORRIS, Administration; CHRISTINA MORTON, Inspections & Enforcement; KATHY PHINNEY, Administration; ANGEL SHORT, Parks & Recreation; KATHLEEN SKINNER, Planning; PATTY VIRDIN, Planning; and NICOLE VAUTARD, Emergency Management.

Last year's Favorite Administrative Professional was MARI FABRES, Secretary in the Department of Public Works/Wastewater Facilities Division.

High Praise

Kudos to SCOTT VAUTARD and MARC St. JEAN, both of the Inspections & Enforcement Division for responding to after-hour calls when a tree fell on a manufactured home and when a homeowner discovered his home was constructed of old ammo boxes. Thanks for the quick professional response!!!



ON THE MOVE. . .

Compiled by Carissa Zeiters, Personnel Technician II

New Hires

04/04/05 KELLY BLANCHIES, Secretary, Grade 6, Sheriff's Office

04/04/05 ROCHELLE BOHM, Historic Preservation Planner, Grade 12, Planning Services/Planning

04/04/05 KENNETH MCKENZIE, Paramedic I, Grade 9, Public Safety/Emergency Medical Services

04/04/05 JESSICA STEELE, Deed Clerk I, Grade 5, Recorder of Deeds Office

04/24/05 JOHN SCHULTIES, Building Codes Inspector I, Grade 8, Planning Services/Inspections & Enforcement

Reinstatement

04/04/05 DAVID NESBIT II, Paramedic II, Grade 10, Public Safety/Emergency Medical Services

Transfers

04/04/05 ELLEN MITCHELL, Deputy Receiver of Taxes, Appointed, to Property Specialist I, Grade 8, Assessment Office

Retired

04/01/05 JANET HURD, Deed Clerk II, Grade 7, Recorder of Deeds Office

Resignation

04/02/05 ELIZABETH WICH, Dispatcher II, Grade 9, Public Safety/Emergency Communications

04/08/05 BRUCE SLODY, Building Codes Inspector II, Grade 10, Planning Services/Inspections & Enforcement

Milestones

04/05/80 WILLIAM MICHAEL WARD, Technology/GIS Administrator, Planning Services - 25 years

MARK YOUR CALENDAR



May 4, 2005 - Blood Pressure Checks WWF

May 10, 2005 - Employee Training Session on Time Management at 9:00 a.m. in Kent County Administrative Complex Room 220.

May 11, 2005 - Blood Pressure Checks Annex at 9 a.m., Kent County Administrative Complex Room 222 from 9:30 - 11 a.m., O'Brien Building from 11-11:30.

May 11, 2005 - L&W Rep. from 1-2 p.m. in Room 222 at the Kent County Administrative Complex.

May 19, 2005 - Youth in Government Day for Kent County High School students who learn about
(Continued on next column)

COUNTY BIRTHDAYS



MAY

01 Jill Johns, Planning Services

01 Karen Lewis, Public Works/Engineering

02 Harry VanSant, Community Services Director

05 Ronald Eby, Board of Assessment

05 Jack Loftin, Public Safety/Emergency Comm.

10 Audrey Stanford, Finance

13 Kim Loudenback, Public Works/Engineering

15 Sheila Ross, Assessment Office

19 Robert McLeod, County Administrator

19 Jennifer Immediato, Public Safety/EMS

22 Richard Washington, Public Works/WWF

26 Larry Warner, Sheriff's Office

28 Keith Powell, Public Works/WWF

31 Angela Moseley, Planning Services/Insp. & Enfor.

JUNE

03 Barbara Schroeder, Finance

03 Danielle Lamborn, Planning Services/Planning

06 Steve Watson, Planning Services/Insp. & Enfor.

10 David Nesbit II, Public Safety/EMS

11 Kimberly Dixon, Tax Office

15 P. Brooks Banta, Levy Court Commissioner

18 Kathryn Gooden, Assessment Office

20 Daniel Dolphin, Public Safety/EMS

21 Dawn Jenkins, Finance

22 Michael Evans, Public Works/WWF

22 Mike Rigby, Community Services/Parks

23 June Gladden, Assessment Office

23 Richard Baker, Public Works/WWF

23 Catherine Brown, Tax Office

25 Robert Savage, Public Works/WWF

27 Darla Dempsey, Community Services

27 Gina Glanden, Finance

28 Joyce Melvin, Receiver of Taxes

29 Joe O'Connell, Planning Services/Insp. & Enfor.

(Continued from previous column)

County government and hold a "mock" Levy Court meeting.

May 26, 2005 - "Preventing Violence in the Work Place" session by MHNet at 1:30 pm in Kent County Administrative Room 221. Attendees will receive .5 CEU's and a chance to WIN A DOOR PRIZE!

May 30, 2005 - Memorial Day Holiday. County Offices closed.

June 8, 2005 - Employee Appreciation Picnic at the Kent County Administrative Complex from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m.

Employee health insurance rates jump 26%

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Once again Mid-Atlantic Health Plan, Inc. was the winner – as the lowest responsive bidder for Kent County employee and retiree health/medical insurance coverage.



Kent County Levy Court reviewed proposals last month submitted by MAHP, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Delaware, Coventry Health Care of Delaware, and Aetna, but Mid-Atlantic was successful by offering the lowest overall rates and maintaining current coverages.

Health insurance rates continue to increase by double digits, so Levy Court has instructed staff to begin to seriously look at self-insuring the coverage beginning in Fiscal year 2007.

Despite this significant increase, individual employees and retirees will continue to receive health/medical insurance coverage at no cost. The news is also good for most employees with family coverage. The proposed Fiscal Year 2006 budget completely revamps the method used by the County to determine its contribution toward dependent health care. Previously, the County contributed a flat sum (\$175 in FY2005), but starting on July 1 the County plans to contribute 50% of the dependent health care cost. For some employees this new method will mean slightly higher monthly premiums for some of the coverage options, but those employees with family coverage see a significant savings. The plan includes a minimum \$175 monthly contribution by the County. Medical cashback paid to employees with HMO options remains at \$35/\$50, but employees waiving coverage will see an increase from

\$50 to \$100 per month. Employees waiving coverage must maintain equal or better coverage elsewhere—such as the spouse's employer. The new dependent health funding method and waiver increase may not apply to some collective bargaining units.

With the bidding process complete, the Personnel Office has scheduled Open Enrollment for the month of May. During open enrollment employees can change coverage options, add or delete dependents, or begin to participate in Section 125 - Cafeteria Plan supplemental insurance options offered by AFLAC. Cafeteria Plan and health plan option changes can only be made during open enrollment.

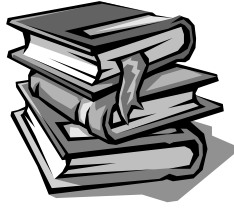
A representative from Mid-Atlantic Health Plan will be available to meet with interested individual employees on Wednesday, May 11 from 1:00 p.m. to 2 p.m. at the Administrative Complex, and 2:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. at Wastewater Treatment Facility. Since there are no major changes to the County's health/medical plan, there will be no general information meeting with the insurer.

The AFLAC representative will be making appointments for Tuesday, May 17, stop by the Personnel Office if you would like to schedule one. Remember, open enrollment is the only time health, dental or supplemental life insurance option changes can occur and the only time employees can add, delete or make changes to most AFLAC supplemental insurances such as cancer, accident, sickness, short-term disability, or intensive care plans, and tax-free flexible spending accounts for medical expenses (such as co-payments, prescriptions, etc.) and child care. Anyone currently with a flex spending account must reenroll annually.

Dependent health/medical premiums are always deducted one month in advance, therefore the new Fiscal Year 2006 dependent premiums will be deducted from paychecks beginning Friday, June 3.

FY06DEPENDENT RATES	SPOUSE COVERAGE	CHILD(REN) COVERAGE	FAMILY COVERAGE
PREFERRED (PPO)	\$296.34	\$242.46	\$549.57
ADVANTAGE HIGH (HMO)	\$231.26	\$183.58	\$455.36
ADVANTAGE LOW (HMO)	\$201.22	\$137.79	\$411.87
MEDIGAP I	\$98.91		
<i>INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE</i>	<i>PREFERRED (PPO)</i>	<i>ADVANTAGE HMO HIGH</i>	<i>HMO LOW</i>
County pays 100% of Cost	\$538.79	\$476.81	\$448.20

FROM THE STACKS



By Florence Greene, Library Technician

Mary After All

By Bill Gordon

Here's a novel for all you "Soprano" fans written from a woman's point of view. Mary Marelli Nolan grew up during the 1970's in Jersey City, the only little girl in a large extended Italian-American family.

Mary was the darling of her doting grandfather and a host of elderly "uncles" who frequented grandpa's bar. The conversations mostly centered around their dubious occupations, and the merchandise that fell off the trucks, who could get you what and the doings of the local bookies. Mary grew up believing that she could always count on men to protect her.

To escape from her dysfunctional parents she falls in love with handsome, smooth talking Bobby Nolan and finds herself trapped by a husband who is seldom at home and two sons, born in rapid successions. Our girl wants out.

Mary's road to independence is both hilarious and heartbreaking, she wants a job that is legitimate but lacking any experience or education she gets nowhere. To earn a living she turns to her eccentric aunts, Dot and Loretta, whose enterprises are booking numbers and lending money. After a short apprenticeship Mary tries the numbers business with the local housewives as her clients. A near brush with the law brings an end to that venture.

With the help of a friend, a very creative resume and changed image Mary sets out to conquer the banking and real estate world, will she reach her goal? What happens to Bobby? The kids?

Read the book! **4480**

New directories coming

Be on the look out for a new Kent County Levy Court Telephone Directory to be published during the month of May. Listings will soon be sent to each division/office for verification of names and telephone numbers. Please return the proof to the Personnel Office by the date requested. Contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310 with questions.

Recipe of the Month

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

IRISH CREAM CHOCOLATE CHEESECAKE

*If you like Irish cream and chocolate,
you'll love this recipe.*

Prep Time: Approx. 20 minutes

Cook time: Approx 1 hour, 20 minutes

Ready in: Approx. 9 hours, 20 minutes

Makes: 1 9" Springform pan (12 servings)

CRUST

1½ cups chocolate cookie crumbs

1/3 cup confectioners' sugar

1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder

¼ cup butter

FILLING

3 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, softened and at room temperature

1¼ cups white sugar

¼ cup unsweetened cocoa powder

3 tablespoons all-purpose flour

3 eggs

½ cup sour cream

¼ cup Irish cream liqueur

Preheat oven to 350°F. In a large bowl, mix together the cookie crumbs, confectioners' sugar and 1/3 cup cocoa. Add melted butter and stir until well mixed. Pat into the bottom of a 9" springform pan.

In a large bowl, beat the cream cheese until it's smooth and light. Combine cream cheese, white sugar, ¼ cup cocoa and flour. Beat at medium speed until well blended and smooth. Add eggs one at a time, mixing well after each addition. Blend in the sour cream and Irish cream liqueur; mixing on low speed. Pour filling over baked crust.

Bake at 450°F for 10 minutes. Reduce oven temperature to 250°F, and bake for 60 minutes.

With a knife, loosen cake from rim of pan. Let cool, and then remove the rim of pan. Chill before serving. If your cake cracks, dampen a spatula and smooth the top, then sprinkle with some chocolate wafer crumbs. **3530**

High Praise

Congratulations to PAT PIAZZA of the Facilities Management Division for her grandson—Bryan Schieferstein for receiving a Skills USA gold medal in the Criminal Justice competition. *Way to go!!!*

End the struggle! Learn to get that “to do” list done

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

Do you find yourself always struggling to get everything on your “To Do” list done?



You are not alone. Attend our May training event and get some good ideas on how to use your time to the utmost. The guest speaker will be LESLIE PERSANS, Assistant

Director of Planning Services/Division of Inspection & Enforcement. Leslie attended a time management seminar a few months ago, and will be sharing some of the concepts that she found most interesting and useful.

One session will be held on Tuesday, May 10, at 9:00 a.m. in room 220 of the Kent County Administrative Complex. To sign up for this session, contact me in Personnel at 744-2312, by e-mail (if you have a list), or in person.

In April, the topic was change and participants viewed the video “Who Moved My Cheese?” County employees who received credit for this session were SHERRY BARKER, DARLA DEMPSEY, NAOMI GALLOWAY, JUNE GLADDEN, KATHY GOODEN, MARTY HAYES, JILL JOHNS, EVELYN JOPP, KAREN LEWIS, ANITA LLOYD, GALE MAAS, WAYNE McCARTY, CHRISTINA MORTON, KATHY PHINNEY, SHEILA ROSS, ANGEL SHORT, KATHY SKINNER, ALAN TYSON, LESLIE VASQUEZ, and CARISSA ZEITERS.

Thank you for your continuing interest in the County’s voluntary training program!

Evaluation deadline extended

The deadline for submission of the annual employee performance appraisals (GAUGE) has been extended to May 16 to accommodate the time packing and unpacking for the recent move into the new Kent County Administrative Complex.

The necessary forms are located on the V-drive. Questions should be directed to 744-2310.

Warning!! Great weather means activities increase

By Sgt. Dave Mick, EMS Operations Support Officer

So who needs a little refresher about protecting yourself while enjoying the outdoors? How about protecting the outdoors while you’re enjoying it?

It’s time to start thinking about sun screen and bug spray, but even more we should take a few moments to think about some other safety concerns that can be more immediate and more hazardous than mosquitoes.



YARD WORK:

- When using that power mower keep track of your toes and fingers. Shut the thing off before checking the blades or grabbing that piece of string you found. If you use a riding mower and are constantly backing up in tight places...where are the kids? Has the motor cooled down before you leave it in the garage unattended?
- Feeding the lawn? Killing the weeds? Trying to keep the bugs down? Be careful when using fertilizers and pesticides around the home. Read the labels so you know what to do if you spill something on you or a child or pet gets exposed by running through the yard.
- Want to burn some debris left from the winter? Check with DNREC (739-5072) or the Fire Marshal’s Office (739-5665) on what you are allowed to burn. Call Dispatch to report your controlled burn and again to advise that you are finished burning.

BOATING:

- PFD – Personal Floatation Device. One for everybody? Kids wearing theirs?
- Does someone who is not with your party know where you plan to go and when you plan to return? And check that fire extinguisher for current service date and charge.

GRILLING:

If you’ve never seen a gas grill go up in flames count yourself lucky. Even firefighters don’t like

(Continued on Page 10)

EMPLOYEE COUNCIL NEWS



By Jennifer Graham, Employee Council Secretary

The Spring has sprung and summer is not far behind (we hope)! Just in time for the Annual Employee Appreciation Picnic.

This year's event will be held on Wednesday, June 8 at noon on the north end of the grounds at the new Kent County Administrative Complex. There will be plenty of good food and fun for everyone. Unfortunately, the dunking booth is not available this year.

We would like to initiate a new "Devious Deed" to replace the dunking booth activity, to show our Department Heads and Division Managers just how much they really are appreciated.

Suggestions can be forwarded to any member of the Employee Council. If anyone would like to lend a helping hand with clean up after the picnic, please include your name on the sign up sheet, which will be distributed to each department this month. We look forward to seeing everyone at the picnic. Look for final details of the picnic in next month's issue of *Kent Connections*.

The Employee Council members have selected KATHY SKINNER of the Planning Division in the Department of Planning Services as the May 2005 Employee of the Month.

Kathy will be rewarded with a paid day off during the month of May, a designated parking space close to the employee entrance to the Complex, as well as \$100, and a chance at being selected as Employee of the Year.

If you know of a fellow co-worker who deserves to be recognized, please fill out a nomination form located on the V: drive and also in the mailroom.

We have restarted our monthly raffle for the Employee Council parking space, located near the Complex's employee entrance. Congratulations to JOYCE MELVIN, Receiver of Taxes for purchasing the winning ticket for May. Remember, a Council member will be selling raffle tickets near the end of each month for the following month at two for \$1.

Your Employee Council members are: CATHLEEN McLEAN—President, JASON MILLER—Vice-President, JENNIFER GRAHAM—Secretary, DAWN JENKINS—Treasurer, NYLE CALLAWAY, MICHELLE LAPINSKI, and MELISSA McNATT.

Tech Talk



By Bill Blades, System Development Specialist

We are in a new building and trying new things. The one new thing that has impressed me the most is the movement toward a paperless environment. You say that will never happen. I believe it is possible, but will take time and a large commitment from all of us here at the County.

The process is currently under way. Even before the move, workers started to scan documents to be retained in a digital format. Last year the annual tax books were converted to Adobe Acrobat files (pdf) instead of being printed. In the past it took about 600 pounds of paper to print the books, plus the cost of the binders in which they were kept. Everyone has been to the Tax Office in the O'Brien Building and saw the west wall covered with the books. That was only the books for two years.

Within the past two months the printing of the payroll reports was stopped. All those reports are now converted to Adobe Acrobat files and saved electronically. These reports would use over a case of paper each month and more if it were the end of the quarter or the end of the year.

For the iSeries (AS/400) users there is software available that will allow the conversion of any print job to PC files in a variety of formats. These formats include Rich Text Format (rtf) and Text (txt), which are readable by word. Also, Hyper Text Markup Language (html), which is readable by Internet Explorer and Adobe Acrobat, which is readable by the Acrobat reader. If you need access to this software, let us know and we will make it available.

The next time you start to press the print button, pause and think. Do I need a hard copy of this or can I just save this digitally for future reference? The less we print the more money we save the County. With more revenue, maybe the rising cost of benefits and the cost of living increases will have a more positive effect on each of us. **5125**

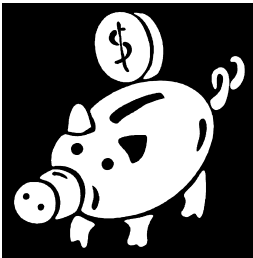
Water Fountain Change Contest

As an homage to the Robert W. O'Brien Building, two free movie tickets were awarded to RUBY FARMER in the Tax Office for submitting the closest guess for the value of coins removed from the water fountain this past fall. The total was \$19.43 for the general fund.

Actuary advises higher contribution needed for pension

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

It must be two years later, because the County's em-



ployee pension plan has been actuarially evaluated as happens on a biennial basis to determine if additional funds are needed to meet future pension obligations.

Aon Consulting evaluated the County's \$17.3 million pension plan as of January 1, 2005 and determined that the recovering stock market had done much to improve the plan's portfolio (up from \$14.2 million two years ago). It also noted that the recent pension benefit enhancement approved by Levy Court increased the plans liabilities. (The Commissioners had received an estimated pension impact late last year whenever it voted to increase the pension multiplier from 1.6% to 2%.) In addition, the increase of base salaries as a result of the last pay study and continued growth of the County staff impacted the consultant's funding recommendation.

Just in time for the budget approval process, the actuary recommended that the annual pension contribution be increased to \$1,008,000 per year. As an alternative the actuary advised that the annual contribution could be reduced to \$831,025, if the Levy Court immediately transferred \$2 million into the fund. In the FY2006 budget, the Commissioners proposed to allocate the lower annual funding amount and promptly contribute the lump sum.

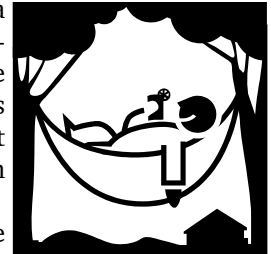
The study determined a variety of interesting statistics related to the County's active employee group, including determining that the average age for males is 47.05 and for females 44.88. As of January 1, there were 146 males up from 126 in 2003, and 102 females up from 81 in 2003. The males average 10.09 years of service, while the females have 9.24 years. Most County employees (37%) have less than 5 years of service, while 23% have 5-10 years, 19% have 10 to 15 years, 11% have 15 to 20 years, and 10% have over 20 years of County service.

Employees with questions about the County pension plan, should contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

Longer service has positive impact on future benefit costs

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Kent County has earned the respect of its peers by anticipating the high cost for a pending Governmental Accounting Standards Board rule that will require governments to pre-fund post-retirement benefits much like pension funds.



The new GASB rule #45 has many governments scrambling to find funds to sock away in preparation for the pre-funding requirement effective in 2007. Kent County, on the other hand, prepared for the eventuality four years ago when it had an actuarial study conducted of its Other (non-pension) Post Employment (retirement) Benefits program. At the time, the consultant recommended that \$5.1 million be set aside to meet these obligations as envisioned by the then draft GASB rule. Like the pension plan, the County has had its retirement benefits program biennially evaluated and has made annual contributions to the plan.

The 2005 actuarial report recommends that the County contribute \$370,000 annually to fund future retiree benefits. Despite significantly increasing health benefit costs, this amount is down from the previous \$430,000 annual funding recommendation due in large part to the fact Kent County employees don't usually retire whenever they are eligible to do so.

A surprising 20 employees are over age 62—the County's retirement age and another nine could have retired with accrued years of service, but have chosen to remain employees. This scenario—typical and long standing for Kent County has shifted the health insurance cost burden off the post retirement benefits fund to the annual budget.

The Levy Court is expected to act in the near future to formally establish a trust fund for post-retirement benefits in order to achieve the asset growth projected by the actuary. At the present time, the funds are "designated" and only earn minimal interest typical of a money market or certificate of deposit.

CAT BOX



By Cathleen McLean, Payroll Administrator

QUACK for AFLAC

I just finished doing my taxes for 2004 and again I am amazed how much I saved by having a Flexible Spending Account. I am further astounded by the fact that only a few of our employees participate in our plan that puts more money in your pocket.

So here is my pitch. A flexible spending account for medically related expenses is a direct savings for the employee by reducing the amount of your taxable income.

Here is how it works. You estimate an amount of expenses that are medically related, i.e. doctor visit co-pays, prescription co-pays, dental co-pays, over-the-counter medicines (Claritin, cold medicines, bandages, ointments), and amounts due over the allowable of dental bills, etc, for the whole fiscal year. The figure you select is divided by 26 and deducted from your biweekly pay before taxes are calculated in equal increments for the entire fiscal year.

During the ensuing year, you are reimbursed for your expenses as you accumulate and submit receipts up to the total amount allotted for the fiscal year. Keep in mind that these expenses are only allowable for itemized expenses, on your income taxes, for the amount that exceeds 7.5% of your adjusted gross amount. This is where you get the direct saving on your medically related expenses—it is an immediate reduction in your taxable income.

Flexible spending accounts for Child Care Expenses work slightly different. The amount that you are reimbursed can not be dispersed until you have actually accumulated the amount requested in your Flexible Spending Account.

The difference is that these funds are a direct reduction in your adjusted gross amount when completing your tax forms.

Keep in mind that once a pre-tax deduction is made through any flexible spending account, you cannot claim the expense again on your annual tax forms.

For more information on what is reimbursable contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310 or come to the Open Enrollment session for AFLAC in May.

BENEFIT BLURBS

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

It's Open Enrollment time again! Many employees have been waiting for the OE period, when employees and retirees can, without a qualifying event, enroll in the health and dental plans, change options in the health plan (for example, changing from Preferred to Advantage), enroll dependents in the health and dental plans, enroll in AFLAC programs, or apply for an increase in their life insurance. If you wish to have a change processed during the OE period, please contact or visit the Personnel Office for the correct form.

Our AFLAC representative, Eunice Craig, will be here in May to meet with employees who wish to enroll in AFLAC, or make changes in their AFLAC insurance plans or flexible spending account.

Express Scripts, the prescription plan utilized by Mid-Atlantic Health Plan, recently mailed letters to members using the drug Bextra®, an arthritis and pain medication. The manufacturer of Bextra®, Pfizer, voluntarily stopped sales of this drug on April 7, 2005, and has advised members to stop taking the drug and to contact their physician regarding a replacement medication. **8225**

Great weather could mean danger

(Continued from Page 7)

getting close to an overheated propane cylinder! Again, read your grill manual...it will have tips on how to check the unit for safety. Make sure the grill is clean and functioning well.

WEATHER:

It seems silly to remind people to “come in out of the rain”. Actually, the point to make is about lightning safety. One general rule is if you can hear thunder you are close enough to be in danger of a lightning strike. Tall objects in open areas can act as lightning rods. Lightning can do lots of crazy things like travel through tree roots, down spouts, telephone lines. Lightning can even strike twice in the same place. The bottom line: If lightning shows you it's in the area take precautions to avoid becoming personally acquainted. Moving indoors and hearing gripes about the cook-out being messed up is easier than explaining for the rest of your life how you dared lightning to strike you and lost....that is if you have the rest of your life to worry about.

Get the picture?

Please spend a little time now to get this season off to a safe start. **5410** **5954**

Dig more than flowers this month, discover archaeology!

By Rochelle Bohm, Historic Preservation Planner

On April 27, 2005, Governor Ruth Ann Miner proclaimed May as Archaeology Month. The variety of activities held throughout the state highlight the extraordinary archaeological heritage of Delaware. There are numerous opportunities to learn more about Archaeology in Delaware from lectures and exhibits to artifact identification and demonstrations. The opportunities abound with family friendly activities happening every weekend in May. A complete list of activities and their locations is found at www.delawarearchaeology.org.

Activities taking place within Kent County are as follows:

May 7, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm - Dover

Archaeology at Old Dover Days – Delaware State Visitors Center and the Delaware Archaeology Museum will host various activities and presentations at 406 Federal St. and 316 S. Governors Ave. Sponsor: Delaware State Museums; for information call Beverly Laing, (302) 739-4266 (Delaware State Museums) or (302) 734-1736 (Old Dover Days).

May 11, 6:30 pm - Dover

The Archaeology of Seventeenth-century Delaware – Chuck Fithian, Curator of Archaeology, Delaware State Museums, at Delaware Public Archives, 121 Duke of York St. Sponsored by Delaware Public Archives; for information, call Cherie Dodge, (302) 739-5685.

May 17, 7:00 pm - Dover

Delaware's Agricultural History and Archaeology, Lu Ann De Cunzo, Archaeologist, University of Delaware Department of Anthropology, and Rebecca Sheppard, University of Delaware Center for Historic Architecture and Design, at the Delaware Agricultural Museum, 866 N. Dupont Hwy. Sponsored by the Delaware Agricultural Museum; for information, call (302) 734-1618

May 23, 7:00 pm - Dover

Excavations at the Old Statehouse, Chuck Fithian,
(Continued on Page 12)

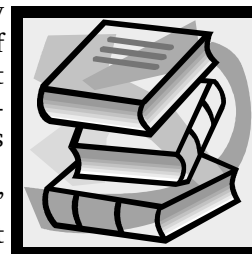


Library renovation & expansion gets underway this month

By Richard "Dick" Krueger, County Librarian

With the Parks and Recreation Divisions along with the Department of Community Services administrative staff relocated to the new Kent County Administrative Complex, the Kent County library is poised to expand big time.

The "friendly library" located in a leased structure at 2319 South DuPont Highway just north of the Camden light will be going through a major remodeling over the next few weeks. The walls in the former Parks and Recreation portion of the building (west end) come down starting May 9. Due to this construction and its proximity to the building's shared entrance, there is a good chance the library will have to close for normal circulation on May 10th and 11th.



Typical of any remodeling project, things don't get started until the work crew actually shows up at the door, but library staff is hopeful that the time table will hold. According to the plan, the furniture in the County Librarian's office and the Library Supervisor's office will be moved on May 10 and 11, so their office walls can be taken down. There will be a total of 6 office spaces removed in order to make way for more space for patrons and books.

The additional space created on the west end of the building will have a children's area with children's books and media, and eventually more children friendly furniture.

The final phase of the project is replacement of old carpeting, a new roof, new windows, resurfacing of the parking lot, and a new sign.

The library has several programs scheduled during the days that it is anticipated to be closed, but access through the back door will permit them to be held in the back room. The popularity of the programs make it difficult to cancel.

Please excuse our mess, and come see us when we are fully remodeled and ready for business.

For more information about this and other projects, call the Kent County Library at 698-6440.

BLOOD BANK IS VALUABLE BENEFIT WHEN IN NEED

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

The Blood Bank of Delmarva supplies blood and blood products to 18 hospitals and 13 renal care centers in Delaware; Cecil County, Maryland; and on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The basis of the program is the Blood Assurance Plan, which provides coverage for its members.



Established: 1954
Current Membership: 178,000

families

Group Sponsors: 2,600+ businesses and organizations

Population Served: 1.2 million people in DE; Cecil County, MD, and on Maryland's Eastern Shore

Donor Centers: Christiana, Wilmington, and Dover, DE; Salisbury, MD

Mobile Sites: More than 30 locations throughout Delmarva

High Schools and Colleges: 65 schools participated in the 2003/04 school year, with over 8,000 students volunteering to give blood

Employees/Volunteers: 209 employees and 250 volunteers

2004 Fiscal Year Statistics: Over 75,000 blood and platelet donations received and 120,000+ products shipped to 18 hospitals and 13 renal care centers

Coverage Plan: The Blood Assurance Plan covers the cost of blood replacement for members and dependents

Kent County Levy Court sponsors Blood Bank membership for its employees and retirees at no cost to the member. This is an important benefit because the County's health insurance provider, Mid-Atlantic Health Plan, do not cover blood products.

If you would like to join the Blood Bank, please contact anyone in the Personnel Office.

2005 Graduation Accolades

If you or a member of your family is graduating from College or High School this year, contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310 and a notice will be included in the next Kent Connections.



Welcome to Kent County!

Name: ROCHELLE LEA BOHM

Job: Historic Preservation Planner, Department of Planning Services

Date hired: April 4, 2005

Education: B.A. in History from Houghton College; M.A. in Urban Affairs and Public Policy from University of Delaware

What I like most about my job: Learning more and more about Delaware

Greatest accomplishment: My son!

Greatest challenge or obstacle: Finishing my thesis

Future goals: Develop a preservation education program

Person/event that most inspired me in my career: Trip to the Farmers Museum in Coopers-town, NY

I'm most relaxed and happy when I'm doing this: Enjoying my family

Family: Husband, Jim; son, Joshua

Most recent movie enjoyed: Miracle

Favorite TV show: Waltons

Favorite meal: Chinese

Favorite music: Country

Favorite saying or slogan: "Clear as mud"

Who has had the most impact on my life: My grandmother

If I won a million dollars, I would: Joshua's college fund, pay off mortgage, pay off family mortgages

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Climbed Mount Katahdin in Maine

The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Climbed Mount Katahdin in Maine

Words that describe me: Organized, loyal, stubborn **8076** **6423**



Discover archaeology

(Continued from Page 11)

Curator of Archaeology, and Wesley Willoughby, Archaeologist, Delaware State Museums, at the State House Museum, The Green. Sponsored by Delaware State Museums; for information, call Beverly Laing, (302) 739-4266.

New High Tech Phone System is simple to use

By Carissa Zeiters, Personnel Technician II

It has been quite a challenge trying to figure out the new Kent County Administrative complex phone system. The high tech Cisco IP Phone has many, many options to choose from. The biggest issue employees seem to be having is the uncertainty about how calls are transferred and answered. The following information transcribed from www.cisco.com will help alleviate some user mishaps.



new Kent County Administrative complex phone system. The high tech Cisco IP Phone has many, many options to choose from. The biggest issue employees seem to be having is the uncertainty

about how calls are transferred and answered. The following information transcribed from www.cisco.com will help alleviate some user mishaps.

Answering a Call: To switch from a connected call to answer a ringing call, press “Answer” or the round line button for the incoming call located on the top right corner of the phone system. This answers the new call and automatically places the first call on hold. To answer a call using call waiting you will hear a call waiting tone and see caller ID information if a new call comes in while you are on another call. To answer the call, press “Answer”. To return to the original call, you must put this call on “Hold”. To answer another employee’s phone, pick up your receiver and press the “More” button, then the “Pickup” button which is the first button from the left directly below the display screen. Press this button again to answer.

Using Hold and Resume: Only one call can be active at any given time; all other calls must be placed on hold. To put a call on hold, highlight the call and press “Hold” (same location as Pickup button). To remove a call from hold on the current line scroll to the specific call (if necessary) and press “Resume”. If you want to remove a call from hold on a different line press the round button for the line that is on hold (the line displays the call-on-hold icon which looks like a box with two white boxes inside of it). If there is a single call holding on this line, the call will resume automatically. If there are multiple calls holding on the line, scroll to the specific call (if necessary) and press “Resume”.

Transferring a Connected Call: To transfer a call without talking to the transfer recipient press “Transfer” and enter the target number. When you hear the call ringing, press “Transfer” again. The Transfer button is located directly under the display screen, third from the left. To talk to the transfer recipient before transferring a call press “Transfer” and enter the targeted number. Wait for the transfer re-

ipient to answer. If the recipient accepts the transferred call, press “Transfer” again. If the recipient refuses the call, press “Resume” to return to the original call. To transfer two current calls to each other scroll to highlight any call on the line and press Select (press More button twice to bring up Select). Repeat this process for the second call. With one of the selected calls highlighted, press “DirTrfr”. The two calls connect to each other and drop you from the call. If you want to stay on the line with the caller, use Join to create a conference instead.

Forwarding Your Calls to Another Number: To set up call forwarding on your primary line press “CFwdALL” and enter a target phone number. Enter the target number exactly as you would dial it from your desk phone. To cancel forwarding from your primary line press “CFwdALL”. If you want to verify that call forwarding is enabled on your primary line look for the icon above the primary line that looks like an arrow. Also, check the status line near the bottom of the phone screen; it displays the call forwarding target number.

County Complex opens

(Continued from Page 1)

In other related issues, the ladies room now has paper towels, and toilet seat covers, and the hand dryers in the rest rooms are being checked to insure that the correct amount of heated air is being expelled. All the snack and beverage machines have been installed in the break room and alcove areas, and while not yet ordered, a table for the Levy Court Caucus Room should be delivered in the next month or so.

Security was a major concern when the new complex was designed and that has resulted in a full array of cameras, including all hallways, most rooms, and the parking lot—but not restrooms. Employees should be advised that their activities including those inside a vehicle are fully observable and recorded.

Emergency exits will soon be armed and each time the door is opened an alarm will sound. Employees are advised to stop using the emergency exits immediately.

The Facilities Management Division has been extremely busy before and since the move, and County Administrator ROBERT S. McLEOD recently praised the staff for “getting the job done with very few problems. Division Manager DICK MacDONALD deserves much of the credit for the monumental and successful effort.”

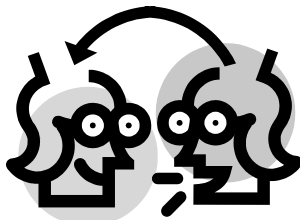
How not to offend that new office neighbor

By Sophie Dear, Personnel Technician II

Life in a cubicle presents certain challenges. If you've been moved out of an office and into a cube farm, the change can be emotional, as well. During research, I found the following guidelines for courteous behavior in a cubicle environment.

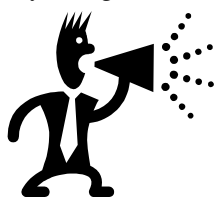


#1 - Don't ask unnecessary questions. Before distracting someone else with your question, how about looking it up? If you don't find the answer, and it's not urgent, you can e-mail it to them. It's much less intrusive. Before blurting out your question, ask the person if they have a moment. Maybe they are in the middle of something they need to wrap up. If you make a habit of asking lots of questions, you will end up reducing everyone's productivity and people will probably not be very anxious to help you with legitimate issues.



#2 - Wear headphones if you want to listen to music. Everyone has their own musical tastes and there is no reason for one person to inflict their preferences on others. Humming can also get on other people's nerves.

#3 - Talk softly when a friend is visiting. If someone has dropped by to say hello, be considerate of the other folks who don't have any friends visiting them. They're already not too keen on the idea that you have friends and they don't, so why antagonize them by being loud about it?



#4 - Don't scream over cubicles to discuss matters with your co-workers, converse with anyone other than the cubicle's occupant over the cubicle walls, or congregate outside someone's cube.

#5 - Don't use your speakerphone to retrieve messages from your voice mail OR to dial the

phone. Watch your volume when speaking on the phone.

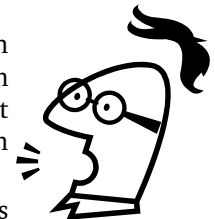
#6 - Stay out of others' cubicles when the cubicle is unoccupied, and keep your hands to yourself if you must enter. Don't enter someone's cubicle and use the cubicle wall to speak with a nearby cubicle occupant as though you are holding a backyard conversation with a neighbor over a fence.



#7 - When walking past a co-worker's cubicle, dangling or sliding your hand inside their cubicle as you walk by is distracting to the occupant, and will eventually soil the walls of the cubicle. Don't "prairie-dog" over the tops of cubicles or peek in as you walk past each one.

#8 - Don't throw paper over the wall of a co-worker's cubicle.

#9 - Don't sneak up on someone who is concentrating in their cubicle. Announce yourself at their doorway or lightly knock on the wall.



#10 - An open cubicle is not an open invitation. Pretend there is a door and wait to be invited in. When you're in, don't hover over them, or try to eye their computer screen or documents on their desk.

#11 - Don't ooze your work materials into another's territory.



#12 - Save your colleagues' noses - avoid excessive office odors. Don't slather on perfume or other forms of scent that will emanate well beyond your personal space. On the other hand, personal hygiene is of utmost importance - this is not the time

for body odor. Preparing your lunch on a George Foreman® grill will not contain the food odors within the walls of your cubicle. A good rule of thumb is to never eat hot food at your desk. Food odors can bother your hungry or nauseous neighbors. Not everyone appre-



-the do's & dont's of a cubicle environment

ciates the scents of garlic, onions, meat, etc. coming over the walls of their cubicle. Also, keep your shoes on!

#13 – Don't try to have the loudest or most obnoxious telephone ring in your work area. The ring of your phone should not startle your neighbors. This also applies to cell phones. Never leave your cell phone behind in your cubicle without first turning it off or to vibrate.

#14 – Your cubicle should not be a bacteria cafeteria. If you have pizza on Monday, don't keep on a shelf and eat it until Thursday. Then, there are other surfaces in your cubicle. Charles Gerba, a microbiologist at the University of Arizona, reported that a desktop has 400 times as much bacteria per skuzzy square inch as the toilet seat; the keyboard and mouse have 67 times and 34 times as much bacteria, respectively. According to Mr. Gerba, the difference is that some-



one cleans the toilet. If you snack in your cubicle, make sure crumbs, spills, drips, and dribbles are wiped away, and snack wrappers are properly disposed of.

#15 -- About snacks: Don't be an Office Moocher. Bring your own stash.

A director of research for a workplace consultant found that at one large law firm, the average number of times people were interrupted by noise, visual distractions and chatty visitors prairie-dogging over a cubicle wall was 16 a day – or 21 a day including work-related distractions. It takes 2.9 minutes to recover concentration after these disruptions, meaning people spend more than an hour a day trying to refocus. And that doesn't even count the time drain of the distraction itself.



Since innovation is required for our changing environment, respect for cube space and communication are important.

Trust Fund available for uncovered costs

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Many years ago when Mid-Atlantic Health Plan was first selected as the County's health/medical insurer, Levy Court approved Policy 2-12 to address several medical insurance issues.

The policy clearly defines who is eligible for insurance coverage, criteria for medical cash back incentives, dependent coverage, etc. It also established a method for appealing medical coverage denials, lack of coverage, and hardships.

Levy Court previously amended the policy to provide a method for establishing procedures. The Employee Insurance Appeals Committee has formally adopted rules to provide clear guidance in its decision making process.

Among other things, the procedure requires appeals to be filed within one year of the service date or within 60 days of final denial of coverage for a medical claim. In addition, the rules provide for a

maximum annual reimbursement of \$3,000.

The reimbursement program has been largely utilized by retired employees with the County's Medigap Medicare supplement. The current Medigap coverage limits prescription payments to an annual maximum of \$2,000. Many retirees exceed the \$2,000 and submit receipts for reimbursement less the normal Rx co-payment. The Medigap prescription co-payments at 10/20/40 are higher than active employees at 10/15/35, so the plan also reimburses Medicare eligible retirees the difference upon submission of receipts.

The policy permits the Personnel Director to approve the first \$500 of reimburseable costs, with the excess requiring approval from the Employee Insurance Appeals Committee composed of the Levy Court Finance & Administration Committee Chairman, County Administrator, Finance Director, Personnel Director, and a member of Employee Council, which meets as needed.

If you have questions about Policy 2-12 or would like to submit for a reimbursement, contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310.



SOME ANSWERS TO THOSE NAGGING QUESTIONS

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Q. I plan to come in early each morning to use the fitness room. Since I will be arriving at 6 a.m., I will have to enter the front door and disarm the security system. Can I park my car in front of the building, so I will not have to walk so far?

A. I know you folks doubt it sometimes, but I swear this question was really asked! Employees have been instructed to park at the rear or north side of the new Administrative Complex. The parking spaces next to the building and in the lot on the south side near the front doors are reserved for customers. Just think of the long walk as part of your fitness regimen.

Q. I notice that the County has the same number of custodians, despite the new administration building being twice as large as the Robert W. O'Brien building. How are these hard working staff members supposed to get everything done?

A. It is awful nice of you to be concerned about the County's custodial staff. You are right, we do have the same number of custodians plus a couple temporary employees. The good news is that a new full time staff member starts the first week of May. The Facilities Management Division has been short three custodians since before the Courthouse was sold to the State in December 2003, but the positions were not eliminated. With the Deeds and Wills offices scheduled to move to the new County complex in a year or so, we don't want to be overstaffed and be in a position to lay off someone. So, the County's current custodial staffing strategy is to take it slow until we have a good handle on exactly how many custodians are needed.

Q. I have had a serious financial emergency come up for which I need some serious cash in a hurry. A coworker suggested that I get a loan from my 457 deferred compensation account. Can I do that?

A. Yes you can. A great new feature of the ICMA-Retirement Corporation 457 deferred compensation account is the ability to take out a loan against the assets. Application forms are available in the Personnel Office and it takes about one week for the check to arrive with the necessary loan documents. The program only allows you to borrow a maximum of 50% of your funds and the interest charged simply replaces the growth you would have received on your deferred

compensation. The interest rate on the last loan taken out by an employee was 7.109%. The loan is typically paid back over 52 months, but you can pay it back sooner. ICMA-RC charges a modest \$40 processing fee, which is rolled into the loan payback. The IRS requires the full amount to be repaid if you terminate your employment. If you fail to do so that a substantially penalty will be charged for early withdrawal—typical for early use of other retirement savings accounts. Every employee should be deferring a portion of his/her compensation for retirement. It reduces tax rates now, can still be available for emergencies, and will make retirement a lot more comfortable than just surviving on the County pension and Social Security.

Q. Did I read the newsletter correctly last month, or was I seeing things? Did you say that the Levy Court plans to convert all employees to 40 hours next year? I came to work for the County for the sole reason to work 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., not 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

A. No, you were not seeing things. During a February budget hearing, the Levy Court Commissioners endorsed the concept of converting all currently 35-hour per week employees to 40-hour per week employees beginning in July 2006 (Fiscal Year 2007). The switch was seen as an alternative to hiring new staff and as acceptance of reality—which is that County residents/customers expect to receive services during normal office hours. Regarding your comment about why you came to work here, I can only say that this might be a good time to start looking for another job that works from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.—I don't think many, if any, exist.

Q. Why is it up to the Department Head to scrutinize employee apparel? Why doesn't the Personnel Director contact the employee if he observes someone wearing inappropriate clothing?

A. Thanks, but no thanks—I would prefer not to be the County's fashion police. When the work attire guidelines were established with full department head support several years ago, it was agreed that directors would hold staff to the "guideline" standards to avoid a Levy Court imposed policy. You can rest assured that any time I observe an inappropriately attired employee or receive a telephone call from a coworker, I call his/her department head.