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State IT initiative off and running at DAS

Connecticut's computer core gets an overhaul

By Anne Pomeroy Dixon and Mike Mansfield

Imagine a time in the not-too-distant future. You are dreaming about a week in the Bahamas soaking in the sun and admiring the view. You've saved the money, but do you have the vacation time? You go to the computer and check your vacation records in an instant. Yes! You have the time! You send an e-mail message to your boss, your boss approves your vacation. With the click of a computer key, your time and attendance records are updated and you are on your way to sunny skies and sandy beaches.



Anne Pomeroy Dixon facilitates a recent meeting of DAS' Core task force.

The Office of the State Comptroller, the Department of Administrative Services and the Department of Information and

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Spring Training



"Iron Mark" Carroza (center) discusses curveball technique with (from left) Jerry Lynn, Bob Cosgrove, and Pedro Valentin at a kickoff event for the sixth round of DAS Employee Recognition Awards. (See story, page 6)

DAS Shows Good Taste

School lunch was never like this

By John McKay

What's cookin'? DAS' Food Distribution Program (FDP), that's what. On Friday, March 31, the FDP held its second annual Food Distribution show at the Marriott Hotel in Rocky Hill. The food show was in conjunction with the

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Schools Sink Their Teeth into Food Show

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Connecticut School Food Service Association (CSFSA). One of the FDP's initiatives is to partner with CSFSA on events related to USDA commodities and food distribution services.

The "CSFSA Directors Meeting and USDA Food Show" was a full-day event. In the middle of a



swarm of attendees, and with a big smile on her face, Program Manager Doris Vieira exclaimed, "We definitely have a good turnout here." And indeed they did. Some 150 people attended the event designed to expose various food vendors and their products to Connecticut school food cafeteria buyers.

The food show served up a cornucopia of delicious samples including snack bars, thirst-quenching juice drinks, pizza, and the ever-popular Jamaican beef patties. "They're going fast," said George Scott of Scott's Jamaican Bakery, "people love these things."

Before the doors opened to the banquet hall, attendees gathered to listen to speaker topics such as Child Nutrition Update by Maureen Staggenborg from Department of Education, a Food Processing and FDP Update by Vieira, Jeffrey



Cufaude on "Character Does Count" and "Encouraging the Heart: How to Retain and Recognize Top Talent," and Peggy Cantfil speaking on "USDA Food Distribution 2000 - Proposal for Change."

"It may not sound like the most thrilling stuff, but this is important information that Connecticut schools need to know about," said FDP's Tony Ferreira. "And we're happy to do our part." **DAS**

PHOTOS - Far left: The DAS FDP team is all smiles at their second annual food show. **Above:** Attendees sampled and evaluated menu offerings available through state vendors.

DAS Times

The DAS Times is published monthly by the Department of Administrative Services Communications Office 165 Capitol Avenue Hartford, CT 06106

John G. Rowland
Governor

Barbara A. Waters
Commissioner

Donna J. Micklus
Editor

Contributions are welcome but may be edited for space and clarity.

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FMLA Goes to College

By John McKay

They came. They saw. They learned a lot. On April 5 and 6, about 25 state human resources personnel went to the Institute of Industrial and Engineering Technology in New Britain, to learn as much as possible about the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA).

DAS' Sandra Sharr and Diane Mazar-Roberts presented the class with FMLA manuals, an in-depth PowerPoint presentation, charts, graphs, and a host of other visual aids. "There is a ton of information to cover in two half-day sessions, so instead of going through the manual



Diane Mazar-Roberts (left) and Sandra Sharr (right) of DAS' new HR Learning Center lectured on the state's FMLA rules at CCSU's IIET Building in New Britain.

See *New*, page 3

Co-chief of Staff Sid Holbrook from the Governor's Office applauded **Roy Dion** and **Kenn Stephenson** for their help and assistance in getting surplus wheelchairs to the Board of Education and Services for the Blind.

Social Work Case Aide Judy L. Merritt from the Department of Children and Families applauded **Dave Tufano** for his help when her state vehicle left her stranded, saying, "State employees do not realize what an asset our Fleet Operations personnel are to all agencies."

Hats Off

By Cindy Duberek

Jerry Lynn applauded the Fleet Operations gang of cardholders; **Steve Dygus**, **Ed Flores**, **Calvin Halliday**, **Lou Magnano**, **Bob Negri**, **Wayne Stocking**, **Norm Townley**, and **Tom Yuhas** for their commitment to the P-card program and for taking such great care to follow the rules to keep the paperwork in order. "Thanks to all of you!"

Jerry Lynn and Mike Felix extended a special thanks to **Virgilio Santos**, **Peter Varhol**, and **Fred Ondevilla** of the Property Management Unit for helping organize and move equipment on short notice for a training seminar. Thanks guys!

Kudos to **Kim Shepard** from Vincent Lombardo for coming back to work after her class and correcting the Inpatient System file update. "Thanks for going the extra mile."

John Wilkerson would like to thank **Janet DelGreco**, **Joe Giliberto**, **Alice Hall**, and **John Pacholski** for giving great presentations to the Department of Labor on DAS' automation capabilities related to purchasing and procurement.

Sandra Sharr commended **Vicky Cotton**, **Deanna Howard**, **Larry King**, and **John McKay** for the great job they did on the Family and Medical Leave Act manual and said, "It was a pleasure to work with them. Kudos and thanks to all."

Pamela Anderson extended her appreciation to **Betty Johnson** and **Debbie Mitchell** for being so supportive and for coordinating large team meetings and issuing minutes for the ABL Committee and the Printer Team. "This is a good example of great teamwork."

Commissioner Barbara Waters commended **Bernie Blumenthal** and **Dan Donahue** for their continued commitment to the housing authority insurance program and wished them much success with the annual CT Housing Authorities' Workshops.

Former Pitney Bowes Representative David Roberts commended **Pamela Anderson** for all of her help and professionalism and said, "It was a pleasure working for you and I wish everyone at DAS the very best."

The Food Distribution Program Team thanked **Deanna Howard** and **John McKay** for their support and help with providing material for the Food Show on March 31. "These individuals really went out of the way to exceed their customers' expectations."

Cheryl Sawina thanked **Mike Mansfield** for his hard work and creativity on the pennant and ticket posters for the Employee Recognition Award's kickoff. "Everything looks wonderful!" *DAS*

New FMLA Course a Hit

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page by page, we thought these visuals would keep everyone's attention," said Sharr, "but it's a very comprehensive class. We don't gloss over anything because we want our attendees to have a firm understanding of the act."

"The customers have been really great with their participation and have asked some really intriguing questions," said Mazar-Roberts. "The FMLA is very interesting because it's continually changing and growing as new case law is being developed. Our object is to give these state human resources personnel the confidence to address FMLA questions and concerns."

FMLA is continually changing and growing. Courses like this are essential

DAS' efforts are not going unnoticed. Lori Kolakowski, from the Department of Correction said, "I've been going back to my office every day after training and telling everyone what a great job they've done here."

DAS' Cheryl Catania said, "The examples and discussions were great. It prompted the group to get involved and helped understand what is and isn't covered by FMLA."

DAS will continue to provide training to human resources personnel on FMLA. Please contact Kathleen Sullivan at (860) 713-5231 for more information. *DAS*

A Heart Warming Donation

By Michael Mansfield

DAS employees have a long and generous history of community outreach, particularly through the employee's perennially increasing donations around the holiday season. But what's always set the agency apart is how much it does throughout the rest of the year as well, and how DAS personnel team together, using the agency's own leverage to help the people of Connecticut on a larger scale.

Case in point – the State and Federal Property Distribution Program's recent donation of several hundred surplus overcoats to homeless shelters across the state.

"The coats were smalls and mediums," explained surplus property Manager Kenn Stephenson. "So they were perfect for children and women."

Indeed they were. The South Park Inn in Hartford sent DAS' Jim Potyra an extremely moving letter thanking the agency for 100 of the garments, which the shelter said will "result in lasting improvements in our clients' lives." South Park's Co-Executive Director John Ferrucci illustrated this, thanking DAS on behalf of "Claudia and her three children who left our shelter program for permanent housing," and "Martha, who after spending 10 years on the streets due to mental illness is now living successfully at our Plimpton House Program."

"Carolyn St. Paul contacted every shelter in the state, telling them they could have as many coats as they wanted," Stephenson said. "Jim and Dan Barrows distributed the coats to the four groups that expressed interest." In addition to South Park, recipients included CRT McKinney Shelter, Mercy Housing, and Norwalk Emergency Shelter, all of which together claimed over 300 coats. **DAS**

DAS gave hundreds of quality coats to those in need across the state

Financial Services Center rakes it in (again)

By Heather Cavanaugh

In this case, money is put back to work to help children in the Department of Mental Retardation's Early Connections Program, which helps assess children and identify developmental delays. Through speech and occupational therapy, these children are better prepared for school.

"Every cent directly affects these kids," said FSC's Henry Jovanelly. "If the parents have insurance, we bill insurance companies for the services rendered, and put it back into the program," explained Jovanelly.

DAS is able to bill for therapy and assistance programs that are operated and funded by DMR. "We've established a great partnership with DMR to help get this money back," said FSC's Devin Marquez. "A lot of this couldn't have been done without them."

For these recent collections, DAS was on a tight two-day timeframe to process all of the claims. FSC team players Chris Fons, Sonji

Victories

Fonseca, Lilka Vega, and Eva Williams spent grueling hours going through two boxes full of cases, filing, stuffing envelopes, and getting the claims quickly pushed through the system.

"There was a lot of paperwork to be done in a certain amount of time, and they pulled it off," Marquez remarked.

The bottom line is that DAS has a direct effect on improving services for children with developmental disabilities. **DAS**

Family Business

For some lucky parents, *Take Our Kids to Work Day* is every day

WORK CAN OFTEN SERVE as a haven for the busy parent - a place to escape the daily domestic demands. Children may revel in the time spent at an after-school job where they can feel autonomous and be with peers.

For some DAS parents and kids, it's different. They work together and actually *like* spending the time together! Diane Preble and Fred Ondevilla are two of those parents.

"He's a great asset at home and I've heard he is at work as well," said Diane Preble of the Business Office. Her son, Ryan, began at DAS when he was a ripe 16 years old. His job in the mailroom was a great way for Ryan to earn money for school. He is currently attending Asnuntuck College in Enfield.

"I've always told him that school comes first. Once you have the degree, there's a world of opportunity," Diane remarked. Ryan is on a quest for success. He ultimately wants to study business management or finance.



Diane and Ryan Preble

"The best thing I've found working here is that it has motivated me to go to school. By experiencing different kinds of work, I know what I want to do. I would like to be in a professional field," Ryan explained.

Diane and Ryan don't cross paths too much while at DAS as he is in the mailroom and Diane, the State Office Building.

"The only time during the workday that I see Ryan is when he is sent here to deliver something," Diane said. Last summer when he was working additional hours, the pair was able to have lunch and ride in together. They were also joined for the summer by Ryan's younger brother, Derrick, who worked in MIS.

"We've gained a greater respect now that we've each seen what the other one does on a given day," Diane said. She added that knowing the job and the agency enables them to voice concerns and share feelings about work in their down time.

Fred Ondevilla, who runs DAS' Property Management, also feels lucky to have his son, Warren at his side. Like Ryan, Warren also began as a summer worker in 1998. He has been working on tech support for MIS since then.

"He came at the right time," Fred explained. There had been a need for computer-literate employees, and Warren had the knowledge.

"I've always been interested in electronics. I like to take things apart and put them back together," Warren said. It's hard to believe he has these skills and is only a senior in high school!



Warren and Fred Ondevilla

"This job is great because it's nothing like what other kids my age are doing for work," Warren commented. He is currently looking at colleges to attend next year. He plans to study business management/computer sciences at Northeastern University or Bryant College.

Up Close

By Heather Cavanaugh

Both are enjoying this time together before Warren leaves for school at the end of the summer. Because Warren only works part-time, they can't drive in together, but they visit when given the opportunity.

"He's a good kid. I don't have to watch him," Fred said of his son. Warren enjoys having dad just a floor away.

"It's comforting to know that I have someone to talk to," Warren said. Both realize that these situations are sometimes hard to come by.

"This is a rare opportunity for father and son," Fred remarked. **DAS**

(This is the first installment of a two-part series on DAS' parent/"kid" teams.)

Core Value

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Technology have teamed together to make this dream a reality. (The online attendance records, not the vacation in the Bahamas.) This team is leading a project chaired by Comptroller Nancy Wyman to redesign the state's Core Financial Systems. The project recommends that the state replace its financial and administrative systems (accounting, payroll, time and attendance, personnel) with a single integrated system that will use current technology - probably one that is Internet-based.

An integrated system offers many advantages to the state. It will streamline business processes to eliminate redundant tasks (such as entering the same information into two separate systems) and manually checking information that has been entered. It will reduce the variety of programming languages and databases that are currently used, plus it will eliminate systems that agencies use to perform financial and administrative functions. Commissioner Barbara Waters said: "This is a great opportunity for us to simplify what we do. The Core Systems Project will enable the state to take advantage of e-commerce and workflow activities such as routing of time and attendance that will make everyone's life just a bit easier."

Rick Miarecki is DAS' point person on the project, and a group of enthusiastic and able DAS employees have already started meeting to develop a list of functions that they want the system to perform. Since DAS "owns" the HR information system component of this

system, it is critical that the agency have maximum input from the people who know the system best. DAS has amassed several sets of focus group feedback notes from its customers over the years. This information will be used - along with the personal expertise of DAS employees - to create the business requirements.

DAS Core Systems Redesign Project members include Antoinette Alphonse, Martin Anderson, Cathy Daly, Janet Knopf, Vin Lombardo, Rick Miarecki, Anne Pomeroy Dixon, Brenda Samuels Woods, and Lina Simonu. Additionally, APS staff will soon be co-located with the project members to assist in helping

to unravel the current system requirements. "APS team members are critical players as we move forward. They have done a terrific job of working within the constraints of the current system and are best positioned to advise on the necessary improvements for the

new system," said Commissioner Waters. While they work with the project team, APS/ATC/AWCS staff will continue to operate at its current support levels for customers, including all ongoing maintenance and enhancements.

DAS plans on involving more employees as the weeks progress, as well as paying visits to customer agencies to solicit suggestions and system requirements. The end product of these meetings will be the information used to develop a request for proposal to solicit proposals from software vendors who have developed state-of-the-art administrative software packages. **DAS**

DAS' role will be critical, particularly with the HR component

Business Office BOLTs

By Mike Felix

As part of its ongoing effort to improve customer service and lines of communication, the DAS Business Office has created an exciting new Leadership Team comprising supervisors and managers from the various operating units.

The "Business Office Leadership Team," a.k.a. BOLT, had its kickoff meeting in December. At this meeting, the team defined its purpose as being to further the integration of all FSC operational units through: enhanced dialogue and discussion, increased understanding of each other's responsibilities, challenging and improving policies and procedures, and mutual aid and assistance.

The ultimate mission of the team is to improve customer service and satisfaction through leadership, strategic planning, education, better communication, creating partnerships with customers to become a more creative and effective service provider, and achieving results.

Jim McKenna, manager of the business office, said, "I'm excited about the possibilities created by the formation of BOLT. This will allow us to improve our internal communications and procedures, and ultimately will lead to enhanced customer service. That's definitely a win/win situation in my book."

The team plans to meet twice monthly, and encourages the DAS business community to lend its input, provide suggestions and potential topics for discussion, or offer any ideas to aid its mission. **DAS**

Making a pitch for employee recognition

By Michael Mansfield

The first pitch was good – a perfect strike, right up the middle.

On March 27, the DAS Employee Recognition Award Committee held kickoff events for the sixth round

of awards, throwing out the first pitch of what they say is already looking to be a winning season.

"We have already received a bunch of nominations," said committee chair Cheryl Sawina. "We've never had so many this early in a campaign."

The committee that gives out awards in Customer Service, Team Excellence, Remarkable Innovation, and Going the Extra Mile went quite a few extra miles themselves. One of their key goals of this round was to do whatever they could to literally bring the event to DAS employees. All Fleet garages were covered, as were DAS Print Mail & Courier and the Financial Services Center in Newington, which held a well-attended party of their own. Bob Cosgrove stopped by the State Office Building festivities, leaving with a care package of baseball-shaped DAS ERP stress relievers and Post-It pads, Cracker Jack, and peanuts for the teammates at APS, members of which have been recognized through the program in the past.

Room G-38A and B in the State Office Building were converted into a temporary bullpen, with Mark "the Shark" Carroza demonstrating a killer pitching style he developed playing college ball that has inexplicably left him still undrafted by the majors. (Note to scouts, keep an eye on Rose Lamy's impressive fastball!)

Nominations are being accepted now. The deadline is May 5, at which time All-Star voting begins, with this round's MVPs being announced later that week. (Rumors that ERP committee members planned to notify winners via a shower of Gatorade were found to be mere April Foolery.)

Prizes for the recipients of the awards may include DAS coolers for those hot summer afternoons in the sun-soaked bleachers, special edition embroidered DAS baseball caps, and perhaps even baseball tickets. Awards will be given out at "The All-Star Break" – an indoor/outdoor barbecue luncheon to be held at the Solomon Welles House in Wethersfield on May 24. The DAS Employee Recognition Award nomination form is available on DAS Central. **DAS**



Jay Bard auditions for Pedro Martinez's job.

Commissioner Waters' Fleet Tour 2000

Commissioner Waters' annual tour of Fleet facilities was bumped a bit this year to accommodate the completion of the renovations downstate - not to mention Y2K details, unforgiving winter weather, and her usual packed schedule. But now that retooled New Haven garage is fully operating, she's scheduled a spring tour that as of press time will bring her to the following garages at the following times:

- April 18 at 10:30 - New Haven
- April 25 at 10:30 - Norwich
- April 26 at 9:30 - Hartford
- April 27 at 1:30 - Wethersfield

All Fleet employees are encouraged to attend these informal, candid, sitdown chats and share with Commissioner Waters absolutely any questions or concerns they may have. Waters said she's "looking forward to getting out to visit and hearing exactly what's on the minds of Fleet personnel." **DAS**



COMING SOON:

- DAS' Annual Report 2000, titled *Making a Statement*, will be released to all employees soon!

All the news that fits, we print

Honorable Mention

Suzanne Liquerman has been selected to serve on the National Grant Review Team for Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in Washington D.C. Liquerman will be a "peer reviewer," reviewing applications for the Special Demonstration Programs for the RSA.

"It's quite an honor," said Liquerman. "The reason I have been recruited to sit for this committee is because of the work I'm doing here at DAS. As a disability placement coordinator for a state agency, an appointed member of the President's Committee, and a person with a disability, I understand the challenges and frustrations of being a person who received Social Security disability income for seven years, and returned to work overcoming numerous barriers - it seems I have the viewpoint they want and need."

Festival of Awareness

DAS is a Golden Medallion sponsor of the Department of Mental Retardation's (DMR) third annual Festival of Awareness on June 3 at Hartford's Elizabeth Park. As a sponsor, DAS will supply the financial support for the rental of staff tables and chairs for the festival. "It's a great cause and a really educational event," said Commissioner Barbara Waters. "DAS is very proud to be a part of it." For more information on the event, contact DMR's Lincoln Davis at (860) 679-7191.

Take Our Kids...

The fourth annual DAS Take Our Kids to Work Day will take place Thursday, April 27. Please contact Cindy Duberek via e-mail or at (860) 713-5195 to participate or to volunteer as a chaperone.

Be on the Lookout

Direct customers of the various DAS business centers will be receiving DAS customer satisfaction questionnaires very soon in the mail. For many of DAS' business centers, this will be the fourth round of annual surveys. Please take the time to complete and return a questionnaire if you receive one. This is a formal chance to tell us how we're doing. For a questionnaire, contact Amy Torre at (860) 713-5161 or Mary Yabrosky at (860) 713-5251.

Answers to the Survey

Now that the DAS Employee Survey has been taken and tallied, what happens next? Strategic Leadership Center personnel will be going around to individual business units this month to explain the survey results. "We feel that a face-to-face with our fellow employees will make people feel more comfortable about asking questions," said SLC's Amy Torre.

"We'll obviously address agency-wide topics that affect all employees. We can also get into the details of different business centers at a later date," added Torre. Overall, the DAS Employee Survey is being heralded as a big success. Improvements in how the agency perceives diversity, training, and teamwork show that these surveys are worthwhile to employees and have a direct impact on employee satisfaction.

"What happens next is up to DAS employees," said Torre. After the presentations, employees are asked to fill out survey forms. "These feedback forms will help us tally what is most important to employees and what needs to be addressed first," she added.

Short Takes

The Race is On

The Connecticut 2000 Race For the Cure against breast cancer will be held on Saturday, May 13 at Walnut Hill Park in New Britain. For those who like to run, separate 5k (3.1-mile) races will be held for men and women. For walkers, the race offers a non-competitive, untimed one-mile Family Fun Walk or the non-competitive 5k Fun Walk. For children, the race offers a Kid's K Run, a one-kilometer (0.6-mile) event that will offer a fun, non-competitive challenge for children age 12 and under. If you are interested in volunteering or participating in the race, please call (860) 224-5900 extension 4151 for more information. **DAS**