



GOT STUFF Gone Wild!

By Nina Ritson

SOLD! The word is special to auctioneersand, in this case, special to the General Fund!

What began as a homespun suggestion on how to save money at DAS during the budget crisis, has exploded into one enormous statewide clean up campaign and perhaps a small shopping spree for sister agencies, towns, schools and non-profits.

"We are getting requests and filling them daily, it's great!" Lynn Peccerillo of Property Distribution was excited about the responses so far.

"Towns and municipalities are registered and on the system and actively buying! Groton Police Department requested exercise equipment and they got it – thanks to Corrections, and East Berlin requested mowers – they got them, too!" she said.

On July 17, during DAS' Got Stuff press conference, Governor Rowland was so impressed with the high impact of this

employee-generated budget-busting campaign, he announced a statewide initiative headed up by DAS.

Commissioner Waters, Jim Passier, and Linda Hubeny immediately assembled "swat teams" to venture out into the agencies promoting "Got Stuff" and helping point-persons get their surplus equipment online.

Hubeny, now charged with overseeing the Property Distribution Unit, has been working

long days and many nights along with Jim Potyra, Lynn Peccerillo, Matt Shea — and just when he thought it was safe to retire - Kenn Stephenson, to get this program off and running swiftly.

With reduced staff, Waters said that the thought of housecleaning initially seemed burdensome to many agencies, but it did not take long for them to come on board.

To sweeten the pot, DAS offered an incentive to agencies that placed their

items in the surplus system by September 12 – DAS picked up the scrapping cost (environmentally safe) of computer equipment not transferred or donated.

"We are seeing agencies hitting the system regularly every Wednesday morning to see what new items have become available," Hubeny lights up when she reports.

"Got stuff has made agencies and municipalities aware of how easily accessible this stuff is, at a fraction of the cost."

Back home at the SOB, what better way to celebrate the successful completion of months of hard work – but to throw a Dumpster Day party?



Fred Ondevilla (R) grills a mean dog as Peter Varhol and Linda Hubeny work the soda and chips. In the background, stuff is loaded into the Spacefitters truck as the SOB celebrates "Dumpster Day."

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They're back. . . healthy and on a high By John McKay



Jeanne Gray and Ray Bailey returned to work in August after undergoing kidney transplant surgery in May.

I'd do it again without a second thought."

That was Jeanne Gray's answer to a colleague who asked her about her recent kidney donation to friend and coworker Ray Bailey.

"It is the most gratifying thing I've ever done in my life," Gray said.

Although her recovery was arduous at best, Gray and Bailey both want to get the word out that they are both back at work and have a message for everyone: Don't be afraid to ask us questions.

"There have been a couple of rumors about the surgery and Jeanne's recovery that we'd be happy to address," said Bailey, "but more importantly, we want to inform people that organ donation isn't something to be afraid of."

These days Ray Bailey isn't afraid of anything. Since his new kidney, he is full of life and doesn't have enough time in the day to get everything accomplished.

"Before the surgery, I would pick one thing to accomplish all day. I only had a little bit of energy. Today, I'm my old self again and am reprioritizing my life," he said.

Part of that includes becoming an advocate for organ donation. Gray and Bailey are currently working with the Connecticut Kidney Foundation to promote donation.

"It's not like we're asking people to sign-up and give away one of their kidneys," said Bailey. "Other ways to get involved can be as simple as volunteering as an organ donor on your driver's license or simply giving blood to the Red Cross."

And since her donation, Gray is looking again to match the emotional high she's gotten from donation.

"I always hoped I could make a difference in someone's life. There's nothing like it," she said. "Now I'm looking to find another way to continue this mission."

Explaining the bond they've created is difficult.

"I think it's like going to war," said Bailey. "We're the only two who went through this experience so we now share this unbreakable, unspoken bond with one another. We will always have a special part in each other's lives no matter what."

Special Note: Due to some mailing address confusion and a never-explained mail policy at the hospital, Jeanne and Ray did not receive everyone's get-well cards.

"Please bring them in if they are returned to you," said Gray. "Each and every card meant so much to us, we'd still like to have them." She has been saving everything to put into a book she's composing about their donation experience.

"Connecticut seemed so far away from us during recovery," said Bailey. "We lived for every note, card, and e-mail. Thanks to everyone for your support, it meant a lot to both of us."

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Visit our website at www.das.state.ct.us

Kudos to **John McKay** from Patsy McLaughlin and Diane Mazar Roberts for his work on a new feature on the DAS nursing website. "The nurse marketing committee has developed a monthly rotation calendar for each agency to spotlight their employees, programs, etc., for nurse recruitment and marketing. DMR has kicked off the program highlighting their agency. John did a wonderful job of polishing up the presentation, before it was placed on the web."

Heather Tweeddale had words of praise for **Dave Lynn** and **Cheryl Catania**. "I called Dave this morning concerning a salary computation and he took the time to patiently go over the whole issue with me and I got an answer right there on the spot. I get alot of varied HR questions from my agencies and Cheryl always helps me. I know how busy she is but she will always take the time to help me and get me the right answer or send me in the right direction."

Kenn Stephenson thanked Procurement's **Lynn Peccerillo** and MIS' **Matt Shea** for their help at the PDC Forum which was an outgrowth of the "GOT STUFF" program. "I wish to commend Lynn for her input. She displays a high degree of professionalism and is a pleasure to work with. I also wish to thank Matt for his input, professionalism and for keeping me on an even keel."

Lynn responded: "I just wanted to add that I could not have done it without the help and teamwork of my co-workers. Especially, **Laurie Melesko, Eva Merriman, Meg Yetishefsky, and Lydia Rosario**. I am happy to be a part of a group that is willing to help and share their knowledge. Thanks guys!"

Commissioner Barbara Waters received the following note from BESB Director Donna Balaski: "I

read 'A State Agency That Earns Its Keep' published on August 31, 2003, in the *Hartford Courant* - Congratulations! It is great to hear of you receiving such nice positive press!"

Teresa Dupont sent along kudos to **John McKay, John Pacholski and Rob Zalucki**: "John, thanks so much for the awesome design you came up with for the jewel case cover of the WIN CD. Not only that you came up with the design, did not complain when edit changes were suggested, but made them within minutes, and printed them out in color, all in less than half a day. You are a pleasure to work to with. I would also like to thank John P. and Rob Z. who will be burning the CD's today for these beautiful jewel cases. You guys are the best! Thanks for all the hard work and for your patience with us!"

Lydia Rosario, Tina Costanzo, and Carlos Velez received words of praise from Michelle Knollwood: "On behalf of PPAC, I would like to thank all of you for your wonderful and informative presentation to PPAC on Sept. 11. I don't think alot of us realized the impact of the new legislation. It's been great for representatives from DAS to attend our meetings."

Jay Tulin expressed appreciation to **Mayme Casady**: "I just wanted to thank you and all the other folks involved for having the raffle for Jeff Lecce's family. I was on a committee with Jeff before he left State service and we had a lot of fun and he seemed like a real good guy. With all the craziness around us with layoffs and wars etc., it's good to know that people will still extend themselves for good people that may be in need. I really wish Jeff's family the best."

Diane Mazar Roberts thanked **Billy Skyrme** for a "super job on the on-

line evaluation for our HR Symposium. It looks awesome!!!!!!!!!!!!!!"

Angela Armstrong from DMHAS expressed her gratitude to **Paul Felix**: "Beautiful, Paul!! All four DMHAS Hospitals met the 1% Medicaid Utilization Rate for DSH this year. Yahoo!! Thank you very much for all your hard work on this. It is appreciated."

Mayme Casady offered a special recognition: "The group from MIS that

hats off

By **Donna Micklus**

so effectively set up the computers and worked closely with the move to the 5 North quadrant were: **Jose Baez, Brian Halloran, Brenda Rivera, and Anna Tara**. Cutting down the need for hard copies requires good computer support and we have a great customer friendly team that meets that quest. We appreciate you all on a daily basis in addition to the efforts you made for a smooth move. "

David Hartley at DOT praised **Celeste Cashman** and **Tina Costanzo** for "the assistance they provided in two major RFP procurements. In these times of constrained resources in both agencies, the knowledge and experience that they brought to this project was invaluable. ..This was a great example of the cooperation that is given by your agency."

The State of Nevada complimented **Vin Lombardo, Henry Jovanelly, and FSC/Collections** staff for sharing expertise, ideas and suggestions on the Avatar system. "Everyone's honest and up front opinions will help us to better prepare for the project."

Connecticut and Virginia Receive Top Honors

The National Association of State Purchasing Officials (NASPO) on Friday announced that Connecticut was one of two states receiving top national awards. The following is excerpted from the news release:

Lexington, Ky., — The NASPO Cronin Club Innovation Awards Program recognizes outstanding procurement initiatives and promote the adoption of these ideas throughout the states. This year, there are two separate categories: Cronin Club Classic Innovation Award and the Cronin Club IT Innovation Award, for use of IT to improve the procurement process. The awards were announced at the 2004 NASPO Annual Conference, Sept. 11 in Nashville, Tenn.

Connecticut's Weekly Information Newsletter was awarded the **Classic** Cronin Club's Gold Medal. The Procurement Services set a goal to develop a newsletter that would provide critical, timely information to our state agency customers. To meet the definition of timely, they decided to make it a **Weekly Information Newsletter**, which led to its name - WIN.

Knowing that printing and mailing a weekly newsletter would be cost prohibitive and inefficient, Connecticut decided to take advantage of available technology by providing WIN each Friday via email. When the newsletter debuted, it had several hundred state agency subscribers. Currently there are approximately 2,500 WIN subscribers including, not only state agencies, but also representatives from Connecticut municipal governments, schools, not-for-profit organizations and vendors.

The **IT** Cronin Club Gold went to the Commonwealth of **Virginia** for eVA; Electronic Procurement Solution. eVA's goal is to create a virtual procurement organization that embodies the beneficial aspects of both decentralized and centralized models. Specifically, eVA is designed to provide a common face of government to state vendors through a single registration point.

The Commonwealth's electronic procurement solution (eVA) is a hosted web based procurement solution that supports the Commonwealth's decentralized procurement environment through an elec-

power through increased competition and effective negotiations.

The **Classic** Cronin Club Bronze medal went to **Connecticut** for their Statewide Carwash Network. Connecticut DAS and Connecticut Com-



Jim Passier and Maureen Friedman bring home top honors from the National Association of State Purchasing Officials.



munity Providers Association (CCPA), and numerous commercial car wash vendors combined to develop a Statewide Car Wash Network to wash State Vehicles.

CCPA is a trade association representing nonprofit organizations that provide services for people with disabilities. The purpose of the program is to create employment opportunities for people with disabilities. CCPA's coordinator for the state use program took the DAS challenge and put together a network of twelve nonprofit organizations with nine car wash companies at thirteen locations. The commercial car washes were asked to take on workers with disabilities from local nonprofit community providers. In turn, these car washes became part of the network from which state employees could obtain car washes. The nonprofit organizations that provided the workers gave them training and support in a real work setting.

tronic procurement portal on the Internet. This portal allows Commonwealth Entities and vendors to access information needed for conducting business, including solicitations and awards. The portal hosts tools such as central vendor registration, an electronic mall for online buying, Quick Quote, and competitive sealed and unsealed bidding and negotiations. These tools, combined with a purchasing data warehouse and analytical reporting, enable the Commonwealth to leverage its buying

McKenna to take post at new agency

By John McKay

Okay, so maybe he's a little young to be called an institution.

But after some 17 years, our own Jim McKenna is leaving DAS' Business Office for new ventures.

Yet, McKenna has always viewed change as a positive thing. And his state career supports his view.

He started off at the Department of Transportation in 1973 and then moved on to the Southbury Training School as a material storage manager.

He then got a job at the Connecticut State Library.

"This was my first exposure to a state agency environment and becoming familiar with every level of financing from budget preparation, payroll, and troubleshooting. Plus, I really had a great boss there who taught me a lot about how to treat people, sharing credit and building long term professional relationships."

Then McKenna came to DAS.

"It was a natural progression for me," he said. "I like to grow professionally with every new job and DAS was the logical next step."

Soon after McKenna's arrival, DPW spun off of DAS, and McKenna was asked to consolidate the remaining business offices into one unit.

"I'm still working on that," quipped McKenna.

As McKenna leaves DAS for a Chief Administrative Officer position in the newly formed Connecticut Commission on Arts, Tourism, Culture, History and Film, he reflects that the biggest compliment he can get is the relationships and friendships he's formed in DAS' business office.

"We still keep in touch with people who left this office years ago and each one always says they wish they never left," said McKenna.

"That's a real achievement. However, I hope I'm not one of them saying that in the near future," he said with a grin.

Here are some parting sentiments from his colleagues:



Business Office Director Jim McKenna prepares to leave the surroundings of his office at DAS

up close

"I enjoyed that job a lot and made some great friends there. This was where I got my first taste of financing and budgeting."

McKenna recalls one day when the phone rang with someone from the state lottery commission on the phone.

"I was so excited that I thought I had won the lottery that I wasn't listening to what the guy was saying. When he said 'Do you want to come in for an interview?' I was like, umm...OK."

The interview leads to McKenna managing an Off Track Betting parlor in Torrington and then Waterbury.

"Man I could tell you some stories of the kind of characters that showed up at those places. I could write a sitcom about it," laughed McKenna.

"It will be very strange not having Jim come in every morning and walk around the Business Office with his familiar greeting of 'good morning' to every person. If someone is out, he will direct his 'good morning' to their workstation and sometimes even answers himself as well. I will miss him saying, 'Well, Jean what is the game plan for the day?' I will miss his great sense of humor, our serious business discussions, and the way that he always answered my questions with another question to make me resolve the issue myself. I'm sure that Jim will be very successful in his new venture and I wish him all the best."

-Jean Michael

"After working with someone for nearly 15 years, one cannot help but get to know them pretty well. You see them in a multitude of settings/situations and you see how they handle themselves and the particular crisis of the day. Jim has always been a calming force. No

continued on next page

E-Mentoring: DAS Blazes Another New Trail

By Adam Liegeot

DAS is positioned to become a national leader in e-Mentoring.

At an October 10 event, Lt. Governor Jodi Rell will announce that DAS has become the first state agency in the United States to implement an e-mentoring program for young people with disabilities.

E-Mentoring is a mentoring relationship that is conducted via e-mail. Its goal is similar to face-to-face mentoring: to establish a trusting, positive relationship between a caring adult mentor and a young person.

For example, a young person who is deaf might find it difficult to communicate with a mentor through a

traditional mentoring program. E-Mentoring breaks down that communication barrier and puts the mentor and mentee on an level playing field.

Once a week, DAS e-Mentors will be able to send e-mail messages to mentees from their workstation computers.

"We hope to see e-Mentoring eventually connect hundreds of middle school, high school students and young adults with state employees," said Suzanne Liquerman, DAS's ADA Coordinator and Disability Employment Specialist.

"Great relationships develop. Caring adult mentors help students link learning to the world of work.

E-Mentoring helps motivate students to succeed in school and life."

Liquerman hopes to develop a small pilot program at DAS, involving only five to ten matches.

Once she receives enough positive feedback about the program from everyone involved, she hopes to see e-Mentoring expanded to all state agencies.

Liquerman thanked the National Mentoring Partnership for providing the "Mentors Online" tool kit and software developed by AOL and Time Warner for their Digital Hero's Program, Connecticut Mentoring Partnership, which will provide training for the mentors and provide ongoing

technical assistance.

She also thanked Rick Miarecki and everyone at MIS for installing the software and managing the technical compo-

nent to make it possible for DAS employees to e-Mentor.

"We're very excited that Lt. Governor Rell is supporting the program," Liquerman said.

"She understands that e-Mentoring can specifically impact employment of people with disabilities. It acts as a catalyst to stimulate new ideas about employment."

Any DAS employee interested in participating in the e-Mentoring program should contact Suzanne Liquerman at 713-5057.

At an October 10 event, Lt. Governor Jodi Rell will announce that DAS has become the first state agency in the United States to implement an e-mentoring program for young people with disabilities.

McKenna, cont. from previous page

matter what the problem or situation was, we could always count on Jim NOT to get ruffled and he would always offer some kind of positive "pep" talk, and then suddenly, the problem did not seem so bad, or insurmountable. Jim has tremendous confidence in our abilities and he knows just when to challenge us and he has a "sixth sense" to get out of our way to let us accomplish the mission. He has a keen sense of when to step in and when to back off (and let us go). Jim is an awesome listener. He would seek our views/opinions/input and our viewpoints received very careful consideration. Jim may not have always agreed with everything we came up with, but he gave us a chance to say our piece. If he didn't agree with us, Jim explained his reasoning and he did it in such a way so that we did not feel small. I've learned a lot from Jim and I'll miss him."

-Jerry Lynn

I will miss Jim's "good mornings". Every morning Jim walks through and says "good morning" to each person in the Business Office.

-Kathleen Sobieski

What I've learned from Jim is that we are all here to help DAS achieve its goals and objectives. I am sure Jim will take this quality with him to his new position. Jim has been a lot of fun to work for and with. I will miss his carefree style and his witticism.

- Tracie Knapsack

Jim, all of us at DAS will miss you and we wish you every success in your exciting new position.

HR Symposium: *Change and Evolution Managing Change in the Modern World*

By Cheryl Sawina

DAS sponsored its second HR Symposium on September 24, entitled "Change and Evolution, Managing Change in the Modern World." It was well attended by 80 human resources professionals from various agencies.

In the spirit of going paperless, no materials were handed out at the session and will be available on DAS' website in the next week. There is also an online evaluation for the participants to give feedback.

With Cheryl Sawina and Diane Mazar Roberts moderating, the agenda was a full one and included opening remarks by Alan Mazzola, Martin Anderson and Pam Libby. The feature of the morning was Dr. Steve Sobel, hailed as speaker

extraordinaire; he uplifted the participants through his quips, stories and penchant for picking on Martin!

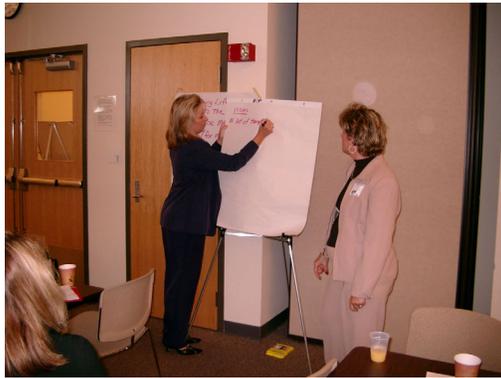
A panel discussion followed featuring DOC and DCF and the organizational changes they've undertaken in their HR departments. Dan Callahan, Tracey Butler and Brenda Abele from DOC and Wanda Estrella, Len Oberg and Diane Anzellotti from DCF shared their experiences and fielded questions from participants.

To wrap up the morning, attendees were given the opportunity to participate in an HR World Café, brainstorming sessions around the topics of Performance Management, Layoffs and ERIP, Core-CT, and Workforce Planning.

Plans for next steps include continuing the conversations started around the above topics and creating an online HR newsletter.

Initial feedback has been very positive about the Symposium.

Special thanks to the team that helped make it a success: Heather Tweeddale, Carolyn Koloseus, Patsy McLaughlin, Steve Soklow, Lina Simonu, Shari Grzyb, Nancy Jones, Linda Shackett-Blue, John McKay, Kathleen Rabera, and Bill Skyrme.



DAS folks in the spotlight at the HR Symposium: Clockwise: Carolyn Koloseus, Nancy Jones, Heather Tweeddale, Shari Grzyb, Lina Simonu, Diane Mazar Roberts, Steve Soklow and Patsy McLaughlin



CoreCT

By Bob King, Communications Coordinator for the Project Team

Core-CT HRMS (Human Resource Management Systems) applications will be going live October 27, starting payroll processing for the first bi-weekly and semimonthly check date of November 14.

The new HRMS system, after three years of planning, development, and testing, will automate many formerly manual functions and integrate state government's human-resources functions to a greater degree than ever before. Separate personnel and payroll systems, and the need for time-consuming data reconciliation, will be a thing of the past.

Human Resources transactions in APS will be frozen for a short period in mid October. A bulletin describing what that means to agencies using APS is being developed to guide users.

For example, all HR transactions will be limited during the period of October 13 to October 27, and transactions that do occur at agencies during that period will need to be entered into Core-CT upon go-live.

Position approvals will need to be done in APS by a yet to be determined date in order to meet the deadline. More details will be coming shortly.

Directions on the procedure for closing down the MSA payroll system went out to agencies the first week in September.

Detailed information on the new deposit advice/check stub document for all state employees, including some changes for those holding multiple state jobs, will be included in pay envelopes for checks dated both October 3 and November 14.

After the successful launch of Core-CT Financial modules in July,

the Core-CT team, project steering committee members and directors, and top state human-resources managers are expecting another good outcome.

Enhanced productivity, streamlined business practices and elimination of redundant systems are among the goals of Core-CT (see "How Will Core-CT Improve How the State Works?" at <http://www.core-ct.state.ct.us/coreuser/improve.htm>). The Core-CT team and some 1,350 HRMS are working to make these goals a reality.

Training for Core-CT HRMS users is well underway. Hands-on HRMS system training classes have begun, with approximately 900 seats having already been filled at 79 sessions. Previously, about 1,250 future Core-CT HRMS users attended 31 overview training sessions. (Agencies have identified about 1,325 HRMS users and many users are actively involved with the project on an ongoing basis.)

UPDATE

Municipal Officials Trained on E-Surplus

By Adam Liegeot

Municipalities and schools can now view available state surplus property on the online Property Distribution Center (PDC), and DAS held six Property Distribution Forums in September to train local purchasing officers on how to use the system.

The Forum came about as a result of the "Got Stuff?" project that is now being implemented statewide.

"Our main goal is to get surplus property to you folks cheaper, better, and quicker," Kenn Stephenson told the first class of trainees.

Seventy-six representatives from 61 cities and towns attended the forums. They were taught how to acquire surplus property, how to

search for and request specific items, and how to understand the billing system. Each official received a secure password to allow them access to the system.

"Our idea was: Let's make this a virtual warehouse," Stephenson said. "We're going to try to make this as smooth and easy for you (municipalities) as possible. The whole system has been designed around a paperless process."

The prices of property are more than reasonable: \$50 for the first item and \$15 for each item thereafter. Stephenson pointed out that municipalities can now request surplus property as soon as they see it appear on the system.

"Every Wednesday, DAS approves 'stuff' to appear on the system," he said. "That means that every Wednesday, municipalities are going to see a new batch of items appear on the system."

Stephenson, was joined by Linda Hubeny, Lydia Rosario, Jim Passier, Jim Potyra, Lynn Peccerillo, and Matt Shea in guiding municipal representatives through the process and making the new service as effortless as possible for DAS customers.

"I'm just a temp here," Stephenson said to the trainees. "Commissioner Waters deserves the credit for implementing this program. She's the one who sparked the changes at DAS."

STUFF, cont. from p. 1

On September 30, DAS hosted a building-wide Dumpster Day at 165 Capitol Avenue.

From 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m. DAS sold hotdogs, soda, and chips while groovin' to tunes spun by our own Tony Smith of Fleet. The proceeds collected from food sales went toward the DAS Holiday Party in December. Who knows, after this, maybe Dumpster Day Gone Wild!!

There's still more to come. On Saturday, October 18, the entire contents of Long Lane School, (27 buildings) will be auctioned. Items like bunkbeds, brand new mattresses, kitchen equipment, gym equipment, desks and an entire auditorium will go on the block.

"There are even dentist chairs from the 1940's and 1950's, real retro!"

Hubeny laughs. She also noted "I am very thankful for the inmates from Uncasville for all their hard work setting up this auction."

Whatever items do not sell at auction will be offered free of charge to non-profits on Thursday, the 23rd, and then open to the public on Saturday the 25th of October. DAS is anticipating a fantastic turnout at this event!!

Once again, DAS has taken a clever suggestion and polished it into a statewide money-saving crusade.



MIP on the Move

By John McKay

"It's been a bit like a traveling road show," said Housing Authority Insurance Program Administrator Aimee Gagnon.

During the past few weeks she's been on the road hailing the benefits of DAS' Master Insurance Program (MIP). The Housing Authority Insurance Program is a division of MIP.

The program unites multiple state housing authorities under one umbrella to strengthen their buying power. The authorities then can help moderate-income and elderly residents lower their insurance premiums and consequently, lower their rent.

The National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials hosted Gagnon's first trade show at the Mohegan Sun in Uncasville.

"It was a great opportunity to speak to the Housing Authority employees, get a grasp of their perspective on

insurance, and of course, finally put a face with a name!" said Gagnon.

DAS E-Partner Lydia Rosario accompanied Gagnon to demonstrate DAS' procurement site and the other opportunities that housing authorities and other customers can take advantage of.

The second trade show was at Foxwoods Casino in Ledyard. "I know it looks suspicious having two trade shows at the casinos, but I didn't plan it," joked Gagnon.

She said the Foxwoods conference also offered informational breakout sessions where she could learn more about the insurance industry as well as other potential opportunities.

"My predecessor retired a few months ago and it's been a very 'learn-as-you-go' atmosphere for me," said Gagnon. But she's already getting into the swing of things. One of her first projects was to issue an RFP for property insurance coverage.

"Thank you Tina Costanzo and Carlos Velez! They were lifesavers on making sure everything went

smoothly," she said.

And she already sees new opportunities for MIP.

"I would like to offer more to our customers. For example, a dental plan is in the works for the housing authorities. If they could get a huge group rate on dental care, I think that might draw more people to our program."

Currently the MIP has 97 housing authorities under its umbrella. "I'd also like to synchronize the expiration and start-dates of our policies," she said. "Instead of constantly researching which policies are expiring and which ones are being issued each month, it'd be great to have them all harmonized."

All and all, it looks like DAS' MIP program is in good hands.

"It's interesting, hectic, and keeps me really busy all at the same time, added Gagnon. "Plus I really enjoy the altruistic fact that I'm helping people who really do need to save money, it's very rewarding."



Profile

...our strength is in our differences

Theresa Dupont, Procurement Services

Lithuanian Traditions

By Maureen Friedman

From time to time, the Diversity Council will profile a DAS employee to learn about the customs and celebrations that are unique to their heritage.

Our first profile is Teresa Dupont, Contract Specialist with Procurement Services. Teresa is 100% Lithuanian and comes from a family rich with traditions that have been handed down from generation to generation.

Many of Teresa's memories are of her grandparents, Jonas and Prane Liudzius, who were forced to leave their farm in Sakiai, Lithuania to escape the advancing German troops. They eventually came to America in 1945.

Her grandfather was a beekeeper, a tradition that is now carried on by her father, Joseph. Teresa remembers that after the honey was extracted, she and her sister and brothers would take pieces of the honeycomb to use as chewing gum! They would ask their grandmother for a drink made of honey, lemon and water, that they called "ka Grempa geira", which translates as "what grandpa drinks".

Her grandfather also used honey to make Krupnikas, a traditional Lithuanian liqueur made with honey, orange rinds, grain alcohol and spices.

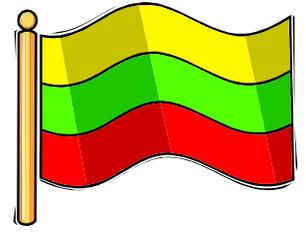
Today her father and brothers continue to produce this delicious drink that is sure to warm anyone on a cold winter day!

Another custom that has been carried on for three generations is the making of a traditional Lithuanian wedding or celebration cake called Raguolis, which translated means "horn cake".

It is not your typical cake. Depending on the size, a Raguolis contains 30 to 90 eggs along with flour, sugar and butter. The authentic process is to slowly pour the batter over a special dowel as it revolves horizontally over an open fire, to produce a tall spiked form with a hollow center. These spikes or "horns" can be broken off and eaten.

As a child, Teresa remembers getting in trouble for sneakily breaking off "horns" after it was baked. When her grandfather made Raguolis years ago, he used charcoal in a spit and the cake took all day to bake. Her grandmother would help to turn the spit by hand, drizzle batter and continue this process all day!

Teresa's father, brother, Joe and sister-in-law, Dianne, who continue to make this traditional cake, now use a motorized machine that turns automatically and has speed adjustments. What once took all day, now takes about 4-7 hours depending on the size.



Holidays mean special Lithuanian treats like "ponckai", a doughnut type confection with a prune filling to mark the beginning of Lent. At Easter time eggs are decorated using melted bees wax to draw designs and then they are dyed using onionskins and beet juice.

On Easter Sunday, each family member gets one of the colorful eggs to hit against another person's egg. Only one of the eggs will crack and if it happens to be yours, you are out of the contest. The egg smacking continues until the last person with an uncracked egg is declared the winner!

At Christmastime "plotkele", a rectangle shaped wafer is shared. Each family member breaks off a piece and passes the wafer to the next person. Of course, for special occasions Teresa's mother, Bette Ann bakes mushroom cookies (no they are not made with mushrooms, they just look like them). Potato pancakes *must* be fried in the cast iron pan that has been in the family for over 55 years.

Growing up, Teresa went to school to learn how to speak Lithuanian so she could communicate with her non-English speaking grandparents. She attended St. Andrews; a Lithuanian church in New Britain and participated in the choir and dance groups.

Teresa also attended Camp Neringa in Brattleboro, Vermont. There she learned Lithuanian songs, dances, crafts and folklore. When Teresa attended this camp, only Lithuanian was spoken. Today Teresa's son, Matthew attends Camp Neringa where now English is spoken in addition to Lithuanian.

Teresa lives in Bristol with her two children, Matthew, age ten and Miranda, age nine. Their generation is the first one that is not 100% Lithuanian. Even so, Matt and Miranda are learning the customs and traditions that have been in Teresa's family for generations so they may hand them down to their children someday.

By the way, it's almost Krupnikas time so if you are interested in donating orange rinds for Teresa's father or if you would like to learn more about her Lithuanian heritage (there's lots more!), give her a ring at x5073!

If you or anyone you know would like to be profiled in *DAS Times*, contact Isabelle McKinney at x5103.

Special photo section

The DAS Summer Picnic Olympics













