



DAS Hosts Bird Flu Summit to “Keep Government Going”

By Donna Micklus

On a rainy, fowl morning, Dr. Martin Anderson talked turkey. As chairman of the June 2 Flu Summit held at Rentschler Field, Anderson said, “I’m here today and you are here today to get serious about the planning and preparation that is necessary to keep essential state operations running in the event that we have a pandemic flu here in Connecticut.”

Governor M. Jodi Rell had charged Commissioner Linda Yelmini with organizing a flu summit to develop individual agency plans for the impact that the pandemic flu could have on the state workforce’s ability to deliver vital services.

In a historical framework, Anderson described the 1918 flu outbreak in the state. “Government broke down in many places, but not here in Connecticut. They attributed that to everything being handled openly and candidly. Communication was reported to be very good,” he said.

He also noted those segments of the population most susceptible to the 1918 disease. “The greatest death rates were 20-30-year old male immigrants who worked in the close quarters of the mills. Sick people came to work and made other people sick because they had no choice but to work or lose their pay and possibly their job,” he explained.

“So that gets me around to two things: Help keep our employees to stay well in the first place and plan for how we can keep essential business operations of the state going in the event of a pandemic flu and possibly a reduced workforce,” Anderson said before introducing Commissioner Yelmini.

Brenda Sisco Named Deputy Commissioner

By Nina Ritson

“I love the people here at DAS...they couldn’t be nicer or friendlier!” What a great first impression for newly-appointed Deputy Commissioner Brenda Sisco who joined the DAS family on June 9.

A Connecticut native, Sisco brings over 11 years experience in the Governor’s Office - first as a Legislative Liaison then as the Legislative Director. Her career actually extends beyond public service to the private sector where she worked at the Aetna in Government Relations.

“It’s only my fourth day here but I can’t wait to get to the point where I am



Brenda Sisco

comfortable with the projects and services DAS offers – and can go forward. I will tell you this -I already have respect for the knowledge and background the employees of 10-15-20 years have here. People work very hard!” she said.

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“As the Governor’s Legislative Director, we were involved in so many aspects of state government and had to spread our energies very thin to enable us to know a little bit about everything. Here, I can’t wait to be able to focus on DAS projects only. I had no idea how much DAS is intertwined in all areas of state government. I am very much looking forward to this!”

Sisco particularly enjoys the camaraderie at DAS. And, as a walker and runner, she immediately got involved in ConnectiFIT and “signed up for my pedometer.”

“I’ve also noticed the frequent communication within the agency and the infograms for the pancake breakfast and other functions – I think this is great. Not only is it great for employee morale to host functions where employees can share thoughts – but overall it keeps the agency very

close! I was told by many people before coming here that DAS was one of the best agencies to work for in the state – and several employees have already told me I am going to like working here. That says a lot in itself!”

But Sisco is also looking forward to shifting gears and being able to focus on family life. She is not only a government guru, but the mother of two beautiful eight-year old twins, Kevin and Kathryn. Their photo in her office, with their white-blond hair from the summer sun, clearly reveals their love of the outdoors.

“Soccer – baseball - swimming - this is our lives now – every day, every weekend - and my husband and I just love it! I am grateful for the opportunity to be able to be there for all the kids’ activities – I love being in their world!”

She went on to describe the experience of having twins and said that the first year after they were born

was a bit of a blur, just trying to keep up with their demands.

“Now that they are older we are enjoying the kids, their friends...and keeping up with their schedules is pure pleasure! This weekend alone we have a four-game soccer tournament to go to!” Sisco confessed to being very fortunate that her husband’s schedule allows him to be the driver to all their activities – which frees her up to leave work and head straight to the events. This is something all moms would cherish!

Having endured the incredible pace of the legislative sessions, and survived the early years of raising baby (times two), what does a Deputy Commissioner do to relax?

“Well, this summer we are vacationing in Nantucket but other than that - nothing – my favorite thing to do is nothing - just chill - sit and relax and maybe read a little!”

List Serve Replaces Bidder Notification System

By John McKay

DAS Procurement Services is replacing the current Bidder Notification System with an easier, more efficient List Serve. Procurement customers already subscribed to DAS’ current bidder notification system will automatically be enrolled. The new service took effect June 5.

“Technologically speaking, the new system will be less taxing on our Internet and email servers,” said Procurement’s Joe Giliberto.

“Plus the everyday maintenance will drop significantly.” Giliberto went on to say that DAS Procurement has been able to customize the email in response to customer feedback.

“We had some really good suggestions from our customers on how to improve the message for ease of use as well as making it easier to read and find information.”

Previously, customers had to provide quite a bit of information to receive bidder notices. Now it’s as easy as sending an email.

Existing customer information has already been migrated into the new system.

For help or more information call the State Contracting Portal hotline at 860-713-5430.

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M. Jodi Rell
Governor

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Commissioner

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

Judge James J. Lawlor from the Probate Court commended **Nina Ritson** for her “valuable assistance in producing the 2005 annual report of the Probate Court Administrator. Your fine work on the layout, design and other aspects of producing this important document helped create an attractive publication that is enjoyable to read. I appreciate your efforts and your professionalism. Thanks again.”

Theresa Johnson-Jones from Board of Education and Services for the Blind commended **Carole Biernacki** and **Pam Bowe** “for their

Isabelle McKinney sent the following thank you to **Nina Ritson**: “Nina, what a fabulous article on the TASTE! I love the format and the interviews made it even more interesting and lively. The photos are so vivid that I almost want to try an empanada with a cool glass of Sweet Sixteen punch. **John McKay, Nina and Franky Rivera**, thanks for such a fantastic job covering the TASTE 2006!! Have a splendid day!!”

John McKay wanted to acknowledge **Kimchi Le** of MIS for “an amazing job of figuring out the Law Enforcement exam website. She was quickly thrown into a project that had non-negotiable deadlines, multiple parts, and intricate complexities. She figured it all out, met the deadlines and the demands of Human Resources, all while being professional and courteous. Job well done, Kimchi!”

months. No matter what the question or concern, you have always been available and willing to help and your prompt attention to our concerns is remarkable in light of your many other duties and responsibilities. The recent TSHC overview you presented to us and the upcoming retirement overview in July are merely two examples of how accommodating you have been. I just wanted to make sure that you know how much we appreciate all the fine work that you do to make our jobs better and a little less stressful, and what a tremendous asset you are to DAS, CORE-CT, and to state service. Thank you.”

The DAS Communications Office received too many comments to print on the 2006 Annual Report “Premiere”. This particular kudo from Carlos Velez to **Donna Micklus, John McKay, Nina Ritson and Cindy Rusczyk** represents the general sentiment of the messages: “Hi Donna, John, Nina and Cindy - Just a quick note to say NICE JOB! Thanks for making us look so good and for providing me the opportunity to be involved in this project. I enjoyed it. Congrats again on a job well done!”

hats off

By *Cindy Rusczyk*

outstanding service to our agency. I would also like to commend the staff at the Wethersfield Garage for their service to our organization as well. I would send Carole and Pam flowers but that’s against policy. They should be commended for the things they do on a daily basis. This is what all state employees should strive to be like.”

Food Service Director Maryann Lopez applauded **Dan Sadowski** for getting 10,000 pounds of cheese added to her fall order for 06/07 school year. “Wow you guys are miracle workers! I am impressed. I really had resigned myself to not having a lot of cheese for the fall. Thank you from all of us here!”

Procurement Services received the following comment from customer Mary Doherty, Technical/Business-to-Business/Commercial Writer: “The bidder email looks GREAT today! The *Connecticut Procurement Daily Notice* looks really good with its new layout, its delineating color scheme and the white space. Easy to read, easy to find your own section, and a nice reflection on your departments. Please tell whoever did the revamping that today’s notice is really nice.”

Stephen Caliendo sent the following message of thanks to **Lina Simonu**: “On behalf of the SMART Human Resources and Payroll units I just want to take this opportunity to thank you for all of your assistance and cooperation over the past few

If you didn’t get your own CD of the 2006 DAS Annual Report, drop by the Communications Office in Rm. 407 to pick one up!

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In her welcoming remarks Yelmini lightened the mood of the 200+ employees gathered, with her own rendition of "The Bird is the Word," followed by another musical reference to the song, "Turn, Turn, Turn" or ("Tern, Tern, Tern") by (who else?) The Birds.

Of a serious nature, Yelmini said that Governor Rell asked DAS to convene this meeting to make sure state service continues...not just in the event of a flu pandemic, but for any health hazard.

"It is almost a certainty that the flu will get here...the only question is when, and we just don't know how serious it will be," Yelmini said.

"Today we start the process. DAS doesn't have the answers; we're here to help you develop your own agency plans," she explained.

She cited the Y2K panic, but noted that in that instance the state was preparing for interruption of equipment.

"We are now preparing for loss of the workforce," she said.

Department of Public Health (DPH) Commissioner Dr. Robert Galvin said that people find it hard to understand why there is no vaccine for this specific flu strain.

"We can't develop a vaccine until the virus mutates. We can't develop a treatment for something we don't know," he said.

"We can try to treat symptoms with drugs like Tamaflu - but this flu is different. Traditionally flu is a bundle of sneezing coughing, fever and aches. This flu attacks the deepest parts of the lungs. The good news is because this virus is so deep in the lung, it renders it more difficult to pass from person to person," Galvin explained.

Who will get first treatment in terms of pills or Tamaflu in the event of a shortage?



Commissioners Yelmini, Galvin and Dr. Martin Anderson address state employees at the Summit



"Police, fire fighters, and emergency medical people. We can't have anarchy," Galvin said emphatically. Most medicines must be given in the first 12-48 hours to be effective. Then he joked that the Commissioners of DPH and DAS should have first dibs at medicines, too.

Robert Kenny of DPH and Michael Varney talked about agencies' need to take a team approach, beginning with an assessment of each agency's own capabilities.

"The COOP (no pun intended) or Continuation of Operations is critical," Kenny said. Varney talked about how to develop a COOP plan.

"ID the services you provide, prioritize and ID who provides those tasks. Document jobs in case an employee doesn't show up. Beware

of single points of failure. Determine how that function can be performed or know how long you can go without providing it."

He stressed that employees should expect to plan for a 10% - 40% reduction in personnel.

The attendees then took part in COOP workshops that centered on:

- A communication strategy to reach all employees and contractors
- Policies and procedures to promote a healthy workplace
- Employee training and educational opportunities promoting wellness
- Difficult planning scenarios

The Summit concluded with a "Town Hall" meeting on major points and themes from the café discussions.

Thousands Sign Up for Law Enforcement Exam

By John McKay

Running, stretching, sit-ups and pushups. Not a gym commercial, but the physical exam process for candidates interested in state police, correction and protective services positions with the state. One of DAS HR's largest undertakings is the coordination of thousands of candidates who signed up for the written exam, physical assessment, and verbal requirements for the positions.

Because so many passed all phases of the exam, DAS HR expects a high-caliber turnout and an exceptional recruiting class this year.

A State Police class is tentatively scheduled for this fall, and the Protective Services class includes Conservation Enforcement Officers, Police and Inspection Enforcement.

The physical evaluations took place June 19 through June 28 at the Maloney Training Center in Cheshire.



Clockwise: Task masters Rita Rose, Michelle Burns, Andrea Yurcak and Pauline Mahony run the physical assessment testing



...our strength is in our differences

The DAS Diversity Council is looking for members!

***Please consider joining this wonderful group of dedicated people.
You will not be disappointed!***

In you are interested, contact any of the following members by July 14:

Donna Camillone, x5029

Nancy Bryant, x5038

Laura Guilmartin, x5258

Carlos Kebe, x5429

Glenda Rollins, x5422

Cathy Abadom, x5476

Juliet Colebrook, x5128

Isabelle McKinney, x5103

Connecti Fit

By Nina Ritson

Now that Connectifit is entering week 8 of its Walking/Pedometer program, the advisory committee is happy to report that participants have walked a total of 11,724,187 steps collectively to date (6/26/06) or 5,862.09 miles!

They are already making plans for the celebration of what they accomplish in 10 weeks and have begun thinking ahead to the next 10-week program.

"This rainy and cold weather pattern didn't do any favors for walking unless walkers were allowed to count steps double that involved jumping puddles," laughed Dr. Martin Anderson, Connectifit chairperson.

"Participants in the walking/pedometer program have totally exceeded the imagination of the ConnectiFIT advisory council. The results so far have gone far beyond expectations of the Connectifit team, and with this number of dedicated walkers in the midst, we should have selected some place about 5,000 miles away for our joint walking goal!"

There are also new brochures available near Anderson's office on the 5th Floor.

One is from the Department of Agriculture showing locations of all of the farmers' markets around the state. It includes the days/times of the market that will be started across the street in the First Presbyterian Church parking lot on July 10, running through October on Mondays, 11 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The downtown farmers' market has already started midday Mondays-

Wednesdays-Fridays at the Old State House, 800 Main Street.

Additionally, there are new fliers from the Downtown YMCA located on the second floor of the Civic Center, 241 Trumbull Street. State employees get substantial discounts and are not assessed joiner fees, so take advantage of these great programs!

The Lunch and Learn sessions, held twice, one on June 8 with a presentation by Weight Watchers and again on June 22 with Gertrude Sutcliffe from the American Heart Association, were very informational and well-attended!

Looking ahead, the committee is planning its closing party for July 26 from 11:30a.m. – 1:30p.m. in the South Mechanical room. On that day walkers will turn in their pedometers and may sign up for the next session.

The kickoff for the fall session will be on August 21 and the actual program will begin on September 4. This time the recording of steps will not be restricted to the workweek and will include all walking - 24/7!

TIP!

The ConnectiFIT Advisory Committee has a tip for DAS employees pursuing health and fitness. Take the time to review the discount and wellness programs that are available through your State of Connecticut health insurance plan. Many employees may not realize that some plans give them introduction rates to weight loss programs or discounted health club memberships or similar offerings. Committee members are not recommending one plan over another. Rather, they are hoping that employees will take full advantage of discounts and programs available through their plans that will help them achieve their health and fitness goals.

Around and About

By John McKay

Wrong Web Address?

If you're looking to make some changes to the web, contact DAS Communications. From old email addresses or links that don't work any more, contact John McKay in the DAS Communications office for a quick change to the web. "Feel free to email me the change, just be sure to include the exact webpage you need the edit to appear on. We have a lot of web pages out there and it can be difficult to find the exact page without some kind of reference," said McKay.

Hawkeye!

Many State Office Building employees were worried last week when a baby hawk seemed to have left the nest too early. For weeks, employees have observed our resident hawks build a nest, lay two eggs, and watch as two hawk chicks were successfully hatched.



very observant, but noticeably nervous, mother could only watch from treetops and her perch on the North East corner of the SOB.

During the second morning of Junior's great escape, a DEP employee put a towel over Junior, rode the elevator to the fifth floor and went right

into Henry Jovanelly's office, opened a window, and returned Junior to his family.

Through an interpreter, we've learned that Junior has been scolded a number of times and is considered grounded until further notice.

They're Off!

Take your mark, get set, Win! HR's Sue Turko and Collections Services' Henry Jovanelly have some bragging rights when it comes to their kids. At the Annual Race Around the Lake in Marlborough, Turko's son Kevin, and Jovanelly's daughter Kristen, both took home top honors. Kevin is currently with DAS as a summer worker in the MIS unit.

With a time of 17 minutes 10.2 seconds, Kevin Turko was the first male runner to cross the finish line, while Kristen Jovanelly was both the youngest and fastest female to finish the race.



Eighty-three racers competed in the 20th annual race sponsored by the Marlborough Lion's Club to benefit local charities.