



Managers' Briefings a Big Hit

By Donna Micklus and Nina Ritson

Seriously, now. Who would think that a Freedom of Information (FOI) briefing would pack the house? We're talking dry, tedious statutes, not exactly the electricity of a Springsteen concert.

But nevertheless, the DEP Phoenix Auditorium was standing room only on October 1 as Commissioner Anne Gnazzo and Dr. Martin Anderson welcomed attendees to the DAS Learning Center sponsored event for state managers.

Thomas Hennick of the Freedom of Information Commission had the audience hanging on his every word as he presented factual, sometimes personal, and often humorous anecdotes of how managers in government, by law, have to comply with certain requests for information.

"FOI is about access to public meetings and records, and compliance with FOI is about your interpretation of what is and is not exempt. Not everything is black and white. You are tasked with interpreting what the law tells you what to do – and we are here to assist," he said.

Although he explained that FOI laws apply to all public meetings, not just state agencies, Hennick focused his discussion on the information state managers are usually asked to obtain. He talked about what is deemed disclosable, what is exempt, the four-day response time, and the prompt provision of information.

Okay, define prompt.

"A large FOI request cannot cripple or shut down an agency with limited resources to respond. Do what you can, commit a portion of time each day to research and respond, and try to keep the requester informed of your efforts to do so," Hennick advised.

He went into detail on what constitutes public meetings and also gave updates on changes in the laws. The audience embraced the Q & A segment of the program with enthusiasm,



Commissioner Gnazzo and Martin Anderson give welcoming remarks to a full house of state managers



sharing stories that were all too familiar to anyone who has ever responded to an FOI request.

No stranger to the public or the media,

Hennick joined the Freedom of Information Commission after two decades in the print media as both a reporter and editor/publisher.

Somewhat confluent with FOI is the media's neverending quest for information for a story.

According to presenter Brian Garnett of the Department of Correction, state managers need to be ready, prepared, and cautious when responding to a reporter's questions or granting an interview.

Garnett, too, has a career history in television and journalism, so he is seasoned as to what to expect, what to be wary of, how to respond, and most important – to *always* respond.

"You need to take control of the situation, stay calm and professional, and remember: 'he who talks off the top of his head, may just lose his head!'"

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Tom Hennick

He stressed the need to “proceed carefully, especially when you are up against a foe that buys paper and ink by the train car!”

But Garnett also cautioned that you can never ignore the media because any void will be filled with rumor, innuendo or worse.

“They have an agenda, so you need to have one, too. Determine a reporter’s interest, needs and dead-

line and don’t be pressured into responding too quickly,” he advised. “Keep your story positive, prepare your talking points and stick to them. And probably most important - always notify the chain of command when responding to the media – even if it goes all the way up to the Governor’s Office.”

What happens when a reporter does you wrong?

“A wrong uncorrected becomes the truth,” he emphasized. He suggested contacting the reporter’s editor. “A letter to the boss is worth a dozen calls to the reporter.”

That led to a discussion on his opinion of bloggers. When asked if

he considered bloggers ‘legitimate press’, he said, “A blogger is just a guy with a computer.”

He would not allow them at a news conference or in a secure area because “bloggers are not answerable to anyone, so you can’t go to a hierarchy for redress.”

He concluded that the best policy in dealing with reporters is to be up front, proactive and timely.



Brian Garnett

The Birth of the “Briefings”

By *Martin Anderson*

The DAS Strategic Services group started a New Manager Orientation Program in 2006. Newly promoted or hired managers join DAS staff and experts in state government for 11 sessions covering topics from the fundamentals of Connecticut government to the prevention of workplace violence.

When I visited with agencies, and other groups to showcase what we had planned in the New Manager Orientation Program, people complimented DAS for starting the program, but in the same breath, asked what we were doing for the managers who had been around for a while. Hence, the DAS Management Briefings were created.

Developing the concept for the Briefings began with a simple premise: How do we do something that will have maximum impact for current managers with minimal cost? The usual answer to a question like that is “not do it”. However, at the same time that

Strategic Services was getting serious about planning and executing some type of forum for current state managers, we were approached by Erin Choquette of our own DAS staff who had an interest in pulling together a presentation on the status of employment law for managers. Knowing a good thing when we saw it, we launched what we called a “Management Briefing” by teaming Erin with Meredith Trimble of the new Office of State Ethics to do a briefing on “Ethics and Employment Law Update”. We sent fliers to all agency commissioners, the Management Advisory Council, and agency HR administrators and filled the session to capacity through the DAS Learning Center website in two weeks. Even more interesting is that we didn’t have a budget to serve coffee, pay for parking, or pay for anything but handouts, and the managers still came and filled the Phoenix Auditorium at DEP.

Strategic Services’ Diane Roberts, Steve Soklow, Peggy Zabawar and Nancy Jones met on the “Briefings” concept and concluded that we could carve out enough time, energy and resources to do them quarterly. We surveyed managers at the first

session on topics of interest to them, so we had some ideas for future presentations. This led to our June Briefing, “Labor Relations Update for Managers” and our recent October Briefing. Every Briefing so far has been registered to capacity weeks before which has made us think of using larger venues for future sessions. What is very special about the program is that Commissioner Gnazzo began her work at DAS shortly before the first briefing, and she has come to greet the managers at each session since.

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M. Jodi Rell Governor

Anne D. Gnazzo Commissioner

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Claudette Carveth from the Department of Consumer Protection praised **Nina Ritson**: "I just want to say how great you've been in helping us with the materials we needed, especially in the weeks leading up to the Big E. The mini-brochure, the Lemon Law book and the signs all looked really terrific! Thanks so MUCH for your time, talent and energy."

Executive Director Nancy Kushins from Connecticut Sexual Assault Crisis Services, Inc. sent the following message to Steve Caliendo and Olga Gerber commending **Debby Hearl**: "I am writing to let you know how incredibly helpful Debby Hearl has been in the search for a new Victim Advocate. She has responded quickly to any requests we have made and has consistently provided thoughtful assistance and advice. Her professionalism and attention to detail have made all communications with DAS a truly positive experience."



Lori St. Armand from the Board of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB) applauded **Nina Ritson** "for your assistance with the pedestrian safety banner for the Big E. The agency strategic planning committee is spearheading the pedestrian safety issue and when they saw the banner, they were quite pleased. So pleased, in fact, that soon you may see your handy work appearing on the back of the CT Transit buses! Thanks so very much!"

IT Manager Greg Sheehan from the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) extended his thanks to **Susan Pawloski-Burke, Andrea Yurcak, Dale Greenwood, Rick Miarecki, Jose Baez, and Anna Tara**. "I'd like

to extend my sincere thanks for your participation in Stand Down 2007. Your support was critical to the overall success of the event, and by all accounts this year's event was a resounding success. Thanks again for your dedication to Stand Down, and thank you for 'serving' those 'who have served'."

Shari Grzyb thanked **Linda Hubeny** for addressing her problem with the carpeting in her area so quickly and referring the issue to **Peter Varhol**. "Peter came by and sprayed the carpet so that it stays in place. I appreciate the quick service. Thank you to all!"

Linda Hubeny thanked **Alex Cacaes** "for doing such a nice job putting together the Property Control Manuals, they came out GREAT!"

Food Services Director Heidi Buchholtz from the Montville Schools sent her thanks to **Linda Hubeny, Dan Sadowski and Wayne Stocking** from the Food Distribution Program "for being our Connecticut USDA heroes. Thanks so much for all that you do!"

Cheryl Stockford from the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services complimented the **DAS Communications Office**: "I am sending your way Mental Health Transformation products that resulted from the work you did to develop the initiative's logo. Your team captured the essence of the Transformation message voiced by consumers and providers alike..." "Hope." We continue to receive positive responses regarding the logo and think it looks great on our print products. We hope you agree! We remain grateful to you for your contribution to this process. Thanks again!"

Tina Costanzo praised **Cindy Milardo** "for assisting Celeste Cashman at a mandatory pre-bid that I could not attend. The bid is very high profile and involves the cameras that monitor traffic incidents state-wide. We've had to re-bid this project several times due to specification issues. Cindy represented the statutes thoroughly and professionally and provided Celeste support in my absence. It is greatly appreciated that quality staff can provide assistance when needed. Thank you, Cindy!"

Celeste Cashman also wanted to express her "thanks to **Cindy Milardo** for attending the pre-bid meeting with me at the Department of Transportation yesterday. I know it's not easy for anyone to drop what they're working on, but I do appreciate the support. Thank you, Cindy!"

Marian Cicolello from the Women's Business Development Center thanked **Meg Yetishefsky** for "the wonderful class last evening. The evaluations from the session that I attached are all very positive feedback. Thanks for all your assistance."

Kudos to **Susanne Hawkins** from Ann Simeone "who once again, I can't thank enough for her thorough, always willing to help a colleague's ASAP request. You're the best!"

Trish Bauer from the Council of Governments commended **JoAnne Rella** for "getting back to me so quickly" after checking on the status of their reporting exemption, with regard to Disadvantaged and Minority Business Enterprise use.

Lisa A. Powell from the Small Business Administration applauded **Tony Deluca and Joe Giliberto** for their help at the procurement workshop at Gateway Community College.

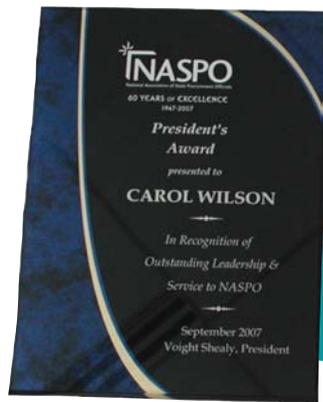
Wilson takes home top NASPO awards

By Donna Micklus and John McKay

Procurement Services Director Carol Wilson was a two-time award winner at the September annual conference of the National Association of State Procurement Officials (NASPO) in Savannah, Georgia.

On the final evening of the conference, Wilson was presented with the 2007 Marketing to State Governments Committee Meeting award for her outstanding efforts as committee chair.

She also took top honors for receiving the coveted President's



Award for her outstanding leadership and service to NASPO.

"I'm not afraid to volunteer and get involved with different aspects of an organization," said Wilson.

"I really enjoy the work and meeting with different procurement professionals from around the country. It was a good experience and a great learning opportunity," she added.

The National Association of State Procurement Officials is a non-profit association dedicated to strengthening the procurement community through education, research, and communication. It is

made up of the directors of the central purchasing offices in each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and the territories of the United States.

In her typically modest fashion, Wilson down played her celebrity status on the national procurement stage.

"It's just what I do," she said.

DAS Team Recognized for Tax Intercept Success

By Nina Ritson



L to R: Audrey Pinette, Kathy Sobieski, Diane Preble, Mohammed Sheikh, Brian Halloran

Kathy Sobieski and Diane Preble, along with the IT team of Mohammed Sheikh, Brian Halloran, and Audrey Pinette, were recognized with a citation for exceptional achievement for their work on the Connecticut State University System Income Tax Revenue Intercept Program.

Ever since the state income tax became law in 1991, DAS has been intercepting state tax refunds and cross-referencing them with debts that are owed to state agencies. This

year the program added on debts owed to the Connecticut State University System - Eastern, Central, Southern and Western, and the University of Connecticut.

For the tax-filing year 2006 DAS, along with the Department of Revenue Services (DRS) has offset a total of \$830,071 to date for those universities. They also offset for the Department of Social Services, Department of Labor, Connecticut Student Loan Foundation, and DAS. A monthly file is coded and prepared by DAS for DRS, and each week DAS receives the offset file of monies from the hits. DRS notifies the taxpayer of the offset and their refund is garnished to pay back the debt.

"For instance, maybe someone has a refund coming to them for \$400 but they owe the state \$200 for public assistance. DRS will deduct the \$200 from the refund and notify the taxpayer that their return has been offset," explained Sobieski.

"At this time we only intercept CT tax returns. To date there is no vehicle in place to collect these debts against federal income taxes, although they have been talking about it for years."

"All the work is in the front end – setting up the files and making sure all systems work and communicate well," she explained. "After that, maintenance is relatively smooth and it is just a matter of staying on top of the data."

"Thanks to legislation that just passed, we will be bringing on the Connecticut Higher Education Supplemental Loan Authority, a quasi-state agency for student financing. Monies will be collected for defaulted loans that are owed to them." Sobieski anticipates a smooth launch to this program with a tentative start date of November 1.

The tax offset program for the tax filing year of 2006 brought in a total of \$7.3 million to date. That's no pocket change – congratulations!

Governor Rell Welcomes New Managers

Governor M. Jodi Rell is shown in her State Capitol office as she prepared to deliver video-taped remarks to welcome participants in the New Managers Orientation Program.

The DAS Communications Team of Donna Micklus, Nina Ritson and John McKay were on-site to capture the moment on film with their hi-tech teleprompter equipment.

"That consisted of the script pasted on a large poster board that we balanced on the lens of the camera, so she could read the script and look into the camera at the same time," Micklus said.

Spielburg they weren't.

"Actually, the Governor and her staff thought it was pretty clever, not to mention thrifty," McKay added.

"She was on a really tight schedule that day, and right in the middle of the take, which was going flawlessly, the air conditioning kicked in with a loud vengeance, totally ruining it. I looked at Nina who was visibly turning ashen. But the Governor was so accommodating and breezed through another take perfectly," Micklus said.

"It means a lot to the participants in the program to see that the Governor is so engaged," said Martin Anderson who, along with his staff, has run the program for new state managers since it began in January 2006.

In her remarks the Governor said, "You are a part of my team and a part of what makes our state government great every single day. You will find that people may not always appreci-



ate all of the hard work and sacrifice that can come with being a manager in state service. But know that I do. Good luck and best wishes!"

DAS Terminates State Contracts with Trash Haulers

By Donna Micklus

Commissioner Anne Gnazzo announced earlier this month that DAS will terminate 26 trash-hauling contracts between the state and four companies.

The decision to terminate the contracts comes after the companies were indicted by a federal grand jury and principals and key personnel of the companies entered into plea agreements on procurement-related offenses.

The contracts with CWPM of Plainville, A.J. Waste Systems of Cheshire, Dainty Rubbish Services of Middletown and John's Refuse Removal of Northford have an estimated annual value of \$686,076. They will be terminated effective December 1, 2007.

Gnazzo said that the agreements are being terminated under a standard contract provision that allows DAS to terminate any contract for

convenience if it is deemed to be in the best interests of the state.

"This is an industry clearly in need of more oversight," Governor M. Jodi Rell said.

"These developments reinforce the need for a statewide authority to license and monitor owners and individuals in the trash hauling industry. Last year I directed the Departments of Public Safety, Consumer Protection and Public Health to work with the Chief State's Attorney's office to develop the outlines for such an authority. The legislature did not act on my proposals, but I will again be offering legislation to establish a Solid Waste Hauling Authority, to require background investigations on trash haulers and to require that every hauler be licensed by the Department of Environmental Protection."

To date, 32 individuals and 10 businesses have been charged with

various offenses stemming from a long-term federal investigation into the waste-hauling industry in Connecticut and eastern New York. Several people, including one from each of the four companies whose state contracts are being terminated, have pleaded guilty to offenses ranging from violations of the federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act to destruction of property to prevent its seizure.

"We will move swiftly to ensure that the cancellation of these contracts will not cause a disruption," said Gnazzo.

"The health and welfare of the employees and customers of those state agencies is a primary concern. DAS will immediately begin the process of soliciting new contracts so that full trash removal services can be in place before the December 1 termination date."

Electricity Contracts for State Buildings Will Save \$18 Million

DAS Procurement Services plays key role in achieving savings

By John McKay with excerpts from the Governor's news release

Sold to the lowest bidder! Auctioning electricity? Believe it! Commissioner Anne Gnazzo said that a new, innovative process to procure electricity for state buildings by 'bundling' contracts will result in a savings of \$18 million in state energy costs.

In addition to the fiscal savings, the new contracts will also increase the state's use of "clean and green" renewable power by an estimated 17 percent over the term of the contracts, which begin in November 2007 and run until June 2009.

The Office of Policy and Management (OPM) and DAS Procurement Services, with the assistance of World Energy Solutions, Inc., of Worcester, MA, conducted an open, online "reverse auction" to procure power for state buildings. The auction process placed qualified bidders in competition with one another. The lowest bid at the close of the auction won the contract award. This process allowed the state to drive down its costs by using competition to its advantage.

All Executive Branch state agencies, all Judicial Branch facilities and the state's public universities and colleges participated in the auction. In total, these facilities use 500,000,000 kilowatt hours of electricity per year, which is enough electricity to power more than 60,000 homes. By bundling those state government contracts, the state maximized its purchasing power because the per unit price per kilowatt goes down with the more electricity purchased.

"I am excited that so much of the electricity under these contracts is clean and renewable," Governor M. Jodi Rell said.

"This is the kind of creative approach to government that our citizens expect and deserve, and we need to introduce similar efficiencies wherever and whenever possible," Governor Rell said. "By using market forces to our advantage, the State was able to achieve substantial savings to taxpayers while making great strides to meet clean air policy objectives."

"Savings like this is next to unheard of," said Procurement Director Carol Wilson. "To be part of this with OPM and see the work result in this kind of savings is what it's all about! The team did a great job!"

In a letter to Gnazzo, OPM Secretary Robert Genuario wrote, "Mr. Paul Greco was instrumental in developing

the contracts and working with our contractor and auction bidders for this first-of-a-kind procurement. Mr. Devin Marquez assisted in developing contract modifications and obtaining approval from the Attorney General's office.

Without the capable guidance and assistance of these individuals, this procurement would not have been possible."

Greco said that improvements in technology played a large role in finding the right price. He, along with OPM representatives, met in a venue electronically equipped to watch the price offers come in.

"Companies were electronically jockeying for the lowest prices via a large display screen, and as the prices got lower the savings got higher. When the final price came in and we locked it in, we knew we had just saved the state a ton of money," said Greco.

"It's not everyday we're able to realize such a substantial amount of savings. These are the types of contracts that really get everyone's attention," he added.

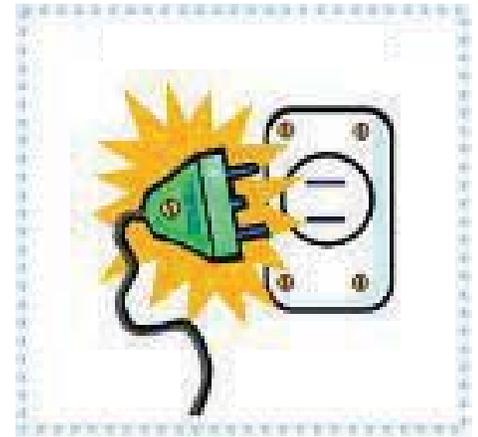
The Governor noted that the contracts will provide certainty for state budget planning through the end of FY 2009, insulating the state from additional costs associated with energy price spikes.

In the fall of 2006, Governor Rell released her *Energy Vision for a Cleaner, Greener State*, which set a goal of increasing the percentage of clean, renewable energy consumed by state government from all sources to 20 percent by the year 2020.

"While these contracts are exclusively for electric energy supply, the auction achieved great progress toward my *Energy Vision's* goal of 20 percent by 2020," Governor Rell said. "Connecticut can and must be a leader in clean energy."

"This contract is 17 percent green energy," said Greco. The savings both financially and environmentally make it a win-win for the state and the environment."

In addition, the auction process afforded the state the ability to obtain additional green power at a no cost premium. OPM estimates that the green supply obtained in the auction will reduce carbon emissions by approximately 65,000 tons annually.



DAS Fleet Station to Pump Ethanol

By Donna Micklus



Got E-85?

Governor M. Jodi Rell and Commissioner Anne Gnazzo announced plans for the conversion of a 10,000-gallon underground tank at the DAS garage on Buckingham Street in Hartford from unleaded gasoline to E-85 ethanol.

“With today’s fuel prices, any way the state can diversify its fuel consumption will mean saving taxpayers money as well as improving our environment,” Governor Rell said.

State vehicles used about 3.3 million gallons of gasoline in 2006. The Governor said that she wanted that number reduced not only to save money but to save energy as well.

Gnazzo said the state can save the equivalent of more than 554,000 gallons of gasoline a year by buying more hybrids and ethanol-powered cars, cutting the number of miles driven by about five percent and maintaining the use of natural gas-powered cars.

Earlier this year, Governor Rell directed the Departments of Administrative Services (DAS), Transportation (DOT) and Environmental Protection to examine the state’s alternative fuel strategy. Their recommendations call for upping the fleet’s use of E-85 to 25 percent from its current level of three percent and installing additional gas stations to support the increased use.

Gnazzo said that DAS and DOT identified two high volume facilities in Hartford and Norwich that could be converted, at a reasonable cost, to dispense E-85. Currently, there are two E-85 pumps in the state, one in Newington and one in Danbury.

“We elected to convert the Hartford facility first, based on the sheer volume of gasoline that is consumed at that location,” Gnazzo said.

In 2006, the Hartford facility pumped 293,000 gallons of unleaded fuel. Based on that figure, estimates show that after replacing one 10,000-gallon tank, the facility can expect to pump 140,000 gallons of E-85 when the conversion is completed.

The Norwich facility has one 6,000 gallon tank which pumped 87,500 gallons of unleaded fuel in 2006. The Governor said that the Norwich

conversion will be revisited when additional funding is available.

The Office of Policy and Management has committed \$50,000 for the fuel station conversion project through funds received+ as a result of a settlement with the oil industry for violations that occurred when regulatory controls were in place in the 1970’s. OPM had designated those funds be made available for renewable energy projects at state facilities.

Gnazzo explained that there are already vendors on state contract that can perform the work at the Buckingham Street facility which is estimated to cost between \$26,000 - \$37,000.

Fleet Director Tom Yuhas said the conversion is expected to be completed by the end of October.

DOIT Selects New Encryption Tool for Laptops

(excerpted from Governor’s news release)

The Department of Information Technology (DOIT) has selected a new encryption tool for use by state agencies for laptop computers and other mobile computing devices.

“We are taking every step possible to safeguard sensitive state information,” said Governor M. Jodi Rell.

The tool, developed by SafeBoot, will be used for encryption of information on laptop computers and other devices that store data. It was selected by DOIT and an interagency working group from 12 agencies, including DAS.

The tool will be deployed as soon as possible to agencies, and is currently available through an existing federal contract, ensuring

favorable pricing to the state.

DOIT is currently surveying agencies to determine the number of devices requiring encryption and working on a rapid acquisition and deployment strategy for the encryption tool.

There are also new protections for state BlackBerry devices. The use of passwords is now mandatory to access data. Passwords have set expiration dates and must be changed regularly.

Governor Rell has directed all agencies to assess and purge sensitive data currently on laptop computers and portable storage devices if there is no compelling business need for the information to be stored on those devices.

Hoaxes and Urban Legends

What You Should Know

We have all received emails promising get-rich-quick schemes, warnings of major computer meltdowns or images exploiting the latest natural disaster. These emails are more than just an annoyance; they do have a purpose, which is often malicious.

Often their messages are untrue, but a few of the sympathy messages in past hoaxes have been based on real events. Some also use sensational news items like earthquakes, plane crashes, or terrorism incidents to entice people to open attachments and forward the message to others.

Email messages written with the intention of the recipient sending it to people they know are known as chain letters.

Chain letters may be sent by strangers or well-intentioned friends or family members. Verify the information before following any instructions or passing the message along.

There are two main types of chain letters:

Hoaxes – Hoaxes attempt to trick or defraud users. A hoax could be malicious, instructing users to delete a file necessary to the operating system by claiming it is a virus. It could also be a scam that convinces users to send money or personal information. Phishing attacks could fall into this category.

Urban Legends - Urban Legends are designed to be redistributed and usually warn users of a threat or claim to be notifying them of important or urgent information. Another

common form are the emails that promise users monetary rewards for forwarding the message. Urban legends have no negative effect aside from wasted bandwidth and time.

How can you tell if the email is a hoax or urban legend?

Some messages are more suspicious than others, but be especially cautious if the message has any of the characteristics listed below.

- It suggests tragic consequences for not performing some action;
- It promises money or gift certificates for

performing some action;

- It offers instructions or attachments claiming to protect you from a virus that is undetected by anti-virus software;
- It claims it's not a hoax;
- There are multiple spelling or grammatical errors, or the logic is contradictory;

What can I do to protect myself and my organization?

If you get an email warning about a virus, call your help desk, or if you experience this at home, run your own anti-virus program. Do not circulate warnings or suspect messages without first checking with an authoritative source. Don't forward chain letters.

Never open an email attachment unless you know what it is—even if it's from someone you know and trust.

Be sure to keep your anti-virus software up to date!



Speaking of Scams

By John McKay

A popular phone scam currently circulating is that of a sales representative trying to sell copy machine toner cartridges.

Copiers leased or placed through DAS statewide contracts **include** toner cartridge replacement. DAS Procurement strongly suggests reviewing contract 04PSX0044 (especially p.13 section 2.7, and p. 41, footnote #1).

The caller will identify himself as a representative from A & A Office Systems – a legitimate state vendor – but he is misrepresenting the company. He or she will try to sell you toner cartridges at “substantial savings” emphasizing that this offer is only available via your agency P-card.

Some words of wisdom from people who have experienced these calls say the caller never gives a last name or phone number and, if questioned enough, will likely get frustrated and hang up.

Professional courtesy dictates that it *is acceptable* to hang up on an aggressive sales person, especially if you are suspicious of their motive or the representative makes you feel uncomfortable in any way.

Once the call is over, DAS Procurement suggests alerting other purchasing staff members about your contact with the caller and how you handled the situation.

Procurement Director Carol Wilson said, “There are plenty of these scams out there. We are taking proactive measures to inform all of our business partners of this particular situation. As with your own personal credit cards, please be cautious about giving out your P-Card number and verify the legitimacy of all orders placed to suppliers.”

The Sweet Taste of DAS

By Nina Ritson and John McKay

The afternoon of October 24 took a sweet turn for the better when, once again, the Diversity Council hosted the Sweet Taste of DAS.

"This is definitely one of my favorite events," said Commissioner Anne Gnazzo. "All the work and organizing by the committee has truly paid off. Employees really contributed to the Sweet Taste and the result is a huge spectrum of foods from around the world. Delicious!"

So what was served up? Everything from cookies to candybar brownies, lemon cake, cheesecake, pound cake, strawberry shortcake, and pumpkin pies and squares.

Aimee Gagnon summed the afternoon up perfectly, "Sensory overload!"

Susanne Hawkins said, "I love expressing my Swedish heritage with Pepparkakor – it's like a gingersnap cookie, and with Dubblachoklad flarm. Recipes and sweets I remember from my childhood. What fun!"

There was also Rugelach, a Jewish pastry of Ashkenazic origin, Italian pastries, pasticottis foggiatele, biscotti, pizzelles, and ricotta squares. Scotland was represented by shortbread, Puerto Rico – flan, France by miniature cream puffs, Ireland by raisin cookies and Hungary by a poppy seed cake.

The mascot of the Sweet Taste is Raguolis from Lithuania. This very time-consuming dessert was once again brought to us by Teresa Dupont's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Liudzius, whose livelihood has been baking this dessert in the tradition that spans four generations. Raguolis can weigh anywhere from 3 to 15 pounds and as Teresa said, "the most eggs ever used to make this was 121 – for my wedding. My

grandfather used to make it in the back yard by the old method with my grandmother pouring the batter as he needed it – now they are using much more modern methods."

While Devin Marquez was on a mission in search of canolis, Jim Gotta confessed, "I'm going to need to run five more miles after this."

From the South came sweet potato pie and zucchini bread, mango wafers, pineapple Jell-O salad, and Halloween cupcakes.

And if this does not send you into sugar shock, there was Death by Chocolate – to die for, not just once, but twice – two bowls full!

Ray Bailey baked with sentiment, "I had to make my grandmother's recipe from scratch; it's the best way to honor her memory."

Ann Simeone was very excited, "The flan was the bomb!"

Once again, a huge thank you and congratulations goes to the Diversity Council for an extremely successful and delicious event showcasing DAS' many heritages and cultures.

"I really want to thank everyone on the Council for all their efforts," said Deputy Commissioner Brenda Sisco. "From the decorating, to the posters and the organizing of all the dishes, they really worked like a well-oiled machine. Good job, team!"



...our strength is in our differences





More "Taste" Pix

