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## Procurement takes its message on the road

By Mike Mansfield

In keeping with the moniker of its "Building Bridges to Our Customers" outreach campaign, DAS' Procurement Learning Center (PLC) set up shop off-site, for the first time bringing word of its new programs directly "to the people."

The most recent offering of their popular seminar took place in the conference rooms of the Department of Transportation in Newington

on March 15 and 29.

Over 50 attendees came from as far away as Seattle to hear the eighth in the PLC's continuing series of informational classes.

In his address, Procurement Services Manager Jim Passier estimated that the classes have been given to over 400 vendors since the program's inception exactly one year ago.

"This is all a joint effort among the buying teams - there is no management involvement in the presentations," Passier said, adding, "It's been a pleasure to watch them do this."

DAS Commissioner Barbara Waters was in attendance, and expressed her delight at what she saw.

"I could not believe how much we have going on in Procurement," she exclaimed. "It is truly remarkable to see the distance that we have come in such a short time."

That progress was apparent to many in attendance, one of

## Employee recognition in the throes of Spring Fling!



It's "shades" of Spring Fling for FAR's Henry Jovanelly, sporting one of the souvenirs of the day as he participates in the Employee Recognition kick-off celebration in Newington.

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whom said frankly, "I like the 'no nonsense' attitude of this course. We're not just talking about the Internet and the opportunities there, I can actually go online right here and register myself now."

This course was all the more unique in that it was the first for which application forms could be registered online.

By promoting the event via the DAS Procurement website and email to prospective attendees, Contract Specialist Maureen Costigan speculated that she could broaden the range of responses and hit those hard-to-reach individuals that hadn't yet seen the presentation.

Her theory was proven accurate - about one third of the attendees

said they found out about the course electronically. One was even visiting from Washington state! OK, Costigan admitted, so the man's trip east was not solely for the seminar - he'd been attending a work function in New York - but the fact that he stayed the extra nights and made the trip to learn about the state's new approaches to enhancing service and efficiency was a testament to the entire Procurement Services staff's gains over the past year.

Those gains were not at all lost on Waters.



**DAS Procurement Services holds an off-site session to brief vendors on new programs. To date, over 400 vendors have participated in the Procurement Learning Center seminars.**

"What is most amazing to me is the depth of talent that we have; this is a real team effort," she said in a congratulatory message to all Procurement personnel. "It is very difficult to turn an image around, but it was clear from the response that you have done just that."



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[www.das.state.ct.us](http://www.das.state.ct.us)

# Help wanted...

By Heather Cavanaugh

**M**ake a mentoring commitment this year by participating in the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.

Last year at the *Connecticut's Promise to Our Youth* summit, an act was signed encouraging state employees to volunteer to mentor a child in need - the first act of its kind in the nation. In return for this one-year commitment, the state will grant one week vacation to the

state employee.

The Governor's State Employee Mentoring Campaign, administered by the Commission on National and Community Service, is looking to increase the number of youth that can benefit from this program. This can only be achieved with your support.

If you want more information or would like to volunteer, please contact Merrily Moynihan at 713-5047 who is coordinating the program for DAS.

Marlene Artibani, from the Department of Higher Education, complimented all **DAS employees** for their “improved service, communications, procedures, and paperwork. The staff has been considerate, helpful, and friendly. HRBC is much more service-oriented, and having agency liaisons is one of the best ideas yet!”

Kathy Kirkpatrick from James Martin Government Consulting thanked the **Procurement staff** for their seminar on *How To Do Business with the State of Connecticut*. “I was impressed with their technical knowledge and client-friendly attitudes.”

Kudos to **Joe Mikulski** from Jean Michael and Jim McKenna for “catching up on five months worth of billing for the Federal Donated Foods Program in just two days.”

Lovie D. Bourne, assistant commissioner of the Department of Children and Families, commended **Robert Cosgrove, Susan Lizee, and Jim West** for “their quick response and courteous manner compiling data in response to a letter from the Governor’s Office.”

Thanks go to **Peter Varhol** from Jean Michael for always being so helpful. “No matter what we ask him to do, he does his very best to do the task quickly and pleasantly.”

Congratulations to **Celeste Cashman, Ted Schilke, and Vince McMahon** from A. Edward Platt of Stevens Lincoln Mercury on the *Recipe for Success* program. “I was impressed with their professionalism, topic knowledge, and demeanor.”

Special thanks to **Bill Skyrme** from Lisa Chasse for all his help with information gathering on the managerial pay plans. “Just wanted to let you know that you are appreciated.”

**Linda Hubeny** was commended by Karen Foley-Schain of the Children’s Trust Fund for volunteering to help one of their employees “quickly and patiently through the process of downloading software.”

Eileen DeRosa from North Central Food Service sent her appreciation to **Tony Ferreira** of Federal Donated Foods for “making excellent suggestions and a follow-up call to see how they were doing.” In her 25 years of food service, she said she never received so much help from anyone.

Compliments to **Cheryl Welton** from Judy Resnick on “clearly a job well done” with the *Meet the Vendors Workshop* featuring DAS’ new CDL Drug and Alcohol Testing vendor.

Tony Ferreira thanked **Olga Delarosa** for always being a supportive co-worker since he started with DAS and “for truly exceeding her customers’ expectations.”

Valerie Fletcher of the New England ADA Technical Assistance Center applauded **Suzanne Liquerman** for being a participant on their Regional Advisory Board and “for your commitment to our shared vision of a more fair and inclusive society.”

Angela James of the Dept. of Veterans’ Affairs commended **Cinde Mabry** for her invaluable assistance in preparing and conducting an on-site educational session ensuring that their HCFA medical billing requirements were met.

Thanks go to **Kerry DiMatteo** and **Jim Passier** from Edward Kane of Fleet Operations for helping solve their credit card accounting problem. “Lou, our parts guy, is smiling for the first time in a long time!”

## Hats Off

By Cindy Duberek

Thanks go to the **Procurement staff** from Mike Santorso of Cedarcrest Hospital for making purchasing so “user-friendly and for being a real source of energy.”

**Linda Kobylenski** was applauded by Joan Tardiff from L & M Productions for redoing form specs and “making them easier to read and right to the point.”

Debra L. Curtis from the Insurance Dept. thanked **Patty Gallucci, Vickye Cotton, and staff** for “getting out an important and time-sensitive mailing on such short notice.”

**Christine Mansolf** was commended by Kendall F. Wiggin from the Connecticut State Library for her “outstanding work, technical assistance, and expeditious processing of their requests.”

Commissioner John P. Burke from the Dept. of Banking extended his appreciation to **Linda Hubeny** for her “cooperation and success in locating an LCD projector for a one-week examiner training session, and for helping us to avoid rental fees.”

## ***Savings soar with new Travel Card program***

**P**rourement Services is flying high over recent travel agreements with Sanditz Travel.

Sanditz has signed agreements for airfare reductions on both Airtran and Midway Airlines for state business travel. Similar agreements are currently pending with US Air and American Airlines.

DAS Contract Specialist Cindy Milardo said these negotiations can add up to a potential savings of \$100,000 to \$250,000 per year.

“Sanditz is coming through so well for us,” Milardo said. “I’m especially pleased with the fact that



they’re so customer-oriented. As soon as you have a problem, you just have to call them on the phone and they solve it.”

Milardo said Sanditz has also taken over DAS’ car rental contracts, negotiating corporate rates for rentals through Alamo and Enterprise Car Rental.

Sanditz Travel has been the state’s travel services vendor for less than one year. DAS, the Comptroller’s Office, the Attorney General’s Office, and Central Connecticut State University joined together to choose the new vendor.

Milardo said one reason the state chose to use Sanditz, a certified small business, was because of excellent references the company received from other customers.

“I was very pleased with the seamless transition we had with Sanditz,” Milardo said.

After hearing how satisfied DAS was, the state judicial department and the University of Connecticut Health Center have also decided to use Sanditz.

“I love this company,” Milardo said.

“I have absolutely nothing but good things to say about them.”

## ***Fleet scores big on customer satisfaction poll***

**C**an DAS deliver on customer satisfaction? Sometimes it’s best to find out one customer at a time.

The recent Fleet Operations customer survey was DAS’ first attempt to learn how its customers feel about the service they receive at Fleet facilities on a consistent, one-customer-at-a-time basis.

DAS’ Strategic Leadership Center (SLC) designed a questionnaire with the input and review of Fleet personnel. SLC’s Martin Anderson said the content of the customer survey was modeled after a long-used questionnaire given by the Toyota Corporation to people who received repair services.

“On DAS’ Fleet survey, we ask customers to rate the service they received at Fleet repair facilities plus let us know which areas affect their satisfaction most,” Anderson said.

Respondents were asked to grade Fleet on issues such as turnaround time, accuracy of diagnoses, courtesy, the mechanics’ knowledge, quality of work, and convenience.

SLC’s Steve Soklow reported that response has been tremendous.

“The February analysis is done - that’s 167 survey forms returned. And I’m in the middle of the March analysis - another 155 surveys returned,” he said.

So how did Fleet do?

How about a 99-percent approval rating? And three out of every four respondents called the service “excellent.”

“I think that the survey results should communicate to the staff of Fleet services that they are not merely good, they’re excellent,” Anderson said.

Again, Anderson stressed, it’s important to remember the volume of responses - over 300. That means that the 99 percent approval rating is based on much more than a small handful of forms filled out by a few contented customers.

Based on the comments shared by some respondents, it appears the state’s customers are getting just that.

“The best comment I read was from someone who wished he could find service as good in the private sector as he received at Fleet,” said Anderson. “That speaks a mouthful.”

# From Russia with love

By John McKay

Immigrating from the Soviet Union when he was 19, MIS' Mark Zager still finds it hard to express his excitement about coming to America.

He said that learning to speak English was not that hard for him because he had been taught it in school in his native Kiev.

But he added, "it was the writing that was hard."

"I guess that's why I enjoy computers so much. I can let math be my

Hartford in 1989, he enrolled at Trinity College where he wanted to pursue a career in medicine.

"However, I come from a very



Mark Zager

technology-oriented family," he said.

"My mother, father, and brother are all engineers. Plus, pursuing medicine is an incredible commitment, so I majored in chemistry and have a minor in computer science - two very technical fields."

Zager is currently a computer programmer for DAS at 340 Capitol Avenue.

When asked to compare Americans to the Russian people, Zager said he finds Americans are much more logical and can express their thoughts and ideas clearly.

Americans, he said, are also very business-oriented and have a great work ethic.

"In America, if you want something bad enough, you can make it happen," said Zager.

"Simply the availability of opportunity and the possibility of success are awesome motivators," he said.

Zager said that Russians are much more ideological and emotional and sometimes let their feelings dictate their thoughts."

He also stated however, that there are many similarities. Growing up in the USSR, high school proms and graduations are much like those in any high school in America. He mentioned though that some Russian stereotypes are true.

"Russians really do love to play chess," Zager added.

***"In America, if you want something bad enough, you can make it happen. Simply the availability of opportunity and the possibility of success are awesome motivators."***

language. Just don't ask me to write a report," he joked.

After his family moved to West

## Up Close

When he lived in Russia, Zager used to practice and compete in pingpong competitions.

"It wasn't anything formal, but it was something to do," he said.

Zager and his friends used to practice in an abandoned movie theater in Kiev.

"I once made it to the quarter finals, but the competition was pretty tough," he said.

"It's funny, for years and years pingpong was the only competition I knew. Now with the fall of the Soviet Union, competition is the name of the game in Russia."

# Spring has sprung, the fling was flung

By Heather Cavanaugh and John McKay

Frisbees were flying, bubbles were floating, and smiles were abound at the Employee Recognition Committee's Spring Fling kickoff parties in Hartford and Newington.

Room G-38 in the SOB was decorated in spring colors with balloons, carnations, and jelly beans to welcome and attract curious employees. FAR-Newington held a similar event in the main hallway of Building 11, with flowers, food, and fun for all.

"Frisbees in the round file" was a contest umpired by Employee Recognition Program (ERP) Chairman Steve Soklow in Hartford. The object was to throw a specially marked ERP Frisbee into a receptacle. As the anticipation grew to compete, so did the line to play.

"The line was probably 10 to 12 people deep at one time," said Soklow. "People were cheering one another on and clapping. It was a lot of fun." The winners of the Frisbee contest were Don Chaffee, Tony Ferreira, Joann McAllister, and Carol Wilson. Newington sponsored more of an informal contest where many participants won huge sunglasses and Frisbees to take home to their families.

The parties were geared to inform employees about the recognition program and encourage them to nominate those employees who have gone above and beyond the call of duty. Handouts with important ERP information were distributed to all who attended.



Carolyn Koloseus (left) tries her hand at blowing bubbles as John Wilkerson looks on at the Employee Recognition Spring Fling kickoff at the State Office Building in Hartford.

Mike Felix of FAR said, "This is really cool seeing all these people recognize and support the program."

As the ERP logo states, this is a program run by employees, for employees. The key is to get involved by recognizing your peers. Ballots can be easily accessed through DAS Central on Lotus Notes. They must be sent by May 14, the last day of the spring nomination period.

## Altruistic Alphonse

By John McKay

With all the UConn coverage in the March 30 *Hartford Courant*, readers may not have noticed the "Volunteer of the Week" article about DAS' Antoinette (Toni) Alphonse.

She dedicates a lot of her free time to the Greater Hartford Association for Retarded Citizens. Much of her activity

is focused on fund raising activities such as coffee mug and Christmas card, and bake sales. Alphonse said she makes a mean cream cheese lemon pie.

Alphonse has a particular interest in the Greater Hartford Association because her 17-year-old son Kenneth is mentally retarded. Thanks to

activities sponsored by the organization including overnight trips, summer camps, and weekend activities, she said that Kenneth has been able to lead a richer and fuller life.

"It feels great to be able to give something back to the organization and to the community," said Alphonse.

"And I really enjoy doing it."

# Huskymania hits DAS

By John McKay

You might have thought you were on the UConn campus and not in the SOB on April 1 as DAS employees celebrated "Husky Day."

Employees displayed their pride in the NCAA Champion UConn Huskies by sporting UConn T-shirts, hats, sweat shirts, pompoms, and basically anything identifiable with UConn.

SLC's Kathy Valone was seen running up and down the halls of DAS with her Husky flag and HRBC's Lisa Chasse went all out by coloring her hair



UConn blue and white were the colors of choice as DAS employees celebrated Husky Day honoring the 1999 NCAA champs!

UConn blue.

"There is a lot of Husky pride here at DAS," said Commissioner Barbara Waters.

"With their victory, the Huskies brought a wonderful level of excitement to the entire state."

# Market my words By John McKay

At last month's Career Entry and Mobility Committee meeting held at Middlesex Community- Technical College, the topic of how to market state services was one subject of conversation. Some attendees suggested slick handouts and giveaways.

HRBC's recruitment specialist Patsy McLaughlin had a simpler strategy.

"Marketing starts with each and every one of us who work in state service," she said.

"Whether you're speaking with co-workers, people from the private sector, or even personally

with friends and family, you should market yourself as a valuable resource. We are collectively responsible for the image we create about our work and our employer, the state of Connecticut."

McLaughlin participates in a number of job fairs throughout the year and is sometimes asked, "How do I get a job with the State of Connecticut?"

McLaughlin said that there is no better place to make such an enormous contribution and impact to the state. "You have the opportunity to be part of a movement that affects everyone in Connecticut. No private company can make *that* kind of impact," she added.

# Just look how far we've come

By Heather Cavanaugh

DAS, we've come a long way! Who remembers back in 1993 when the former Bureau of Purchases had an idea to develop an electronic bulletin board to allow prospective bidders access to bid and contract information?

Well, then it was just an idea...today, technology has finally caught up to DAS

**The first in a series of articles about where DAS was...compared to where we are today.**

ingenuity, and it's bigger and better than anyone could have dreamed of.

All information is available to bidders on the Internet, the most effective way to bring the state and supplier together. Vendors simply go to the DAS Procurement web page and fill out an online form to register their business.

When it's buying time, Procurement sends the prequalified vendors an electronic bid notification via email. They can then bid, and that bid is stored on the site in a searchable database.

The system is better, cheaper, and faster, allowing immediate access to Procurement Services and eliminating paper bid documents and contract award notices.

From an idea to innovation, DAS staff made it happen.

# All the news that fits, we print

By Dana Citarella

## Picnic fund raisers

Feeling guilty for not participating in the St. Patrick's Day flower sale or the April casual days? No need to worry, there are still many opportunities to support the DAS summer picnic. The next round of fund-raisers begins May 7 with the "Pie in the Sky" sale. Be prepared to order the pies in advance. The pie sale will be followed by a teacup raffle, a tag sale, and a candy sale, all taking place during the summer.

## Short takes

This year's picnic will be Friday, August 13 from 12 noon to 9:00 p.m. at Mountainside Resort in Wallingford. Activities will include dance contests, various team sports, and tournaments. The resort also offers a stocked trout pond, three swimming pools, an 18-hole champion putting green, pingpong tables, volleyball courts, and more.

"I encourage everyone to participate in our fund-raisers," said Patti Maneggia, picnic committee chairperson. "With everyone's support, this could be the biggest and best picnic DAS had ever had."

## New handbook published

The newly revised edition of the Appointed Officials Handbook will soon be printed. Five hundred copies will be available by the end of May. If you would like a copy of the handbook, please contact Cindy Duberek at (860) 713-5195.

## Fleet goes national

An article written by Fleet Operations employees recently appeared in a national publication. Mechanics John Hykes and Ed Kane wrote an article detailing their experiences with the new ShopKey software program for *Nuts and Bolts*, the DAS Fleet Operations newsletter.

The nationally published *Fleet Administration News* decided to run the article in their Winter 1999 edition.

## Employees say yes to survey online

The results are in! The votes have been tallied to determine whether DAS employees would be willing to complete the Organizational Assessment Survey (OAS) online.

Out of the 136 employees who voted, 118 would like to take the survey online, 15 would rather take a paper copy of the survey, and three voters said they would not complete the survey. Fifty-four of these voters said they had no preference as to taking the survey online or on paper.

"The percentage of positive responses we received suggests the survey should be available online," said SLC's Martin Anderson.

Since not all employees have easy access to computers, Anderson said a print copy of the survey may be available as a backup system.

Anderson said an anonymous computer may also be set up so employees could complete the OAS survey without any concern of being identified.

"Many people do not feel secure using a computer for this survey," Anderson said. "If we set up an anonymous computer, we can alleviate those concerns."

Anderson assured employees that even without using the anonymous computer, survey responses will remain anonymous.

The OAS survey will measure employees' reactions to various aspects of the DAS environment including diversity, communication, employee involvement, and innovation.