

DAS *Times*

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IN THIS ISSUE

1 Collections reach record heights

by Donna Micklus and Heather Cavanaugh

2 Safety first

by John McKay

3 Hats off to DAS employees

by Cindy Duberek

4 Victories!

by John McKay and Mike Mansfield

5 Up Close with Mary Lou Byers

by Mike Mansfield

6 DAS employees on the road

by Donna Micklus

7 Bringing home the gold

by Heather Cavanaugh

7 More power to you

by John McKay

8 Short stuff

by John McKay

Collections hit record \$640 million

By Donna Micklus and Heather Cavanaugh

You'd think they were literally made of money after collecting an astonishing \$640 million for the State of Connecticut.

DAS' FAR Newington employees exceeded projections by more than \$100 million, posting record-breaking collection revenues for the fiscal year.

"This is an incredible achievement for DAS to be able to return this level of revenue to the general fund," Commissioner Barbara Waters said.

"It speaks volumes about the employees who made it possible."

Waters credited the success to several key factors: better partnerships with sister state agencies, more aggressive collection, and new program initiatives.

"We have built a stronger partnership between DAS and many service provider agencies that we do billing for, such as the Departments of Mental Retardation, Mental Health and

Addiction Services, Children and Families, Education, Social Services, and Veterans' Affairs," Waters explained.

FAR Director Vin Lombardo said, "We've re-engineered the way we do business at Collection Services. Our team-driven approach has helped relieve the tax

Please see Collections, page 2

THE BRONZE QUILL AWARD...IT'S LIKE BRINGING HOME THE GOLD



DAS Communications' Mike Mansfield poses with the award-winning DSS Annual Report he helped design at the Bronze Quill Awards ceremony at the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington.

Story on page 7

Collections, cont. from page 1

burden for our primary customers - Connecticut taxpayers.”

Through increased revenues and controlled expenses, Lombardo said this feat was possible.

“We also initiated new billing opportunities through the Department of Mental Retardation’s expansion of programs and services. In addition, we were able to implement other collection programs earlier than anticipated,” Waters said.

DAS’ latest partnership with the Department of Veterans’ Affairs resulted in getting a new program up and running six months ahead of schedule, generating revenues of more than \$10 million.

“It is remarkable that we were able to collect this money with fewer employees and computer



Despite gray skies, FAR employees had every reason to celebrate at their recent picnic. Last week DAS announced that collections for the 98-99 fiscal year reached a record-high \$640 million, \$100 million over projections.

system flaws. It was the dedication and pride of our staff that enabled us to achieve such great results,” said Estate Administrator Abbie Wotkyns. “Everyone made sure the bottom line was covered.”

The story did not go unnoticed by the media. Statewide press

highlighted DAS’ accomplishment soon after the news broke.

WVIT Channel 30 aired it as one of its lead stories, and the *Hartford Courant*, *Journal Inquirer*, and *Waterbury Republican-American* published stories on DAS’ collection effort.

Congratulations FAR employees!



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Safe at home By John McKay

It was a very safe place to be. The SOB (State Office Building) Safety Committee had its first Safety Fair, and on-hand were the American Red Cross, State of Connecticut Special Services Unit, DAS’ first responder and Medical Response Technician (MRT) program participants, and the SOB floor captains.

Some 300 SOB and FAR Newington employees filtered through Room G-38 on June 30 to learn more about new safety precautions. The room was arranged with several tables which highlighted all the safety services available in the SOB.

“What a turnout!” exclaimed John Wilkerson, safety committee chairperson.



Linda Kobylenski and John Wilkerson answer questions at the safety fair.

“We’ve really gotten the message out that employees are working in a safe environment,” he added.

Linda Kobylenski and Donna Wadhams manned the CPR table which highlighted the Automated External Defibrillator (AED) unit.

“People have a lot of questions about the AED and were impressed that such medical equipment was close by in case of an emergency,” said Kobylenski.

“With all the training and investments made into this program,” said Wadhams, “if it saves even one life, it’s all worth it.”

Commissioner Barbara Waters commended **John Wilkerson** for a job well done with the Safety Fair held on June 30. "This was a very special event; thanks for having the energy and enthusiasm to make it happen."

Personnel Director Sandra C. Cunningham from the Workers' Compensation Commission applauded webmaster **Bill Skyrme** for improvements made to the exam directory on the DAS website and said, "I love the new look - having the closing dates right up front is really helpful. Keep up the good work!"

Roy Dion applauded **Lydia Rosario, Joann McAllister,** and **Jim Neil** for assisting the Hartford School Board in obtaining essential resources for a critical program. "It's a real tribute that they looked to us for help and your creativity and resourcefulness are what made it happen."

Pam Giannini, director of Adult Services from the Department of Social Services, commended **Vin Lombardo** for meeting with her to discuss the EMS/Centaur interface for food stamp claim collections and said, "you made us feel like valued customers with your cooperative approach to solving our common problems."

Lieutenant Eric Smith, commanding officer from the Department of Public Safety's Division of State Police, phoned with thanks to **Patti Maneggia** and **Linda Shackett-Blue** for their pleasant and professional manner during the state police sergeant exam.

Commissioner T.R. Anson from the Department of Public Works extended his thanks to **Patty Gallucci** and **Larry King** for the much appreciated

suggestions with their program draft for an upcoming event. "They displayed true dedication and produced a superb product."

Commissioner Barbara Waters and Roy Dion applauded **Paul Greco** for reducing the on-hand federal surplus inventory by approximately 44 percent. "This type of thinking is strategic and just plain good business. Keep up the great work. You make us all look good!" said Waters.

Kudos to **Mary Daly** from Linda Shackett-Blue for investigating a health insurance matter and for going the extra mile to get it corrected. "Excellent work and great customer service. Good catch, Mary!"

Toni Alphonse extended her thanks to **Jose Baez** for always helping the Audit/Review Quality Assurance Team with any computer problems and said, "you have gone above and beyond the call of duty to ensure that we have the resources necessary to perform our everyday duties."

Sales Representative Terry Robson from Oak Valley Farms commended **Betsy Galian** for presenting a well-organized and informative commodity processing workshop and show.

In a letter from the DOIT Chief Information Officer Rock Regan, he wrote "...we (DOIT) want to recognize the outstanding performance of your agency Y2K coordinator, **Kim Shepard**. Kim has consistently responded to DOIT's requirements and aggressive deadlines." Nice job, Kim!

Andrew M. Norton at the Department of Social Services in Waterbury applauded **Commissioner Barbara Waters** and **Doug DiPersio** for getting a

Hats Off

By Cindy Duberek

copier for their temporary office for the Kosovar refugees. "I am grateful to you both for how quickly you responded."

Director of Communications Michele Sullivan from the Department of Environmental Protection expressed her thanks to **Patty Gallucci, Larry King,** and **Print Staff** for their assistance and supervision in the selection and printing of invitations and programs for events this past month.

The FAR Grants Unit expressed its appreciation to **Jose Baez** and **Chris Smith** for their "exemplary display of professionalism when they recently 'resuscitated' the unit's computer hard drives. Superb work, gentlemen!"

Commissioner Barbara Waters extended her appreciation to **Phil McDermott** for assisting Jeri Fazzalano of the Department of Children and Families with the mailing for the Family Day activities. "We really appreciate your great effort."

HRBC - In sync with their customers

Streamline the Audit/Review Quality Assurance process, and educate customers to make them more self-sufficient.

That's what Toni Alphonse, manager of the HRBC Audit/Review Quality Assurance Unit, was asked to do when she was recruited from the Department of Children and Families.

"It's safe to say I was not well liked when we began instituting changes to the Audit/Review Quality



Assurance system," said Alphonse. "But we've come a long way."

Previously, the unit did a lot of handholding with their state agency customers in correcting Audit/Review Quality Assurance data entries.

"Customers simply didn't have the resources and the necessary amount of training needed," said Alphonse.

Alphonse and her team have changed all that.

"It was like night and day," said Alphonse. "Our customers became self-reliant, the errors dropped, and we began to have a better relationship with them." Now the unit frequently receives suggestions from customers on what changes can be made to improve the process.

"Bob Cosgrove in DAS' Management Information Solutions office has been an invaluable resource to the unit in implementing these changes and improvements," she added.

Alphonse and her team had a clear vision of how the Audit/Review Quality Assurance Unit was supposed to function, and she was able to get the support she needed. The team is just beginning to see the fruits of their labor, and are now getting into their designated role as consultants to customers.

State adds electric vehicles to its fleet

Scientists predict that the Earth's supply of gasoline, at its current rate of use, will be exhausted by the year 2035.

As a result, the US government instated strict guidelines and mandates requiring an increasing percentage of states' vehicle fleets be powered by alternate fuels such as natural gas and solar energy.

"Connecticut is right on course," said DAS Fleet Operations Manager Steve Dygus. The state has been preparing for the past several years to comply with the federally mandated increase in the use of alternate fuel vehicles.

"Hartford Fleet's Dave Marsh has been very instrumental," Dygus remarked, praising Marsh's enthusiasm for these technologies and the high level of technical understanding he's developed through extensive training.

"He's been terrific with both the natural gas and the electric vehicles," Dygus added.

At the recent 11th Annual American Tour de Sol, a traveling road show featuring electric, hybrid electric, and solar-assisted electric vehicles, several new alternate fuel vehicles were officially ushered into state service. DAS has retained one of the electric Chevy S-10 pickups for use by Fleet Operations in Hartford, DEP received eight S-10s to be used at eight different state parks, and one went to the DOT's research center. The unveiling of the vehicles

"We recognize that we have a major role to play in helping curb auto emissions."

Commissioner Barbara Waters

coincided with a proclamation from Governor John G. Rowland designating it Ozone Awareness Week.

"Today, there are a number of

exciting and creative alternatives to the gasoline-powered automobile," said Commissioner Barbara Waters.

"We recognize that we have a major role to play in helping curb auto emissions," she added.

Waters said she is proud of the way Fleet has risen to the challenges of this new technology and looks forward to continuing to provide top-notch maintenance for all state vehicles, regardless of the fuel that powers them.

What a doll

By Mike Mansfield

For as long as she can remember, Mary Lou Byers has been making things with her hands. Growing up in Connecticut, Byers' mother inspired her to become adept in several arts and craftmaking disciplines: needlepoint, crocheting, embroidery, you name it.

When she's not at DAS where she works as a system developer 3 in MIS, she continues honing her crafts in her spare time at her home in Northford.

"I always have at least one project of some sort I'm working on," she said.

But despite the mastery she has gained with a needle, or perhaps because of it, she began to develop interest in other art forms.

"I needed something else to conquer," she said smiling.

That new challenge came in the form of a porcelain doll. A former DAS co-worker, Dorene Gugliemino, recommended that Byers sit in on a dollmaking crafts course she took in Cromwell.

Byers immediately became enamored. And although she started her first doll just about a year ago, she has already completed four of the dolls with a fifth and sixth due to be finished shortly.

Byers said she learns a little more about this very involved artform with each completed product.

"Every one of the dolls I have made in a different way, and each doll is different in style and size," she said, "one of them is a toddler, another one has a stand that holds it upright. I even made a doll for one of my dolls!"

Her dolls are getting more and more elaborate as her technical expertise advances. Some dolls are little more

than a head, hands, and feet with clothes sewn on. Others have full bodies, breast plates, limbs, and heads that can turn and nod. Byers is working on a particularly challenging doll now that she says will require that she paint, fire, and repaint it five or six times before it's done.

The painstaking processes involved make this a poor hobby for the impatient. When Byers first gets the raw porcelain, the doll's heads and body parts are made of a clay almost like that used in ceramics, only it's finer-grained and non-porous. She washes it, smoothes it, and paints it with a blush coat - the first of several.

The clay is then "soft-fired" - hardened, but not to the point that it can't be further manipulated, cleaned, smoothed, and painted.

This process is repeated several times until she is pleased with the doll's colors and appearance.

When the porcelain work is completed, Byers then builds and dresses the doll. She said she usually buys the clothes pre-made, but has made one notable exception.

"I asked my mother-in-law for some of my husband Bob's old clothes," she said. "One of them is actually wearing an outfit he wore as a baby." Since clothing them is part of the fun, she is considering someday creating even the outfits herself.



MIS' Mary Lou Byers and porcelain friends.

Bob, now happily retired, shares his wife's creative streak. He has begun making dollhouses, not for Mary Lou's works, but rather to create a little artistic legacy of his own.

Despite her dolls' outstanding quality and the high prices often

Up Close

paid for fine porcelain, Byers said she has never sold any of her work and has no intention of ever doing so.

"No. I wouldn't sell them. Ever. They are gifts," she said.

"I give them to my children and family members." Which means that whether it's a special something to give one of her five children or a keepsake for any of their growing clan of eight (very soon to be nine) grandchildren, Byers looks to have a seemingly inexhaustible client base for years and years to come.

ON THE ROAD



By Donna Micklus

Willie Nelson's signature song "On the Road Again" has also become a familiar refrain at DAS. More than ever, employees are traversing the state, meeting face to face with customers to give them the best service possible. We thought it would be interesting to trace the footsteps of DAS' traveling emissaries to demonstrate the width and breadth of our customer outreach efforts...so look for frequent "On the Road" updates in the DAS Times.

SLC's Cathy Daly, Martin Anderson and Steve Soklow have met with the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities in **Hartford** over the past month to talk to them about working in teams, strategic planning and measurement.

Carlos Velez of Business Connections attended the 6th Annual Procurement Trade Expo at Central Connecticut State University in **New Britain** from June 21 to 23. The event is sponsored by the Procurement Technical Assistance Program and the National Association of Women Business Owners in cooperation with US Representative Nancy Johnson and the Small Business Administration. In April, Velez also made a presentation to the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women's first CT Women Entrepreneurs' Day in **Hartford**.

In the last two months, Deputy Commissioner Alan Mazzola and Director of Communications Donna Micklus have spoken at

Rotary Club meetings in **Fairfield, Stratford, and Plainville**. Their presentation, "Running Government More Like a Business" outlines how DAS made a \$120 million impact by cutting costs and generating new sources of revenue. Previously, they visited Rotaries in **Bristol, Danbury, Farmington, Glastonbury, Manchester, Rocky Hill, West Haven, West Hartford, Westport, and Wethersfield**.

As part of the Food Distribution Program's customer service outreach initiative, staff members are holding "Monthly Lunches" with customers. This gives the staff the opportunity to meet with the customers, tour some school food preparation sites, and taste products.

Program Manager Doris Vieira was joined by MIS' Sue Miller and Donna Camillone for a "May Lunch" with the school lunch director of the **Enfield Public Schools** and discussed issues from commodity deliveries to computers, and of course, school lunch.

In February, Jerry Santostefano met with the staff of the **Newington** school system for lunch and a tour of kitchen and storage facilities at the high school and one of the elementary schools while discussing various aspects of the USDA Program.

Yvonne Groves and Santostefano had the opportunity to taste test in March in **Bloomfield** and in April in the **New Haven** school system.

Deborah Lewis and Groves went to **New Haven** to meet with school system staff and visit an elementary school.

Each month, Fleet's Mike Hennegan attends meetings of the Accident Review Board at DOT in **Newington**. He also has taught

Driver Awareness classes in **Fairfield, New Haven, Cheshire, New Britain, Danbury, Waterbury, and Torrington**. Along with Dave Marsh, they have made presentations on Wheelchair Van Safety Updates to DMR office staff in **Norwich, Cheshire, Southington, Rocky Hill, and Fairfield**.

Travel for Federal Surplus has taken Paul Greco to sites mainly in the New England region. Within Connecticut he visited sites such as the **Groton** Submarine Base, Pratt & Whitney in **East Hartford**, Knolls Atomic in **Windsor**, Allied Signal in **Stratford**, and select federal offices throughout the state. Outside Connecticut he has traveled to **Portsmouth, New Hampshire; Lakehurst, New Jersey; Mechanicsburg and Chambersburg, Pennsylvania** as well as to conferences in **Philadelphia**. He will be traveling to **Minnesota** in August for a national convention in which all states will gather for training seminars, legislation improvements, regional meetings, and voting for regional representatives. Greco is looking forward to tooting DAS' own horn!

DAS PICNIC

● The annual DAS Picnic will be ● held at the Mountainside resort ● in Wallingford on August 13. It's ● gonna be great! The resort has ● great facilities including a DJ, ● heated pool, tons of food, volley- ● ball and bocci courts, 18-hole ● practice putting green, softball ● fields, tennis courts, and more. ●

Bringing home the gold

By Heather Cavanaugh

There were no TV cameras. Not a tux or stretch limo in sight. But for those attending the June ceremony of the Bronze Quill Awards, it had all the excitement of the Oscars.

Each year the International Association of Business Communicators presents excellence awards for publications in various categories: annual reports, brochures, and newsletters.

This year's event was held at the Hill-Stead Museum in Farmington.

Making its debut in the awards arena was the DAS Communications Office who won the Bronze Quill for the graphic design of the Department of Social Services (DSS) 1998 Annual Report.

Despite the steamy 100-degree

heat, project leader Mike Mansfield, was feeling pretty cool as he accepted the award and the accolades.

"This was really a special honor for a number of reasons," said Director of Communications Donna Micklus. "The annual report we did for DSS was our first major leap into the communication consulting business, and to have that piece win was just an unbelievable thrill."

She said it was a true team effort in developing the look and theme of the publication.

"The whole staff was involved from the start, and everything just clicked right away. Then Mike took the graphic design reigns and let his creativity guide the project to completion," Micklus added.

She said that Mansfield put in over 200 hours on the project.

"Mike probably picked up a few gray hairs along the way, so picking up the award was at least poetic justice," she joked.

Mansfield said, "For me, the best part of winning this award is that it represents a fulfillment of our new, expanded office's mission...to enhance the image and status of our agency by gaining the business and respect of other state agencies through the creation of top-notch communications."

Micklus said competition for the award was stiff. DAS' entry was judged along with slick, pricey pieces from top advertising firms and giants in private industry.

"There was DAS, holding its own right along side the O'Neal & Prells and United Technologies of the world. Who would ever have believed that three years ago?" she asked.

More p-p-p-power to you

By John McKay

There was popcorn, potato chips, punch, pretzels, and a PowerPoint presentation at the CareerPower open house on June 24. In case you haven't guessed, the theme of the open house was the letter "P," which coincides with the five Ps taught at CareerPower.

"We thought we'd make the whole event fun and kind of spoof on ourselves," said CareerPower coach Nina Davit.

During the learning sessions, participants are taught five aspects that affect their career: Person, Perspective, Place, Possibilities, and Plan.

Tables were set up to represent each "P" factor in a whimsical theme, for example, the "person" table was decorated with dozens of little Lego figures all representing different professions and careers. The "plan" table had maps and compasses to indicate directions for planning a career.

The open house generated a renewed interest in the program. Many people wandering through had said they had heard of the program and were interested in going through the training.



Coach Cheryl Welton explains the CareerPower process to Rose Lamy and Isabelle McKinney.

"We were able to meet people face to face, sign them up for classes during their visit, and answer their questions. That's just what we wanted to accomplish," said CareerPower coach Cheryl Welton.

All the news that fits, we print

By John McKay and Mike Mansfield

Well done at Solomon Welles

Both food and praise were handed out in large portions at a luncheon hosted by HRBC Director Tina Lawson and her four managers, Mike Barletta, David Krayeski, Joe Lefkowski, and Pam Libby.

“We do a lot of good work here in HR,” said Lawson, “and it’s nice to share the praise.” The luncheon was held Wednesday, July 28 at the Solomon Welles House in Wethersfield, to recognize this year’s achievements of the HRBC staff.

Short takes

Some of the accomplishments HRBC is especially proud of include: Toni Alphonse and her Audit/Review Quality Assurance team; new exams for State Police Trooper Trainee, State Police Sergeant, and Correction Officer; expanded training classifications to attract the best and the brightest to state government; and the HRBC website which continues to grow.

“I just want every single person in HRBC to know that they are appreciated for all their hard work and dedication,” said Lawson. “Everyone deserves a pat on the back and this is the way we show our appreciation.”

Training for success

HRBC is continuing its development of a training program for state managers. The plan is for HRBC and state training managers to partner with Central Connecticut State University’s Institute for Industrial and Engineering Technology.

One significant opportunity that HRBC and state managers are excited about is distance learning, training courses over the Internet.

Participants read and study information, enter chat rooms to have course discussions, and can take timed tests over the Internet to complete the class.

“This is one area we’re really excited to explore,” said HRBC’s Cathy Bysiewicz-Cluen. “There are no classrooms and timeframes to schedule, plus you can arrange to study at home where it will be much quieter than a busy office.”

New online reports

DAS’ Workers’ Compensation Office has been working with its Third Party Administrator, Berkley Care to provide online reporting of state workers’ compensation data and information.

“Since the Internet is a universal vehicle for providing and sharing information instantaneously, we have begun to use the DAS website for delivery of workers’ compensation reports to our customer state agencies,” said Workers’ Compensation Director Mike Barletta. “It will save an enormous amount of paper, time, and effort, and we will be able to provide vital data quickly and efficiently.”

The first set of electronic reports was published on the DAS website on July 14.

It is expected that when all state agencies have Internet access, the Workers’ Compensation office will make all program-related data available through the HRBC website.

New digs for Print, Mail & Courier

DAS Print, Mail & Courier will move from 80 Washington Street to their new location at 18-20 Trinity Street on Friday, August 6. Manager Ed Urbansky said the move has been planned to be as seamless as possible, with no disruption in service.

The afternoon of Thursday, August 5 will be the last day to drop off or pick up projects at the Washington Street facility. After that, any drops or pickups will be made at the facility on the lower level of the Trinity Street building, approximately a block from the State Office Building, facing the Capitol.