

Kent Connections

A Newsletter Published by Kent County Levy Court for its Employees

May 2007



Employee of the Month *Marvin Millman*

The Kent County Employee Council has selected MARVIN W. MILLMAN from the Department of Public Works as the May 2007 Employee of the Month.

Marvin, a Kent County employee since January 1984, is a Maintenance Mechanic III in the Division of Wastewater Facilities responsible for maintaining, installing, and making repairs to operating pumps, valves, electrical controls, piping, and many other integral components in wastewater operations.

According to supervisors, Marvin possesses an exemplary work ethic and exhibits superior supervisory skills. In his role as a workgroup leader, he can be counted on to get any job done no matter how strenuous or difficult. Marvin is known as a no nonsense person who never procrastinates when given a work assignment and he can always be counted on to volunteer for the most challenging jobs.

Marvin's hard work and dedication are so well known that a superintendent for one of the County's sewer project contractors recently asked for him specifically to serve as liaison because, "he really gets the job done."

Congratulations Marvin on a job well done!

COMING NEXT MONTH:

- > *What's happening at the Employee Picnic?*
- > *What's the impact of the new FY08 budget on me?*
- > *What's likely to happen this hurricane season?*

IN THIS MONTH'S ISSUE:

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Kent Connections is published for the employees and retirees of Kent County Levy Court using Microsoft Publisher® & Microsoft PowerPoint®. Comments, suggestions and story ideas should be addressed to: Kent County Personnel Office, 555 Bay Road, Dover, DE 19901, or given to Allan Kujala, Sophie Dear, Cathleen McLean, or Carissa McLoughlin. Or, call the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

Levy Court approves FY08 budget

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

It's final. The Kent County Fiscal Year 2008 budget was formally adopted by Levy Court on April 24 after months of preparation and much discussion about adding a paramedic power unit and a new State mandate that the County assume 50% of the cost for dog control.

The approved \$54.5 million all funds combined budget provides a 3% cost of living adjustment pay increase for most employees in addition to the normal 2% step increase for effective performance. Retirees will also receive a 3% pension increase. The budget also includes numerous reclassifications, re-titling, reassignment of positions, absorption of computer technology staff, and re-establishment of the Division of Geographic Information Systems.

The new budget features several staffing enhancements including the addition of eight new positions. Specifically, a Parks Worker position in the Community Services Department, 2 Dispatchers and five Paramedic positions (two positions are effective January 1) in the Department of Public Safety.

The budget also continues funding for the Paramedic Trainee program started last year, which pays tuition along with salary and benefits for second year paramedic students at Delaware Tech or students enrolled in the so-called paramedic academy. In return the paramedic student must agree to work a minimum of 3-years for Kent County.

The General Fund's balanced budget totals \$25.1 million with no tax increases. It anticipates a 3.8% increase in tax revenues and a 2% increase in fees.

The Sewer Fund operating budget totals \$14.5 million plus another \$8.1 million in capital
(Continued on Page 6)

Welcome to Levy Court!



Name: CHRISTINA MILLER
Job: Deed Clerk I
Date hired: April 9, 2007
Education: High school; Associate in Arts Degree, University of Delaware
What I like most about my new job: It gives me an opportunity to learn some new skills and meet new challenges.

Greatest accomplishment: Earning my A.A. degree

Future goals: Continue my education

If I had it to do over, I would have done this differently: Spend more time with family

I'm most relaxed and happy when I'm doing this: Reading a good book and/or being with my friends and family

Family: Six sisters, three brothers, two adorable nieces

Most recent movie enjoyed: Bringing Up Baby

Favorite TV show: American Idol

Favorite sport: Baseball

Favorite meal: Thanksgiving dinner

Favorite music: Country

Favorite saying or slogan: Don't think about it so much.

Who has had the greatest impact on my life: My parents

If I won a million dollars I would: Probably splurge on family and friends then invest

You'd be surprised to learn that I: Have nine brothers and sisters

The most adventurous things I've ever done is: Went wake-boarding in a very dirty river in Oregon and wasn't told about the pollution level until I was in the water; have flown to Norway twice

Three words that describe me: Friendly, responsible, caring **8620** **6751**

EOM INSIGHT



Name: MARVIN MILLMAN
Job: Maintenance Mechanic III
Years with the County: 23
Education: Milford High School
What I like most about my job: Something different every day
Family: Wife, Kathy; son, Scott; and a beautiful granddaughter, Shea
After work I enjoy: Relaxing on the deck with my wife
Favorite new movie: The Departed
Favorite old movie: Any Clint Eastwood show
Favorite TV show: Don't really watch TV unless baseball or Nascar is on
Favorite TV show as a child: Three Stooges
Favorite sports: Dirt track racing, Nascar, baseball, horse racing
Favorite meal: Seafood and prime rib
Favorite music: Country
Favorite Kent County restaurant: Iron Gate
People (living or dead) I'd invite to dinner: Grandparents, Dale Earnhardt Sr. & Jr.
I'm most proud of: My wife
Pet peeve: People who think they're better than you!
Motto: Relax!
If I've learned one thing in life, it's: Don't take for granted the people you love.
Who has had the most impact on my life: My wife
A dream I have is to: Travel
If I won a million dollars, I would: Pay off bills and travel.
You'd be surprised to learn that I: Am easy-going
The most adventurous thing I've ever done is: Swim with the dolphins
Words that describe me: Hard-working, straight forward, fun **0586** **1875**

2007 Graduation Accolades

If you or a member of your family is graduating from College or High School this year, please contact the Personnel office so this accomplishment can be acknowledged next month in Kent Connections.

High Praise

Congratulations to GEORGETTE WILLIAMS, Deputy recorder of Deeds for a Constituent Comment Card acknowledging her efforts to help an elderly, disabled citizen pay her property taxes after entering the County Complex. Way to go!!

Levy Court picks Keifer as new Planning Director

Formerly served as Asst. Director

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

No, it's not déjà vu. But the former Assistant Director of Planning Services for the Planning Division is returning to Kent County to serve as the new Director of Planning Services, a position vacated by MICHAEL J. PETIT de MANGE when he assumed the County Administrator position last month.



Sarah Keifer

Levy Court selected the former Assistant Director from a group of four candidates. She left the Kent County in February 2006

to become the Director of Planning and Inspections for Currituck County, North Carolina, where she completed the update and revision of its 15-year-old land use plan.

Keifer earned her Bachelor's degree from the University of Delaware in 1995 and her Master of Public Administration degree two years later. Shortly thereafter she served as Town Administrator for Cecilton, Maryland, followed by a year at Delaware County, Pennsylvania as a Review Specialist.

She achieved her American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) designation in 2004.

FY08 budget eyes slight dependent dental increase

The Fiscal Year 2008 budget approved last month by Levy Court included a \$5 per month increase for dependent dental insurance coverage beginning July 1.



The County's popular self-insured dental program through Delta Dental has maintained steady dependent rates for nearly 10 years. Em-

ployees and eligible retirees, for whom the County will continue coverage at 100%, will experience no

(Continued on Page 15)

Kent County Levy Court Administrative staff honored on special day

By Carissa McLoughlin, Personnel Technician II

Administrative Professionals Day, April 25, was an extra-special day for all members of Kent County's secretarial and clerical staff as each received a carnation and were honored by their coworkers and supervisors.

After the ballots were counted in the annual Favorite Administrative Professional poll, MARI FABRES, Secretary in the Department of Public Works/Wastewater Facilities Division was for the second year in a row named "Kent County's Favorite Administrative Professional." She received a special flower bouquet.



Mari Fabres

The employees nominated for Kent County's Favorite Administrative Professional included: KELLY BLANCHIES, Sheriff's Office; SHELBY BURD, Finance; CONNIE BUTLER, Libraries; MARI FABRES, Wastewater Facilities; NANCY GLENN, Inspections & Enforcement; CYNTHIA GOLDSBORO, Sheriff's Office; JENNIFER GRAHAM, Emergency Medical Services; WENDY HAYWOOD, Parks & Recreation; JILL JOHNS, Planning Services; EVELYN JOPP, Administration; CHARLOTTE LINDQUIST, Sheriff's Office; GALE MAAS, Administration; BARBARA MILLER, Engineering; JAN MORRIS, Administration; CHRISTINA MORTON, Inspections & Enforcement; KATHY PHINNEY, Administration; ANGEL SHORT, Community Services; KATHY SKINNER, Planning; PAT UHEY, Register of Wills Office; NICOLE VAUTARD, Emergency Management; PATTY VIRDIN, Planning; and JAYNE ZERANSKI, Public Works.

Easter Egg Hunt Contest

Congratulations to SHELBY BURD, DEXTER KOLLIE, KAREN McTAGGART, MIKE WILLSON and JOHN ZISTL, whom were the lucky employees finding a free movie ticket in the annual Easter Egg Hunt contest last month.





ON THE MOVE . . .

Compiled by Carissa McLoughlin, Personnel Technician II

New Hires

04/09/07 CHRISTINA MILLER, Deed Clerk I, Grade 5, Recorder of Deeds Office

4/29/07 ROBERT LANKFORD SR., Maintenance Foreman—Biosolids, Grade 10, Public Works/Wastewater Facilities

4/30/07 ADAM BRADFORD, WWF Plant Operator I, Grade 6, Public Works/Wastewater Facilities

4/30/07 GERALD KILGORE, WWF Plant Operator I, Grade 6, Public Works/Wastewater Facilities

Promotions

04/01/07 SUSAN HITCHENS, Accountant III, Grade 12 to Account Analyst, Grade 13, Finance

04/02/07 WENDY HAYWOOD, Deed Clerk II, Grade 7, Recorder of Deeds Office to Senior Secretary, Grade 8, Community Services/Recreation

04/02/07 BRIAN LEWIS, Maintenance Worker I, Grade 5 to Maintenance Worker II, Grade 6, Public Works/Facilities Management

04/02/07 ANGELA SHORT, Senior Secretary, Grade 8, Community Services/Recreation to Administrative Secretary, Grade 9, Community Services

04/08/07 MICHAEL PETIT de MANGE, Director of Planning Services, Grade 19 to County Administrator, Grade 22

04/29/07 JASON MILLER, Engineering Project Manager I, Grade 11 to Engineering Project Manager II, Grade 13, Public Works/Engineering

04/30/07 KAREN McTAGGART, Environmental Technician I, Grade 8 to Environmental Technician II, Grade 9, Public Works/Engineering

Transfer

04/30/07 JAMES BROWN, Parks Worker II, Community Services/Parks to Custodian, Public works/Facilities Management

Retirement

04/28/07 JAMES SMITH, Plant Operator III, Grade 8, Public Works/Wastewater Facilities—6 years of service

Milestones

04/01/2002 HANS MEDLARZ, Director of Public Works—5 years

Congratulations

Congratulations to ERIC L. BUCKSON, Levy Court Commissioner for the 4th District, and his wife, Jennifer, on the birth of their daughter, Leah Lane on April 20, 2007 at 8:45 a.m. weighing 7 lb. 12 oz. Mother and baby are doing well. Leah Lane joins siblings Krisanne (7 yrs. old), Brent (6 yrs. old) and Graham (18 months).

COUNTY BIRTHDAYS



MAY

01 Jill Johns, Planning Services

01 Karen McTaggart, Public Works/Engineering

02 Harry VanSant, Community Services Director

04 Trey Holland, Planning Services/I&E

05 Ronald Eby, Board of Assessment

05 Jack Loftin, Public Safety/Emergency Comm.

10 Audrey Stanford, Assessment Office

12 Dale Jones, Planning Services/I&E

15 Patrick Quillen, Community Services/Parks

15 Sheila Ross, Assessment Office

19 Jennifer Immediato, Public Safety/EMS

22 Richard Washington, Public Works/WWF

26 Larry Warner, Sheriff's Office

28 Keith Powell, Public Works/WWF

JUNE

03 Barbara Schroeder, Finance

03 Danielle Lamborn, Public Works/Engineering

09 Sherry Bourgeois, Planning Services/Planning

10 David Nesbit II, Public Safety/EMS

11 Kimberly Dixon, Tax Office

13 Ruth Semans, Deputy Register of Wills

15 P. Brooks Banta, Levy Court President

18 Kathryn Gooden, Assessment Office

21 Barbara Stough, Finance

22 Michael Evans, Public Works/WWF

22 Mike Rigby, Community Services/Parks

23 June Gladden, Assessment Office

23 Richard Baker, Public Works/WWF

23 Catherine Brown, Tax Office

24 Mary Ellen Gray, Planning Services/Planning

25 Robert Savage, Public Works/WWF

27 Gina Glanden, Planning Services/Insp. & Enforce.

28 Joyce Melvin, Receiver of Taxes

29 Joe O'Connell, Planning Services/Insp. & Enforce

30 Summer Desaulniers, Public Safety/EMS

Kent Co. Employee Obsessions

The display case on the main floor of the Kent County Administrative Complex features a hard earned collection of marathon medals amassed by Environmental Program Manager JAMES NEWTON over the years.

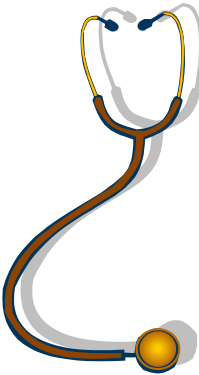
In the second floor display case, Personnel Director ALLAN KUJALA presents a variety of unique items collected during his recent trip to Guatemala.

Got an interesting hobby or like to collect limited edition baubles? Then show off your talent for amassing things—it may interest others as well.

Employee health ins. premiums drop 6.6%

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Blue Cross Blue Shield delivered an early Christmas gift to Levy Court recently by proposing employee health insurance renewal rates 6.6% lower beginning July 1.



The lower rates translate to a full 7% reduction for dependent healthcare premiums.

Last month, Kent County Commissioners reviewed proposals submitted by Blue Cross Blue Shield of Delaware and United Healthcare, as well as five third party administrators if the County chose to self-insure coverage for the first time in eight years.

For several years health insurance rates under the former insurance carrier (Mid-Atlantic Health Plan) increased by double digits, but Blue Cross Blue Shield won Levy Court approval last year with a modest 9.24% average rate increase.

While the final contract is not yet executed, there is no change to the current coverages provided by the Blue Cross Blue Shield PPO and HMO options including mail order prescriptions costing the same one month pharmacy rate for a 90-day supply.

For eligible retirees on Medicare, the Blue Cross Special Medicfill prescription coverage charges \$10 for generic, \$20 for brand name, and \$40 for non-formulary, but has no maximum. Mid-Atlantic had a \$2,000 annual max, but there is no annual prescription maximum under the Blue Cross plan.

Belying the modest decrease, Blue Cross did advise that current medical trends indicate a 9.88 percent rate increase will be necessary beginning July

1, 2008.

The County will continue to fully fund individual employee and eligible retiree health insurance and pay 60% of the dependent cost. In addition, single employees with the lower cost HMO High coverage will receive \$35 cash back each month, and employees with HMO Low coverage will receive \$50 cash back each month. Those employees and eligible retirees waiving health insurance coverage will receive \$100 cash back each month—but must provide proof of adequate coverage elsewhere.

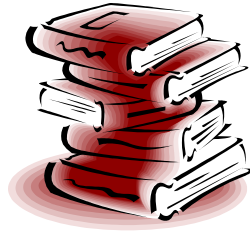
With the bidding process complete, the Personnel Office has scheduled Open Enrollment for the month of May. During open enrollment employees can change health, dental and supplemental life coverage options, add or delete dependents, or begin to participate in Section 125 - Cafeteria Plan supplemental insurance options offered by AFLAC. Cafeteria Plan and health/dental/life plan option changes can only be made during open enrollment.

Since there are no major changes to the County's health/medical plan, there will be no need for special informational meetings or to complete enrollment forms, unless a change of current coverage options or levels is desired.

The AFLAC representative will be making 3 information presentations on Thursday, May 24 and will schedule appointments afterwards. Stop by the Personnel Office if you would like to schedule one. Remember, open enrollment is the only time health, dental or supplemental life insurance option changes can occur and the only time employees can add, delete or make changes to most AFLAC supplemental insurances such as cancer, accident, sickness, short-term disability, or intensive care plans, and tax free **(Continued on Page 7)**

FY08 DEPENDENT RATES	SPOUSE COVERAGE	CHILD(REN) COVERAGE	FAMILY COVERAGE
PREFERRED (PPO)	\$289.48	\$133.61	\$400.81
IPA HIGH (HMO)	\$248.15	\$104.86	\$350.50
IPA LOW (HMO)	\$215.09	\$81.86	\$310.26
MEDICARE SUPPLEMENT	\$109.13		
INDIVIDUAL EMPLOYEE	PREFERRED (PPO)	IPA (HMO) HIGH	IPA (HMO) LOW
County pays 100% of Cost	\$556.68	\$511.76	\$475.83

FROM THE STACKS



By Connie Butler, Libraries Division Secretary

Blowout

By Catherine Coulter
Read by Sandra Burr

This recorded book is 9 compact discs long with approximately 11 total hours of listening. This is another suspense novel that will keep you wanting to continue listening just to find out what is going to happen next.

FBI agents Dillon Savich and Lacey Sherlock confront a nightmare of multiple murders.

A long weekend in the Poconos is cut short when Sherlock and Savich are helicoptered back to Washington to lead the investigation into the brutal murder of a Supreme Court Justice.

Savich allows Callie Markham, an investigative reporter for *The Washington Post*, to partner with local Metro Police liaison Ben Raven, since she's got the inside track – she's the stepdaughter of the murdered justice. Despite Detective Raven's unwillingness to have a civilian along, Callie Markham ends up riding shotgun to help look for her stepfather's murderer.

Within the next twenty-four hours, a Supreme Court law clerk is found murdered, the M.O. is the same.

Savich learns he must also solve a thirty-year-old crime after a psychic encounter with the murder victim, Samantha Barrister, who suddenly appears in front of his car and hysterically pleads for his help. Savich and Sherlock discover that at the time of her death Samantha had a six-year-old son, who disappeared as a teenager. Savich is convinced the missing boy is the key. **7520**

FY08 budget approved

(Continued from Page 1)

expenditures for treatment plant upgrades (\$1,055,000), conveyance system upgrade (\$2,150,000), and the new Hartly Sewer District (\$3,935,200), and other smaller projects.

The General Fund Capital Projects Budget totals \$6,565,100 and allocates \$1,050,000 toward gymnasium constructions, \$900,000 for future
(Continued on next column)

Recipe of the Month

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

SOUTH OF THE BORDER TATER SALAD

3 pounds small red potatoes, quartered
1 (14-ounce) can Mexi-Corn (corn, green pepper and red pepper blend), drained
1 (15-ounce) can black beans, drained
1 cup jicama, diced
3 tablespoons fresh lime juice
1 cup reduced-fat mayonnaise or salad dressing
½ cup taco sauce
3 tablespoons chipotle chiles in adobo sauce, minced
Salt and pepper to taste

In a large saucepan, boil quartered potatoes, covered, for 12 to 15 minutes, or until just tender. Drain potatoes and transfer to a large bowl. Stir in corn, black beans and jicama. In a small bowl, stir together lime juice, mayonnaise, taco sauce and chipotle chiles. Pour over potato mixture and lightly toss until well combined. Chill salad, covered, at least 1 – 2 hours. Serves 6 – 8.

Recipe courtesy BetterRecipes.com 2007

construction of a County library, \$1,500,000 for economic development, \$650,000 for St. Jones Greenway, \$498,900 for Big Oak Park development, \$382,800 for Brown's Branch Park development, \$500,000 for park expansion projects, and smaller amounts for other potential projects. The capital budget is a planning document and does not mean a project will be constructed next year or ever.

Various other budgeted funds include \$2.4 million for contracted trash collection at almost 10,300 lots, \$620,800 for street lights serving 9,000 lots, and \$1.4 million for community development block grant program, among others.

The document also incorporates a \$1.2 million pension fund contribution, a \$475,000 post-retirement benefits fund contribution, as well as normal operating cost increases. No tax increase was included.

High Praise

High Five to RUTH SEMANS, Deputy Register of Wills, for a Constituent Comment Card praising her professionalism for helping a customer that had come in without proper preparation. *Outstanding!!*

Get tips on how to prevent workplace violence at monthly training session

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

“Violence on the Job” will be the topic of May’s training session. We have been loaned a DVD produced by NIOSH (the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health), which is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The DVD also includes a short case study.



Training sessions on violence on the job will be held on **Wednesday, May 16, at 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m.** in room 220 A/B in the Kent County Administrative Complex.

To sign up for training, please contact me in Personnel at 744-2312, by e-mail (if you have a list), or in person. If you initially forget to sign up and wish to attend, or discover that you will be able to attend on the day of the training session -- show up and sign in.

In April, County employees who received credit for attending a “Job Burnout” training sessions were **MARY EISENBREY, JUNE GLADDEN, KATHY GOODEN, SHIRLEY GOODWIN, MARTY HAYES, WENDY HAYWOOD, EVELYN JOPP, DIANE LOCKERMAN, GALE MAAS, JAMES NUNES, LINDA PFEIFFER, SHEILA ROSS, ANGEL SHORT, ALAN TYSON, BILL VINCENT,** and **JIM WELSH.**

Thank you for your continued interest in voluntary training!

Employee health rates drop

(Continued from Page 5)

flexible spending accounts for medical expenses (such as co-payments, prescriptions, etc.) and child care. Anyone currently with a flex spending account must reenroll annually.

For more information about the County’s annual open enrollment as well as the various benefit plans offered, contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

It’s never too early for NASCAR or to start prepping for it

By Dave Mick, EMS Operations Support Officer

Cold weather has finally gone away. The days are getting longer. Birds are nesting, flowers are blooming, Spring is in the air.

WHO CARES?? NASCAR RACING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER!!



Yes, indeed, preparation for the Dover Downs Race Week is in full swing. You may not realize it, but every person who works at the track as a firefighter, first responder, foot patrol, BLS or ALS responder receives refresher training each year in order to be qualified to work there. This effort provides updates and improvements for emergency care of drivers, crews, fans, and responders, alike. This year is no exception and the training this time includes preparation for the “Car of Tomorrow”.

NASCAR’s Car of Tomorrow (COT) is a new design to provide not only more competitive racing, but also has several safety improvements for the driver. Safer cars are a great concept...the actual result presents more challenges for rescue crews. The most critical of these issues deal with medical access to the driver while in the car.

Here’s the scenario: A car crashes into the outside wall; slides down the banking and is hit by another car or two; this spins the first car several times and the car comes to rest on the apron after careening off the inside wall. The driver is knocked unconscious and the car must be cut apart to get the driver out. How do rescue crews manage this extrication?

First, a fire crew secures the scene from any fire hazard. They will extinguish any fire, shut down the car’s electrical system, and control any leaking fluids. Next, a Medic will make contact with the driver from the driver’s window; in this case establishing manual c-spine control and signaling for the extrication unit to respond. The extrication unit brings another medic who will enter the car from the other

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EMPLOYEE COUNCIL NEWS



By Michele Lapinski, Employee Council Secretary

First off, let me say thanks to everyone who purchased tickets for the Easter Basket and spring wreath raffles. The Council appreciates your continued support in our fund-raising efforts for the annual employee holiday events. The lucky winners were CARISSA MCLOUGHLIN (Easter basket) and TERRI MISIEWICZ (wreath). Special thanks to SHERRI BOURGEIOS once again for the donation of the wreath.

Speaking of raffles, the Council is going to try holding a regular 50/50 raffle on the first pay day of the month. We'll try to send out a reminder email a day or two in advance.

As mentioned in last month's column, the Employee Appreciation Picnic has been tentatively scheduled for Wednesday, June 20 (rain date June 21) on the grounds of the main administration building. This annual Levy Court-sponsored event has been a popular staple over the past ten years, and I'm sure this year's picnic will be no exception. The Employee Council will be soliciting employees and department managers to help with set up, cooking, serving and clean up. If you can spare the time, we'd really appreciate it.

Congratulations to MARVIN MILLMAN from Public Works who was chosen as the Employee of the Month for May 2007. In addition to a day off with pay, Marvin will also receive a \$100 stipend. Way to go!

If you know of a co-worker who has excelled and/or gone above and beyond in the performance of their job duties, then nominate them for Employee of the Month. Nomination forms are available in the central mail room and also on the v: drive under forms. Submitted nomination forms are eligible for a three month period and may be resubmitted.

Your Employee Council: President KATHY PHINNEY, Vice President MARY EISENBREY, Treasurer CYNDI LAIRD, Secretary MICHELE LAPINSKI, members PAT ORONA, LORI SHORT and JAYNE ZERANSKI. **1131**

* * *

One of the secrets of life is to make stepping stones out of stumbling blocks.

- Jack Penn

Tech Talk



Microsoft® Vista® is Here!! Hurray??

By Mark Strong, Network Services Manager

Microsoft® finally hit their release date for the long awaited replacement for their Windows XP® operating system this spring. Microsoft "Vista" is on retail shelves and you can get your new computer with Vista® already installed. This proves that Microsoft's change in naming their Operating Systems products from the year of release (Windows 95, Windows 98, Windows 2000) to a less descriptive name (Windows XP, Vista!) was a good move. How many people would run out and buy the new release of Windows 2004 in January of 2007?

We in I.T. have several copies of MS Vista installed for testing purposes and will be testing MS Office 2007 in the near future. (notice that Microsoft is still naming the MS Office suite of products after the year of release. I wonder when that will change to...oh I don't know....MS Office "High Sierra" edition, or MS Office "insert the name of your car" Professional Edition).

So far in our testing we have already found several of the counties applications that need to be upgraded in order to run in Vista. We in I.T. use a software package called "Track-It" that we use to track computer hardware/software inventory among other things. We found that we have to upgrade from our present version of Track-It 7 to the new Track-It 8 in order to get some of the software functions working with Vista. I'm sure there will be MANY of these upgrades required to existing county applications in order to migrate to Vista.

So when will Vista be installed on your county PC? Not tomorrow, that's for sure. If I were forced to guess, I would "ball park it" to some time later in calendar year 2008.

If you are curious about the "look and feel" of Vista, drop by I.T. and we can let you take a "test drive". Also we are planning a little Vista lap (just a PC or two) that county employee's can sit down and play with the new Microsoft products. This will be a "don't worry if you break it, it's not in production" setup. So if you're thinking about Vista for a home PC you can come in to test drive it (kick the tires/slam the door/do a few donuts/take a sharp turn at 92mph) and see what you think. **1852**

Your BlueEnrollment allows online sign-up!

By Sophie Dear, Personnel Technician II

Enjoy working online? Do you wish the County would do more via the Internet?



Starting this month you can, with electronic enrollment for your Blue Cross Blue Shield of Delaware benefits!

Your BlueEnrollment replaces time-consuming, expensive, and paper-based benefit enrollment with a comprehensive electronic benefit administration and enrollment solution. It's secure, online, paper-free, and administered by BenefitFocus, who will soon supply screen names and passwords for all County employees and

retirees. The first time the employee or retiree logs on, the password needs to be changed.

Using **Your BlueEnrollment**, new hire and life event processing is easy. It makes open enrollment and other transactions quick, painless, and paper-free. Employees and retirees can elect their benefits and add dependent information in a secure web-based application. Anywhere members have access to the Internet they can log on. It's one-thought-per-screen and large-button navigation makes the enrollment process simple. The screens provide questions based on the member's scenario, using an intuitive tool.

For example, if the member indicates that he is signing up for Employee Only coverage, there will be no areas to enter spouse or children data, prompting the member to notice the error if spouse or child coverage was needed. The screens will also show how *(Continued on Page 10)*

Enroll in optional employee life ins. in May

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

About one third of the employee population takes advantage of the County's optional/voluntary payroll deducted term life insurance program through Cigna, which is available for up to three times salary. The rates are unchanged from the current year.

In order to estimate your monthly rate—if eligible, multiply your FY08 annual salary by 0.5, 1, 2, or 3 times, then round up to the nearest \$1,000, then divide by 1,000 and multiply by the rate in the table.

The County provides at no cost to each full-time employee, term life insurance and accidental

death and dismemberment coverage, which is equal to one time salary rounded up to the next \$1,000. The County also provides at no cost a long term disability insurance program.

To sign up or for more information, stop by the Personnel Office in May.

FY08 Supplemental Term Life Insurance Rates

AGE	<30	30-34	35-39	40-44	45-49
Rate	\$0.07	\$0.09	\$0.11	\$0.17	\$0.26
AGE	50-54	55-59	60-64	65-69	70+
Rate	\$0.42	\$0.67	\$0.87	\$1.47	\$2.21

Term life insurance for dependents available through Cigna

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Open Enrollment during May is the only time existing employees can add voluntary term life insurance for themselves and dependents through Cigna insurance.

The monthly premium for a spouse is the same as the employee's age category for a minimum \$10,000 and can be increased up to a maximum benefit of \$50,000 with an acceptable medical history. Coverage terminates at age 69.

Parents may also purchase term life for their children up to \$500 for newborns from 14 days to 6 months, and up to \$10,000 from 6 months to age 19 or age 25 if a full-time student. The rate for child coverage is 20 cents per thousand or \$2.00 per month. Retirees are not eligible for the dependent coverage.

For more information about eligibility for this unique voluntary insurance, contact the Personnel Office at 744-2310.

BENEFIT BLURBS

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

It's Open Enrollment time again -- when employees and retirees can, without a qualifying event, enroll in the health and dental plans, change options in the health plan (for example, changing from PPO to HMO), enroll dependents in the health and dental plans, enroll in AFLAC programs, or apply for an increase in their life insurance.

The good news is that since no insurance carriers changed this year, employees/retirees need not do anything to retain existing coverages—except AFLAC, which requires annual reenrollment.

If you wish to have a change processed during the OE period, please contact or visit the Personnel Office for the correct form or try the new electronic enrollment process for health insurance changes through BenefitFocus. OE for health, dental, and life insurances will be May 9 - 25. All changes must be submitted to the Personnel Office (or made online for health insurance only) no later than May 25, so the correct deductions can be made on payroll checks starting in June (life deductions start in July). The Personnel Office can assist you with online enrollment, just stop by.

Our AFLAC representative, Eunice Craig, will be here on May 24 to meet with employees who wish to enroll in AFLAC, or make changes in their AFLAC insurance plans or flexible spending account. AFLAC enrollments and changes must be submitted to Personnel by June 29.

Questions? Call us at 744-2310.

Your BlueEnrollment

(Continued from Page 9)

much the member's premium will be, using County pay periods.

Once completed, members can prompt a comprehensive report for their records and submit their elections to the Personnel Office for approval.

After the Personnel Office approves the member's benefit elections (everything submitted by a member must be approved by the Personnel Office before being transmitted to the BCBS Membership Department), the information is sent to BCBSDE's membership system. Members, however, will not be able to terminate their coverage online – the Personnel Office must submit that event.

Please contact the Personnel Office at (302) 744-2312 if you have any questions about **Your BlueEnrollment**.

CAT BOX



By Cathleen McLean, Payroll Administrator

Timesheets imaged for future

The County's imaging group has taken on the task of imaging all of our timesheets. Now it becomes even more important to make sure that your time sheet can be identified as being "your time sheet."

Here are a few points that are most important to make sure that the correct time sheet and all documents that are attached can be identified as belonging to you:

1. Name – Please use the name that is currently on your paycheck on your time sheet and all attached documents. This is the name recorded from your social security card.
2. Department – Include on your time sheet and all attached documents your department name and number if you are not sure as to the actual name and department number ask your payroll coordinator.
3. Date of the Payroll – Include the date of the pay date that the timesheets are being recorded so that the information is stored with the correct date.

Please use white paper no colored paper. Colored ink is acceptable but black is preferable. The black color results in the clearest image.

In an effort to minimize the amount of images being stored please make sure that your timesheet is correct. In the event of errors that need adjustments we have to include the correction sheets to attach to that pay date.

If you have any questions or concerns please call me at 744-2387.

A Monthly Contest



A free movie ticket will be given to the first two employees who find the last four digits of his/her Social Security number in the current issue of Kent Connections and contacts the Personnel Office at 744-2310. DALE JONES of I & E and PAT UHEY of Register of Wills Office found their numbers and claimed their movie tickets in April. It's easy to win a movie ticket - just read Kent Connections.

FSA is a County benefit that can save you \$\$\$

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

An FSA (Flexible Spending Account) lets you put away pretax dollars to pay health care (out-of-pocket medical expenses ranging from surgery to over-the-counter sinus spray) and dependent care expenses. The money is deducted from your pay and placed in an account from which you are reimbursed. FSA accounts avoid all Federal, State, Local, and Social Security/Medicare taxes. You have paid your expenses with tax-free money!



If you manage your FSA wisely, it can mean generous tax savings – on average, 23 percent. The savings are even bigger for earners in the higher brackets. Someone in the 28 percent tax bracket who puts aside the maximum of \$5,000 (\$2,500 maximum for health care and \$2,500 maximum for dependent care) each year, for instance, can save almost \$1,400 in taxes. I found an online calculator at www.principal.com/group/h/selffunded/fsacalculator.

I typed in an annual income of \$25,000 and put the maximum of \$2,500 into a health care reimbursement account. The calculator indicated that the potential tax savings would be \$691.25. I then indicated an additional \$2,500 for dependent care, and the calculator indicated that there would be another tax savings of \$691.25. You do the math.

The tricky part is figuring how much to put into the account, since what you don't use by the end of the year you lose. Witness the December (for those whose FSA plan year ends in December) bottleneck at eye doctors' and dentists' offices as patients try to spend down their FSAs. The most important part of an FSA is to keep good records and plan carefully for the year ahead. But, don't despair, if CATHLEEN MCLEAN, the County's Payroll Administrator, notices that you still have money on the table, she will give you a call a few months before the end of the plan year. You can always spend that money on allowable over-the-counter medications and supplies (antacids, cold and allergy medications, pain relievers, Band-Aids®, etc.). I recently discovered I can use the Ear-Planes® (earplugs that I use while flying), which will be helpful, since I usually purchase several packages each year.

The fear of losing their hard-earned money, a lack of understanding of the tax benefits, the hassle of keeping records, and filing for reimbursement,

may explain why a low percentage of County employees participated in the program last year. Many people don't understand the tax advantages of an FSA, or are worried about losing money at the end of the year. For fear of not reclaiming money set aside, FSA participants often put less into their accounts than they should.

But their worries may be magnified. Estimating future expenses isn't as scary as it seems, and playing it safe by underfunding will still create benefits at tax time. Start by tallying up your biggest and most obvious expenses: deductibles, estimated copays for office visits and prescriptions, eyeglasses, and routine out-of-plan doctor and dental visits. (Cosmetic surgery is not reimbursable.)

Then, if you are planning an uncovered or partially covered procedure such as laser eye surgery or major dental work, you can set aside funds for that. Estimating expenses for over-the-counter (OTC) drug purchases, which have been reimbursable with FSA funds since 2003, can get dicier, especially the first year when you may not have receipts to gauge your previous-year expenses. As a general rule, OTC products used to treat personal injuries or sickness are eligible.

It's easy to lose track of OTC purchases because they can be small and mixed in with other items, such as groceries or gasoline (Advil for that road-trip headache). People with FSAs need to keep track of all their receipts and also file them frequently. Lost chances for OTC reimbursements are the biggest cause of forfeited FSA funds at the end of the year. Timely filing also will help keep you on track of how much money you have left in your account as the year winds down. One way to keep on track is to use an envelope marked "FSA" in huge letters. Place all prescription receipts, doctor co-pay receipts, receipts that include OTC items, and any other eligible receipts in this envelope, and submit them to the Payroll Administrator each month, with the proper AFLAC form. If you are using a dependent care account, submit those receipts frequently to stay on top of your usage.

Some pharmacies make the record keeping easier by reminding customers at the register and on receipts that certain OTC purchases are reimbursable through an FSA. Although most plans still require that the user submit receipts to be reimbursed, some have begun offering payment cards that can be used at the time of purchase (and also for copays). Hopefully, this will eventually be available to County

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Archeology celebrated this month in Kent County & Delaware

By Rochelle Bohm, Historic Preservation Planner

Archaeology Month highlights the abundant archaeological resources throughout all of Delaware. There are numerous opportunities to learn more about Archaeology throughout the state from lectures and exhibits to artifact identification and demonstrations.

With activities in every county, there is certain to be an activity you and your family can enjoy. The opportunities abound with family friendly activities happening every weekend in May. A complete list of activities and their locations is found at www.delawarearchaeology.org.

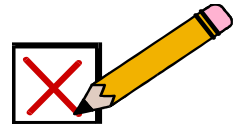
Activities taking place within Kent County are as follows:

- ‡ **May 5, 10:00 am to 4:00 pm - Dover**
Archaeology at Old Dover Days –With an excavation at the John Bell House on the Green and tents and activities at the Delaware Archeology Museum at 316 S. Governors Ave. Sponsor: Division of Historical and Cultural Affairs; for information call (302) 739-4266 (DHCA Events) or (302) 734-1736 (Old Dover Days).
- ‡ **May 12, Annual Meeting of the Archaeological Society of Delaware - John Dickinson Plantation.** The Public is welcome at the afternoon talks. Archaeological Presentations at:
12:45 – Archaeological Tour of John Dickinson Plantation by Alice Guerrant and Wade Catts
1:45 – Introduction to the Archaeological Training Program by Craig Lukesic
2:00 – Introductory Lecture on Archaeological Excavations by John Martin
2:45 – Introductory Analysis on Lithic Analysis by David Clark
3:00 – Introductory Lecture on Laboratory Procedure
3:45 – Bronze Age Transylvania by Josef Nagy
4:30 – Discussions and Questions

For additional information please feel free to contact Rochelle Bohm, Kent County Historic Preservation Planner, at (302) 744-2470.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR



May 2, 2007 - Blood Pressure Checks at the Wastewater Facility from 2:00-4:00 p.m.

May 3, 2007 - Rosemary Knapp, Representative for ICMA, will be meeting with employees from 11 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. at the Administrative Complex in room 221.

May 9, 2007 - Blood Pressure Checks at Annex at 9:00 a.m., Kent County Administrative Complex in Room 257 from 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.

May 9, 2007 - L&W Ins. Rep. to answer health insurance questions from 1:00-2:00 p.m. in Room 213 at the County Administrative Complex.

May 16, 2007 - Employee Training Session about "Violence on the Job". Sessions will be held at 9:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. in room 220 A/B in the Kent County Administrative Complex.

May 24, 2007 - Eunice Craig, Representative for AFLAC Insurance, will be holding informational sessions for employees at the Administrative Complex in room 220 at 9 a.m., 10 a.m., 1 p.m. & 2 p.m.

May 28, 2007 - Memorial Day Holiday. County Offices are closed.

May 31, 2007 - Youth in Government Day. High School students learn about local government in day-long activities. **0346**

FSA is a County benefit

(Continued from Page 11)
employees.

Sadly, only about a dozen County employees took advantage of this tax savings opportunity last year. While speaking with a financial advisor a few months ago, one of the first things he mentioned was taking advantage of all tax advantages (tax advisors aren't just for those in the upper tax brackets; if I can do it, so can you).

AFLAC open enrollment will be during the months of May and June. Our AFLAC representative, Eunice Craig, will be here to meet with employees on Thursday, May 24.

Please contact the Personnel Office to schedule a meeting with Eunice, or if you have any questions about AFLAC insurances or flexible spending accounts.

AMAZING FACTS ABOUT SEASONAL ALLERGIES & MORE

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

1. **Sensitive to pollen?** Wash your hair before bedtime. **Reason:** You'll remove any pollen and keep it from settling on pillows and bedding. **Also:** Avoid irritants such as tobacco smoke, automobile exhaust, hair spray and perfume; wash your hands frequently; plan outdoor activities when pollen counts are low.



2. The best time to take an **antihistamine**, which helps

block allergic reactions, is before symptoms start. **Just remember:** Some allergy medications can cause sleepiness. So never take one when safety requires you to be alert. **Suggestion:** Ask your health care provider about antihistamines that cause less drowsiness.

3. **Dust mites** love to nest in area rugs and make you sneeze and itch. **If you're allergic, Australian researchers offer a simple solution:** Place area rugs outdoors in direct sunlight for a few hours until they become warm and dry. **Result:** Mites dry up and die.

4. **Moving** to another location is no guarantee of allergy relief. **Why:** People usually develop allergies to their new region's pollens and molds within a few years of moving. **Plus:** Most allergy-provoking grasses are widespread throughout the world.

5. As many as 20 percent of Americans believe they have a **food allergy**, but true food allergies are actually rare. What most people consider food allergies are usually signs of digestive problems, food poisoning, or stress.

Information from *TopHealth: The Health Promotion and Wellness Newsletter*

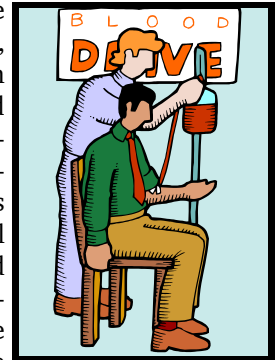
Congratulations

Congratulations to ERIN MILLER, Permit Technician III, in the Department of Planning Services and JASON MILLER, Engineering Project Manager I, in the Department of Public Works on the birth of their daughter, Emery Rose on April 25, 2007 at 4:01 p.m. weighing 7 lb. 2 oz. and 19.5 in. long. Emery joins siblings Kyle and Ashlynn.

Blood Bank membership an important benefit— ineligible under ins.

By Sophie F. Dear, Personnel Technician II

The Blood Bank of Delmarva's mission is to serve the community by meeting the needs of patients, hospitals, and members for safe, high quality blood products and related services. It is a non-profit organization, and supplies blood and blood products to 17 hospitals and 13 renal care centers in Delaware and Maryland. The basis of the program is the Blood Assurance Plan, which provides coverage for its members. 350 blood donors are needed every day in this area. This year, more than 20,000 patients will need blood transfusions.



BLOOD: Everyone Has It; Everyone Needs It. This liquid carries oxygen and nutrients to all parts of the body, and carries carbon dioxide and other waste products back to the lungs, kidneys and liver for disposal. It fights against infection and helps heal wounds, so we can stay healthy. There's no substitute for blood. If people lose blood from surgery or injury or if their bodies can't produce enough, there is only one place to turn – volunteer blood donors.

Kent County Levy Court sponsors Blood Bank membership for its employees and retirees at no cost to the member. This is an important benefit, in conjunction with your health insurance coverage. The County's health plan does not cover blood—employees must pay the full cost of such products unless a member of the Blood Bank.

If you are not a Blood Bank member, or your membership has lapsed, and you would like to be a member, please contact anyone in the Personnel Office for an enrollment brochure. You may join at any time – there is no Open Enrollment period!

High Praise

Kudos to LOU COX, Assessment Supervisor, for a typed letter from a citizen thanking him for helping with a tax appeal. He added a kind word for LESLIE VASQUEZ, Appraiser I, for her help as well. Yeah!!

Library offers "Summer Arts in the Parks"

By Hilary Welliver, Associate Librarian

Kent County Public Library will be offering "Summer Arts in the Parks" - a monthly summer arts program that takes place when the Kent County Bookmobile makes its first stop in Brecknock, Big Oak, and Brown's Branch county parks in June (1, 4 & 7),

July (2, 5 & 6), and August (2, 3 & 6).

The half-hour long programs tie into Kent County Public Library's already successful summer reading program. The Kent County Bookmobile strives to bring library services to areas of Kent County that are outside the service areas of municipal libraries. These bookmobile services are unique in Kent County.

The summer series schedule is as follows:

Storytelling with Hilary Welliver

Interactive stories, songs, and puppetry involve listeners of all ages. Fun for families!

June 1, 2:30-3:00 p.m. at Brecknock Park

June 4, 4:00-4:30 p.m. at Big Oak

June 7, 2:30-3:00 p.m. at Brown's Branch
Itinerant Dance Theatre

Dancers interact with the audience as they try to solve the mystery: Where's My Hat?

July 2, 4:00-4:30 p.m. at Big Oak

July 5, 2:30-3:00 p.m. at Brown's Branch

July 6, 2:30-3:00 p.m. at Brecknock Park

Alison Aubrey, "CongaChick"

Music and storytelling featuring percussion instruments from all over the globe make for an exciting family storytime.

August 2, 2:30-3:00 p.m. at Brown's Branch

August 3, 2:30-3:00 p.m. at Brecknock Park

August 6, 4:00-4:30 p.m. at Big Oak

Attendees are encouraged to bring blankets and/or lawn chairs to the performances. All programs are free and open to the public.

The programs are made possible, in part, by grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Delaware Division of the Arts, a state agency dedicated to nurturing and supporting the arts in Delaware to enhance the quality of life for all Delawareans.

The Delaware Division of the Arts provides technical and financial assistance to artists and arts programs and serves as a clearinghouse for informa-

Public Safety prepares early for NASCAR races

(Continued from Page 7)

side while the cutting team uses hydraulic and air-powered tools to make up to 15 pre-planned cuts to completely remove the roof assembly. While this happens, the medics will be releasing the head restraint systems on the driver's helmet and seat. With the COT there is not enough room to remove the helmet until the roof comes off! Once the roof is gone, the helmet comes off, the driver's airway and breathing are managed, the driver is packaged with a "spoon" device and straps to be lifted vertically out of the seat and placed on a backboard. This entire operation will take about four minutes.

To facilitate this rescue operation the training has focused on the roof removal techniques and some new innovations regarding the helmet and the "spoon" device. Several of the key EMS personnel have explored using surgical saw devices to rapidly cut away the chin piece of the driver's helmet, thus allowing airway management prior to the roof removal. These cutting devices can also be used to re-

move the padding of the seat head restraint; this gives an additional couple of inches of space...this is a huge advantage to the rescue crew! The "spoon" device is a variation of what EMS has had for years called the short backboard. Basically it is a metal sheet that is slipped behind and strapped to the driver to provide as much spinal immobilization as possible. The new seat design has prompted the development of new adjuncts to this device so that the driver can be rapidly strapped in and still be secure.

The teamwork that has been demonstrated by all the various response disciplines has been nothing short of exemplary.

Fire, EMS, and Track personnel shared insight, experience, and dedication in formulating functional and efficient remedies to the challenges at hand.

More innovations are sure to be developed and the care provided to the race crews and fans will only improve over time. **5744**

Solberg receives 2007 Conservation Excellence Award

On Wednesday, April 25, at the Delaware Agricultural Museum and Village in Dover, Governor Ruth Ann Minner, together with DNREC Secretary John A. Hughes, DDA Secretary Michael Scuse, and Delaware Association of Conservation Districts President Josef "Andy" Burger, recognized the winners of the Annual Agricultural and Urban Governor's Conservation Awards. The Governor also signed a proclamation officially designating April 29 through May 5 as Soil and Water Stewardship Week.

The Kent County Parks Division Manager, CARL SOLBERG, received the Governor's Conservation Award for Excellence in Urban Conservation Activities. Citing his work in public and private open space restoration efforts, the Award focused on a major ecological restoration practice completed on his personal property in December, 2006.

On his property in the Marydel area near the intersection of Tappahannak Trail and Mahan Corner Road in the Chesapeake Bay drainage basin, Carl completed a unique stream and wetland restoration project in a cooperative effort between the Division of Soil & Water Conservation's Ecological Restoration Program and the Kent Conservation District. The project was funded by the North American Wetland Conservation Act, the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, and a personal financial match by the Solbergs.

With the goals of providing diverse aquatic and stream-side habitat, improving water quality, and increasing total wetland acreage; the project involved 1,700 feet of stream restoration of what was previously a prong of the Marydel Tax Ditch and included elevating the ditch bottom, installing three water-control structures (including one created to replicate a beaver dam) and creating two acres of floodplain wetlands adjacent to the original channel.

What makes the project unique is that the entire tax ditch right-of-way has been eliminated and portions of the tax ditch maintenance access way have been restored to wetlands. Re-construction of geometries typical of natural coastal plain streams and vegetation consistent with natural riparian communities is a regional conservation priority.

The restoration of these wetlands includes the excavation of the ditch management right-of-way creating macro topographic conditions, adding organic matter, and planting native plants and trees. A portion of the excavated material from these restored wetlands was placed in the ditch to raise the bottom elevation and create a more diverse hummock system



Gov. RuthAnn Minner congratulates Carl Solberg for his Conservation Excellence Award for a stream and wetlands restoration project on his Marydel property.

within the portions of the ditch. Carl purchased two additional acres of land along the tax ditch so that the State's drainage ROW Easement could be abandoned and allow the project to be designed without landowner or geographic constraints. River Otter have already discovered the new habitat early this winter, while Teal, Wood Duck, and other wetland-dependent fauna appeared early this spring.

Upon completion of primary construction of the project in December, the Solbergs recorded a perpetual conservation easement, retiring all the development rights on their 55-acre property for the purpose of, "...the establishment and maintenance of an old growth coastal plain forest ecosystem and secondarily to protect species listed by Delaware or the federal government as endangered or threatened." (Ref. Kent County Recorder of Deeds, Instrument #2006-77292.)

Budget eyes \$5 dental increase

(Continued from Page 3)

change in the current program which features a \$1,000 per calendar year maximum.

The dependent rate paid by employees will increase from \$26 per month to \$31 with the new higher deductions taken from paychecks beginning in June.

Employees wanting to add dependents to the program must do so during open enrollment, unless a qualifying event occurs later in the year.

SOME ANSWERS TO THOSE NAGGING QUESTIONS

By Allan Kujala, Personnel Director

Q. I recently returned from a training conference out of state and had to take a late return flight home due to the high cost of the earlier flight as well as the conference ending time. Imagine my surprise when your office denied my compensation for the late night return flight. I was on County business, so how can you not pay me for the travel time?

A. The federal Fair Labor Standards Act addresses compensation issues such as this. The law only requires the County or any employer to compensate employees traveling on an airplane, train or bus on behalf of the employer during normal working hours—8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in your case. Since your flight was after 5 p.m., you are not entitled to compensation for that time. However, since you flew to the training conference on a Sunday, with a departing time of 9:30 a.m. and landing time if 2:45 p.m., you are entitled to be compensated for those hours, because it was during your normal working hours—even though it was the weekend. In your specific case, it all pretty much evened out. Interestingly enough, your commute to the airport and back home is not compensable according to the FLSA, which views it no differently than driving to work (even though the airport is an hour further away).

Q. My doctor is advising me to work half days for a while after recuperating from an upcoming surgery and I was wondering how that affects the 12-weeks of leave I receive under the Family & Medical Leave Act?

A. Good question. The FMLA provides for up to 12-weeks of unpaid leave during a rolling one year period for employees suffering from an illness or injury or caring for an eligible family members with an illness or injury. The employee must have worked for the County for at least 12 months prior and provide verification from a licensed physician of the need for such leave. If you take the full 12-weeks recuperating from the surgery—you would have no FMLA leave and can be terminated. If you take less than 12 weeks then the half day work would only reduce the FMLA leave by half as much. Keep in mind that the employee does not have a right to part-time work. The County must be convinced that your half days would be productive, or the request for half can be denied.

Q. I recently injured myself on the job and had to return to the doctor several times for check-ups. I was shocked to learn that I would not be compensated for

those check-ups. Why should I have to use sick leave for treatment of a work-related injury? My supervisor said I would be paid for the time, even on my days off.

A. Yet another good reason to keep an ample supply of sick leave available for use during such unforeseen circumstances. Your supervisor was wrong to say that you would get paid to go to the doctor. When an employee has a compensation question, they should not rely on the sketchy memories of supervisors or co-workers, they should call the Personnel Office. Had your injury required you to miss more than 3 days of work, the County's workers compensation insurance provider would have paid for the lost time. But your injury did not require you to miss that much time, so you are not entitled to be compensated. Especially in your case when the doctor appointments were after your normal work shift and on your days off.

Q. Is the County considering another early retirement offer?

A. Not in the foreseeable future. The County pension fund has performed modestly for the past several years, but nothing like it did in the late 1990s leading up to the dot.com bust. Back then the County pension was overfunded, so it was relatively easy to fund an early retirement option. The most recent pension valuation indicated substantial growth in staff and salaries, the FY08 budget increased the annual pension contribution by about \$400K—a hefty spike for any budget.

Q. Would it be possible to put the metal benches located throughout the Complex, outside along the side the building, so that County employees can go out and enjoy the nice weather during lunch and breaks?

A. Sounds like a reasonable request, however, Facilities Management is concerned that the benches would rust or severely fade. They report that exterior seating is available on the second floor patio and a table with chairs and umbrella has been set up in back adjacent the Recorder of Deeds office.

Q. How come you never address the questions deposited in the Complex kitchen suggestion box?

A. I check the box regularly and do respond to the one's to which I can get an answer. Some questions (suggestions) require too many details.