

County Corridors

A Newsletter for Tompkins County Employees and Retirees

December, 2005
Volume 17, Number 10

**Corridors
is Back!**



County Corridors is returning to a regular publication schedule with this issue. Paper copies of the newsletter will be distributed to all County employees and also mailed to any County retiree who requests it. The newsletter will be posted on the County Intranet. *Corridors* will be published in March, June, September, and December. (see page 10 for more details!)

Riding the Bus with my Co-workers *Is the County's Bus Pass Policy Fair?*

By Katy Prince, Tompkins County Health Department



Due to the increase in the price of gas, I recently started riding the bus to work every day. I got this idea when, after Hurricane Katrina, all County employees got an e-mail from either Lorraine Steele or Maryanne Banks about "free" bus passes for County employees that work downtown.

I contacted the appropriate person indicated in the e-mail and was told that I am not eligible because I don't work downtown.

I started riding the bus anyway to save on gas, be more environmentally friendly, and avoid traffic congestion – but I am still upset that the people who work downtown get a free pass to ride the bus and I do not. I have to pay \$45 a month to ride the bus. I feel like I am being discriminated against for working "on the hill." And I'm not the only one. Several other people up

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Goodbyes and Hellos

In January 2006, the Tompkins County's Legislature will have its largest turnover since 1960. Seven new members – four Democrats and three Republicans – are coming in. The departing Legislators are all long-time incumbents who will take with them 98 years of cumulative experience. Also departing is District Attorney George Dentes, who served as our DA for four consecutive four-year terms.

Goodbye to:

Barbara Blanchard, D	Legis. District 1
Nancy Schuler, D	Legis. District 4
Thomas Todd, R	Legis. District 6
Daniel Winch, R	Legis. District 8
George Totman, R	Legis. District 9
Michael Lane, D	Legis. District 14
Peter Penniman, D	Legis. District 15
George Dentes, R	County D.A.

Hello to:

Pam Mackesey, D
Nathan Shinagawa, D
Michael Sigler, R
Greg Stevenson, D
Duane Randall, R
Michael Hattery, R
Jim Dennis, D
Gwen Wilkinson, D

Program Focus

SWAP, JACS Programs Benefit Many

By Patricia Buechel, Probation and
Community Justice Department

You may have heard the acronyms SWAP and JACS, and perhaps your department has been helped by one of these programs – but just what are they and what do they do? The Department of Probation and Community Justice operates both of these supervised community service programs.

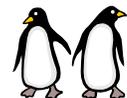
SWAP stands for Service Work Alternative Program, an Alternative to Incarceration program for non-violent offenders who are ordered by the courts to perform a certain number of hours of community service. JACS is the Juvenile Accountability Community Service program for youths involved in family court and who have been ordered to perform community service.

In both SWAP and JACS, participants develop work skills and self-esteem, and the community gains from the work they perform. While the department has work sites all over the county, we are proudest of our involvement in the Grassroots Festival and the Cornell University Dump and Run program, both of which benefit Cops, Kids and Toys (CK&T), a not-for-profit

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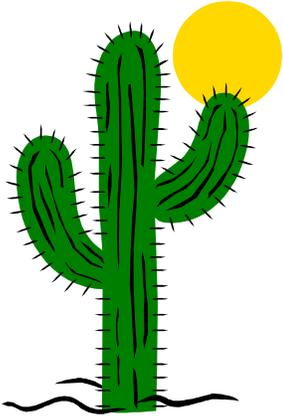
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Corridors is back – but should it have a **new name** to celebrate its return? What do you think? Send in the coupon on the back page.

A Note from the County Administrator

Welcome Back, Corridors! After a long hiatus, it is good to see the return of our employee newsletter. As you may notice, the Corridors team has worked hard to reflect the results of the staff survey.



Regarding the survey, I was particularly pleased to find that my contributions came in solidly behind the classifieds in popularity – provided I stick to real-life events rather than the mundane world of budgets and governmental affairs. I will do my best to oblige.

As I write this column, I am on vacation. I am writing from my daughter's house in the suburbs of Phoenix where the weather is delightful, just perfect for the list of chores that has accumulated since my last visit. It amazes me how

much work is required to keep up a 0.15 acre lot in suburbia. Maybe my daughter just knows that I need the therapy of sunshine and manual labor. I must admit it does feel good.

My days here begin with a short bike trip to Starbucks for a Grande Latte, an obligation of anyone west of the Mississippi. I then bike over to what I think of as "my mountain," really just a large hill. I park the bike and take a three-mile strenuous hike. Then I go for a three- or four-mile bike ride through neighborhoods that I can no longer afford since the Californians have doubled the prices, and then on to my chores for the day. I also manage to play a few rounds of golf each day at one of the two golf courses within walking distance. There seem to be more golf courses than Starbucks.

I can easily see why this place is booming. The constant sunshine is revitalizing and the results of healthy living are readily apparent in nearly everyone around. However, trying to stay alive in a metropolitan area of millions of people takes more energy and wariness than I am willing to give. The traffic here is simply unbelievable and the smog is beginning to creep across the valley on a regular basis. In addition, one is constantly accosted by young men claiming to be trying to rehabilitate themselves and they just need you to buy some magazines to help them get back on their feet. The news stations warn that these young men are actually checking out your house in preparation for a later nefarious visit. Quite a world.

As much as I love this sunshine and warmth, I long for the tranquility of my place in the hills of Tompkins County. Traveling certainly helps to reaffirm the quality of our own life at home. Take care, everyone, and appreciate our little place in the world; it is made even more special by the good works all of you perform each day.

Thank You and Happy Holidays!

– Steve Whicher

Notices & Announcements

Cops, Kids & Toys

The Finance Department is once again collecting for the Cops, Kids & Toys Program. New unwrapped gifts can be dropped off at the Old Jail, 125 E. Court Street, 2nd Floor, through December 12, 2005. Gifts may also be dropped off at the Solid Waste Management Division office on Commercial Avenue.



United Way of Tompkins County

It's not too late to make a contribution to the United Way of Tompkins County. The agencies supported by the United Way assist children, teens, and adults with both emergency help and sustained support.

On the back of our pledge cards is a list of the United Way's "partner agencies." When you make a pledge to the United Way you may designate agencies to which you wish to direct your contribution, and you may likewise designate agencies from which you wish to exclude a contribution.

Sooner or later we all need a helping hand, so please consider a contribution to our United Way. It's easy to pledge via payroll deduction, and a modest biweekly contribution accumulates into a valuable gift. If you have questions or need a pledge card, call Anna Smith in the Personnel Office: 274-5526.

Passport Photos



Get your passport photo taken at the Tompkins County Clerk's Office for only \$8. Compared to \$14 elsewhere. Want your photo for other purposes? We can take it here. Come see us in the basement of the Courthouse.

Kudos Korner

From Michael Koplinka-Loehr, Legislator:

1. I would like to acknowledge and thank Bob Deluca, Betsy Doling, Michelle Eighmey, Jay Franklin, Tom Herden, Norma Jayne, Pat Nowakowski, Greg Potter, David Squires, and Jackie Thomas for their inspiring teamwork to develop the Department Budget Database. Your hard work is much appreciated.

2. Our deepest thanks go to each county employee for the dedication and caring which you bring each and every day for the "common good" of the public whom we serve. Your contribution is a significant and essential part of the local quality of life which we all enjoy, but never take for granted. THANK YOU!

*Want to acknowledge someone for a job well done?
Send your kudos to Corridors@tompkins-co.org*

Awards & Honors

Nancy Zook Receives Award from Challenge Industries

Nancy Zook from the County Youth Services Department was honored by Challenge Industries as their 2005 Partner of the Year for her commitment to working toward providing opportunities for people with disabilities and support for Challenge's mission. In 2004, the County Youth Services Department developed a collaborative proposal to use Workforce Investment Act funds to serve low-income youth and those with barriers to employment.

Nancy worked actively to recruit and connect eligible out-of-school youth so they could receive employment training and job coaching from Challenge through the Job LINK program. Karen Coleman from the County Youth Services Department also works collaboratively with area schools, youth programs and DSS to recruit and connect eligible in-school youth with the Job LINK program.

The whole County Youth Services Department was praised by Challenge as a department that really practices true collaboration

in working with others on behalf of young people.

– Nancy Zahler



Nancy Zook speaks to the Legislature after receiving the Partner of the Year award. In the background is Challenge Industries' president, Patrick McKee, who presented the award (right).



Elizabeth Cree Named 2005 "Woman of Distinction"

Elizabeth Cree, Board of Elections Commissioner, was recognized as a "Woman of Distinction" at a ceremony in Albany in June. She was nominated for the award by Senator Michael Nozzolio as part of a celebration to honor women in New York State whose accomplishments have contributed to an improved quality of life in their communities.

Elizabeth has been an elections commissioner since 1997, and was a senior elections clerk at the BoE for ten years before that. She is a past chair of the NYS Election Commissioner Association. She also chairs the Tompkins County Republican Committee. As a past member of the Ithaca Rotary Club,

she was co-chair for community service, organizing Share the Warmth, and other charitable activities. Elizabeth both likes and believes in her work. "Working for so many years in County government, and to be employed to promote democracy, on which our country is founded, has made me a very blessed individual," she says.

Laura Owens and Tom Paolangeli Earn State Board of Elections Honors

In May of 2005 the State Board of Elections presented to the Tompkins County Board of Elections a Certificate of Merit for "innovative concepts developed in the field of election administration and operation."

The award was for papers discussing the use of Microsoft Access in election night reporting, by Democratic Senior Clerk Laura Owens, and the development of inexpensive web sites for county Boards of Elections, by Democratic Deputy Commissioner Tom Paolangeli.

Karen Bishop and John Andersson Receive State Awards for Excellence

Two County Health Department employees were honored by the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH). John Andersson, Tompkins County Environmental Health Director, received the "Environmental Health Outstanding Service Award" for professional excellence; Karen Bishop, Supervising Community Health Nurse, received NYSDOH's "Gerald A. Errion Award" for outstanding efforts in immunization by local health department staff.



In Memory of Janis Avery



*A devoted employee,
A loving wife and mother
and a loyal friend.
It's hard to believe a year
has passed since we last
saw your smiling face.
We think of you each and
every day. Your smile
lives on forever in our
hearts and minds.*

Department News

Highway

We Have Lots of New Faces!

By Geri Lockwood, Highway Division

Tompkins County Highway normally has a low personnel turnover rate, but 2005 has become an exception. Not only do we have new leadership, but we also have five new crew members, a new Secretary, and a new Civil Engineer!

Ed Marx, previously the Deputy County Administrator and Commissioner of Planning, became the Commissioner of Planning and Public Works. William "Bill" Sczesny joined us in June as the new Highway Manager, a position that John Lampman held as interim manager for one year.

Bob Bunce, Kyle Henderson, Kevin Hulbert, and Lorri Stage all came on board in May as Motor Equipment Operators (MEO's), as two new MEO positions were added, and two were vacated due to the promotions of Joe McCoy and Mike Piotti to Heavy Equipment Operators (HEO's), also two new positions. Phil Royce, who began as a seasonal MEO in May, was hired full-time in June, when an MEO position was vacated.

Kathy Cornell, a former long-term County employee, joined us in September as the new Secretary when Geri Lockwood was promoted to Administrative Assistant due to that position being vacated. John Kupiec filled the two-year vacant Civil Engineer position in October.



County Clerk

New Passport Requirements in 2006 That includes you, Santa!

By Alanna Congdon, County Clerk's Office



Starting Dec. 31, 2006, passports will be required for all persons, fictitious characters, wanted persons or talking animals to enter Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, the Caribbean and Bermuda by air, sea or sleigh. Land border crossings will require a passport starting Dec. 31, 2007. Passports are processed at the County Clerk's Office (274-5432) – please allow six weeks for processing, just as Santa and his helpers have. For more information, visit www.tompkins-co.org/cclerk/ or www.travel.state.gov.

DSS

Learn About Foster Care/Adoption

By Ellie Arnold, DSS

For anyone considering becoming a foster parent or adoptive parent, Tompkins County Department of Social Services holds informational meetings on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Human Services Building, Room 142. The next meetings are December 8, 2005 and January 12, 2006 from noon to 1 PM. The **Youth Services Department** is also looking for host homes for teenagers for short-term respite. Call 274-5266 for more information.



Aurora Valenti (right) and Judge Relihan (center) congratulate a new citizen.



County Clerk

Citizenship Ceremony Goes to Boynton

By Aurora Valenti, Tompkins County Clerk

In November, 29 applicants, representing 18 countries, became citizens of the United States at a ceremony taken "on the road" by the Tompkins County Clerk, Aurora R. Valenti, and her staff. The Hon. Walter J. Relihan, Jr., State Supreme Court Justice, presided at the naturalization service at Boynton Middle School in Ithaca, in the presence of the families and friends of the newest citizens, as well as the entire student body of the school.

The Boynton Concert Band and Student Chorus provided patriotic music, and an extensive reception was held following the ceremony, with elegant "red, white & blue" pastries and punch (made by staff and faculty).

Ms. Jackie Fazio of the Boynton Administration coordinated the events at the school, assisted by faculty and staff. The Tompkins County Bar Association graciously donated the flowers by Flowerfield Florist.

Patriotic attire was visible throughout the school; flags and national memorabilia were strategically placed; clothing was color-coordinated; and one young man came to school with red, white & blue hair.

DSS

November was National Adoption Month

By Maryanne Banks, DSS

November was National Adoption Month. Tompkins County Department of Social Services celebrated on November 21 by recognizing the staff within our office who are striving for permanent homes for children, and have turned positive attitudes about adoption into results. Current research shows that caseworkers' "belief in the adoptability" of all children, no matter how seemingly difficult the issues, leads to success in finding permanent homes for children.

Last year Tompkins County DSS caseworkers were instrumental in facilitating adoptions for 14 children on our caseload. Caseworkers assisted many more adults in exploring their options, creating adoptive families, and supporting families after they have adopted.

Through a partnership with Franziska Racker Centers, the Department also provides a support group and clinical services for foster and adoptive parents involved with DSS. In addition,

over the past few years we have received some small grants and donations to provide professionally facilitated activity groups for adopted children and families, including camping weekends at the Earth Connections Camp and Cayuga Nature Center. These events provide opportunities for adopted children to meet other adopted children and provide safe and nurturing places for adoptive children to explore and talk about their feelings and thoughts around issues of adoption and families. These



events have been very well received by adoptive families and children.

According to the 2000 US Census, Tompkins County is the only county in New York State where the percent of adopted children under 18 exceeds 7.4%—it has the highest percentage of adopted children in the state. A portion of these families have adopted through Tompkins County DSS, thanks to our caseworkers' commitment to children and families.

Probation and Community Justice

The Value of SWAP and JACS Programs

(continued from page 1)

organization that collects and buys gifts for needy children around the holidays.

SWAP runs an on-site recycling center for returnable cans and bottles at the Grassroots Festival, a four-day music event that draws large thirsty crowds. Our SWAP participants help collect and sort the cans and bottles, which are then delivered to a redemption center. This site is a short term, labor intensive endeavor that the SWAP program now has down to a science. This year, a grand total of \$2,800 was received for the returnable cans and bottles the SWAP program sorted. That's 56,000 cans and bottles to be exact!

Dump and Run is a collaborative effort between Cornell University, local police agencies, and this department. The idea is to collect things left behind by students in May, resell them to students when they return in August, and give the proceeds to charity. Cornell staff collects all the items: clothing, furniture, radios, appliances, lamps, stereos, TV's, DVD players, crates, food, hygiene products, computers, etc., which are delivered to a warehouse. Over the next three months the SWAP and JACS participants begin making sense out of all the items by sorting them into labeled boxes. It is a daunting task; the piles are huge and seemingly insurmountable and never-ending. Finally, the items are delivered back to the University for a giant two-day sale that is open to students and the Ithaca community.



The event is a win-win for everyone. The environment does not suffer from items going to the landfill, buyers are happy with their bargains, SWAP and JACS participants develop a sense of pride for their efforts, and proceeds from the sale go to local charities. This year we were thrilled that the sale netted \$20,000, with \$12,000 going to CK&T, \$4,500 to the Dream Factory, and \$3,500 to the Advocacy Center.

Now that the holiday season is here, the SWAP and JACS programs will help CK&T by sorting gifts for the families who have signed up for the program. Over 750 families and approximately 1,800 children are served by this program. The task of organizing and sorting the gifts by the deadline is massive and involves the teamwork of many people, including many police personnel from various agencies.

The Probation Department is pleased to be an integral piece of the community programs that have come to rely on SWAP and JACS for help. For our participants, it gives true meaning to the concept of repaying the community, and for some, the experience of feeling successful and being a part of something meaningful is a turning point toward law-abiding behavior, development of self-esteem, and a desire to make something positive of their lives.

A Note of Thanks

As many of you know, my secretary, Mary King, has been out since July 2005 with a serious injury. Fortunately, she is doing much better and should be returning to work in early January. I am sure she would appreciate hearing from any of you, while she is convalescing from surgery. I would like to thank some people who helped our department during this trying time. When you have a two-person staff and one of them is out for six months, you can imagine the stress and workload. I would like to thank Anita Fitzpatrick for her help, Patricia Carey for her generosity, and Sandra Perez for all her hard work. We have had a great time together and I hope she is actually learning some things from working in this fast-paced environment. Thank you, all!

Julia Hughes, Assigned Counsel

Opinion

Riding the Bus *(continued from page 1)*

here inquired about a free bus pass to ride the bus. We were all turned down.

Apparently, since we don't have to pay for parking, we don't qualify. It seems to me that the people who do work downtown benefit more than just not having to pay for parking. They don't have to pay for gas in their car (gas was costing me about \$45 a week), nor the maintenance on it, and they get a free ride to work (worth \$45 a month).

When I ride the bus, I leave home at about 6:45 AM, drive 7.5 miles to Dryden and catch the bus just after 7 AM. I get to Ithaca around 7:50, board another bus about 10 minutes later and get off at Dates Drive at about 8:15. I walk the rest of the way, to be at work by 8:30.

I have sacrificed some of my time to ride the bus to work. When I drive, I can leave home almost an hour later and be home by 5:15. When I ride the bus, I get home closer to 6 PM. This is not a complaint. Remember, I am saving gas and avoiding traffic congestion. Here's a comparison of my annual cost of riding the bus vs. driving to work:

Driving: \$45 per week (gas only) x 50 weeks (2 weeks vacation) = **\$2,250 a year**

Riding the bus: \$45 bus pass x 12 months = **\$540 a year**

This is a huge savings, but think about the person who works downtown, gets the same pay as me, and gets a \$540 bonus every year in the form of a free bus pass. I think the policy is unfair especially since the last sentence in the White Collar contract from 2001 – 2004 (Side Letter, p. 38) reads, "Employees will continue to be eligible to apply for – at no cost to the employee – monthly transit passes with a value equal to the prevailing monthly pass rate." It does NOT state that the policy will continue for downtown employees only.

Don't get me wrong. The County supplying bus passes to employees is a wonderful thing. I just don't think it's right to discriminate against workers in the "outlying" areas (Airport, Highway, Solid Waste, Health, etc.) Since I am helping to conserve energy, reduce traffic, and save the environment from even more automobile emissions, and I am a Tompkins County employee, I too would like my free monthly bus pass.



Mental Health employee Carole Colaw (free pass) with Public Health employee Katy Prince (pays for pass).



Public Health employee Lirita Meir (pays for pass) with Katy on the bus.

Response: County Will Look at the Bus Pass Policy

According to the Commissioner of Personnel: "The issuance of bus passes to County employees was initiated to accommodate employee parking restrictions in the downtown complexes (Courthouse, Mental Health, and later the Human Services Building). Free bus passes are not currently available to all County employees. The distinction that was made revolved around the issue of availability of sufficient, free parking for employees at the various complexes."

Katy Prince has pointed out that these days the cost of gas is a big issue, as well as reducing pollution and relieving traffic congestion.

As a result of Katy's letter, Kathy Luz Herrera, the chair of the Planning, Development, and Environmental Quality Committee, and Michael Koplinka-Loehr, Chair of the Budget and Capital Committee, have said they will look at the bus pass policy in this new context.

A meeting with TCAT has been scheduled, and discussions are under way.

TCAT Ridership Hits All-Time High Up 34 Percent over 2005

County employees weren't the only people who started riding the bus this fall. According to TCAT, the number of riders on TCAT buses in September 2005 topped all previous records for the transit provider. About 90,000 more people stepped into a TCAT bus in September 2005 than in September 2004 – a 34 percent increase.

"Ridership always goes up in the fall," says TCAT General Manager Joe Turcotte, "but this is a pretty stunning increase."

Turcotte attributes the peak ridership primarily to the soaring cost of gasoline, which went up as much as a dollar a gallon in some areas.

September saw a sharp rise in ridership among Cornell students and staff. The number of university employees who rode TCAT buses went up from about 70,000 in September a year ago to about 113,000 in September this year. Student ridership, boosted by Cornell's new policy of giving free bus passes to all freshman, increased from about 133,000 to nearly 170,000.

About 10,000 more non-Cornell riders (including many of us!) also hopped on the bus.

For information on TCAT routes, schedules, and fares visit www.tcatbus.com or call 277-RIDE.



Employee Spotlights



Dana's a top-flight carpenter for the County. Ask him to show you something he's built!

Dana Dexter is a carpenter for Facilities and has worked there for 2 ½ years. His main duties are carpentry work, remodeling, cabinet and counter making, and some maintenance work. The best-liked part of his job is designing and building new work areas, meeting new people, and the benefits. The least-liked part is “not having a new contract.” Outside interests are camping, four-wheeling, and spending time with family. If he ran the world, the first thing Dana would do is assure “equal taxes between the rich, poor and businesses, no exception.”



Gladys spends a lot of time in the field, helping seniors have a better life.

Gladys Brangman is an outreach worker for COFA and has worked at the Office for the Aging for 4 years. She installs Personal Emergency Response Systems (PERS) and helps seniors apply for grant money for major home repairs. The best-liked part of her job is the people: all of them, co-workers and clients; and the least-liked part is the paper work. Outside interests include teaching jazz and hip-hop dance. If she ran the world, the first thing Gladys would do is “teach people to love one another. It’s not as hard as we think.”



Liz doesn't know the meaning of "slowing down." Looks like she's getting her ears pierced!

Liz Croop is retired from the Mental Health Department, where she headed up the finance office. She worked for the County for 13 years, retiring in 2004. Liz started in Budget & Finance: “I’ve said it before, and I’ll say it again – Laurie Parker taught me everything I know.” Then she transferred to Mental Health where she enjoyed the “awesome crew who work at TCMH.” Liz is now driving a schoolbus for Head Start. She writes a monthly column for the Cortland Standard. She teaches Sunday School and sings in four different choirs and choruses. The thing she likes best about retirement is staying busy in Cortland County, not having the daily drive to Ithaca, and watching “Judging Amy” at noon. Liz misses “seeing Barb Davieds do a little song and dance now and then; the smell of nail polish wafting out Judy DeGrusso’s doorway; and having a weekly lunch with my daughters, who both work in Ithaca.” If Liz ran the world, she would: “Zap all people to install loving kindness and generosity in their brains.”



Got a suggestion for a Spotlight? Send an e-mail to Corridors@tompkins-co.org or call 274-5555.

Union News

CSEA in Tompkins County

by David Chase

As part of the re-start of County Corridors I have been asked to regularly contribute articles pertaining to CSEA (Civil Service Employee Association) in Tompkins County. Hopefully you as a reader are aware that CSEA is the labor union that represents the overwhelming majority of municipal employees in Tompkins County.



In my first attempt (it can only get better, one would hope) I thought I would identify the various individuals/Officers of the Union. CSEA in Tompkins County consists of a Local Office (855) which oversees nine Units representing various municipal employees across the County.

The Local Officers are:

David Chase – President
Chantalise DeMarco – 1st Vice President
Scott Weatherby – 2nd Vice President
Judith Johnson – Treasurer
Pamela Gibson – Secretary

Unit Officers (presidents only listed for the sake of space considerations) are:

Tompkins County White Collar Unit; David Chase - President
Tompkins County Blue Collar Unit; Buddy Rollins - President
Ithaca City Employees (DPW) Unit; Don Lovelace - President
Ithaca City Employees (Administrative) Unit; Brian Carman - President
Town of Newfield Highway; Alan Dann - President
Groton School Unit; Sheldon Clark - President
TC-3 Unit; Scott Weatherby - President
Newfield School Unit; Mary Brenno – President
Town of Danby; Ken McNeil – President

In addition, CSEA Inc. has assigned the following as Labor Relation Specialists (LRS) to Local 855: Stephanie Engster and Will Streeter.

CSEA Shop Stewards Needed

CSEA has openings for Shop Stewards. A Shop Steward is the Union contact/representative for union members in their division. They also oversee that procedures are followed in their division. They report to the Union Officers as needed. There are pamphlets available, and a course is offered for their benefit. Contact Buddy Rollins, President, Tompkins County Blue Collar Unit, 274-0304.

News and photos from Tompkins County's unions and bargaining units are welcome! Contact Corridors at Corridors@tom-pkins-co.org or call 274-5555.

Health & Wellness

Greetings from the Employee Wellness Committee

The Tompkins County Wellness Committee, a group of employees from various County departments, focuses its efforts on encouraging co-workers to be physically active and to eat a healthy diet. Health experts agree that those are two of the best ways to take care of ourselves.

The Wellness Committee also provides **reimbursement** for activities that help employees lead healthy lives and help prevent chronic diseases such as heart disease, diabetes, and some cancers.

These reimbursements include memberships to health clubs and participation in aerobic fitness classes and Weight Watchers – activities not covered by health insurance (or through other County benefits) that have the potential for long term health maintenance.

Employees are reimbursed for a portion of these costs – up to \$150 a year for a continuous pre-paid membership at the end of the membership period. For more information and a reimbursement form, go to the employee Intranet on the Tompkins County website.

For more information on the County Wellness Committee, contact any of the following committee members:

Linnett Short – Solid Waste
Kim Moore – ITS
Michelle Potorff – Legislature Office
Barb Davieds – Mental Health
Brooke Kominos – Personnel
Jim Strehle – Airport
Theresa Lyczko – Health

– Linnett Short



Stay Healthy at Work Stop the Spread of Germs

Viruses that affect the nose, throat and lungs cause the flu and colds. Those illnesses are usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes. To keep yourself and your co-workers healthy, be sure to:

- ▶ Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze or cough. Use a tissue and throw it away. Cover your cough or sneeze if you don't have a tissue and then clean your hands.
- ▶ Clean your hands often. Wash your hands with soap and warm water; then rub your hands vigorously together and scrub all surfaces for 15 to 20 seconds. Use alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers if soap and water are unavailable.
- ▶ Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth. Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches their eyes,



nose or mouth. Germs can live for a long time (some for 2 hours or more) on surfaces like doorknobs, desks, and phones.

► Stay home when you are sick and check with a healthcare provider when needed. Get plenty of rest.

Practicing healthy habits routinely will help to keep you healthy during flu season and all year long. Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, and eat nutritious food. For more information on the flu and staying healthy: www.cdc.gov/flu

– Theresa Lyczko, MS, CHES, Director, Health Promotion Program, Tompkins County Health Department

Beat Holiday Stress and the Holiday Blues

Tips from Your EAP



Holiday stress may include scrambling to finish our annual “end of the year” work tasks and dealing with the myriad of holiday details: gift shopping, baking, parties, decorating, and often times the financial impact this all has.

For others, the holidays can bring on the **holiday blues** or depression.* It can be a sad, disappointing or lonely time that reminds us of loved ones we’ve lost, or we may be far away from family members. And sometimes our actual holidays simply don’t match up with our idealized images of what they should be.

*Some people experience a type of “winter depression” known as Seasonal Affective Disorder which can affect mood, energy level, stress tolerance, sleep, weight, behavior, and functioning. The disorder is associated with seasonal variations of light and should be diagnosed by a trained professional. Call your EAP!

Coping with the Holiday Blues

- Contact your EAP! Our professional counselors can really help.
- If you have sad feelings, acknowledge and express them in healthy ways.
- Be around others. Attend community activities if you don’t have friends or family members around.
- Get involved volunteering to help others in need.
- Spend time with supportive friends and relatives.
- Try celebrating the holidays in a new way.
- Avoid excessive drinking, which will only increase feelings of depression.

Coping with Holiday Stress

- The best prevention is thinking ahead and developing a plan to deal with this busy, stressful time of year.
- Have realistic expectations. Don’t judge yourself for not reaching an unattainable ideal at the holidays.
- Set a realistic budget.
- Reassess and focus on the top 3 things that are truly important and that you enjoy during the holidays.
- Make a list of the things you can do without, and do without them.
- Be realistic about relatives. You can’t solve old family conflicts over the holidays.

- Set boundaries with family members and relatives. Sometimes we have to say no.
- Don’t rely on drinking as a way to relax and relieve holiday stress. Instead, take care of your body in a good way: Get rest, exercise, and eat holiday goodies in moderation.
- Enjoy the holiday journey, not just the destination.

– EMPLOYEE ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (EAP)
607-273-7494 or 1-800-834-1239

Small World

Celebrations of the Holiday Season

Most of us know the story and traditions of **Christmas**, when Christians around the world celebrate the birth of Jesus on December 25, but many people celebrate other holidays at this time of year, such as Chanukah and Kwanzaa.

Chanukah or Hanukkah is a Jewish winter holiday marking the end of foreign rule over the temple in Jerusalem in 165 BCE. A major feature of Chanukah is the lighting of



a candle on each of eight consecutive nights. The lighting of the candles in a commemorates the miraculous relighting of the lamps in the temple from one small container of oil. A traditional Chanukah children’s game is played with a dreidel, a four-sided top with a different Hebrew letter on each side. The date of Chanukah changes every year. In 2005, it starts

at sundown on December 25.

Kwanzaa is an African-American celebration with a focus on reaffirming traditional values of African-American people, their ancestors, and their culture. Since the holiday’s founding in 1966, Kwanzaa has come to be observed by more than 18 million people worldwide. Gift-giving, hospitality, family time, and good food are a part of the celebration. The seven principals of Kwanzaa are celebrated on each of the seven days of the holiday. They are: *Umoja* (unity), *Kujichagulia* (self-determination), *Ujima* (collective work and responsibility), *Ujamaa* (cooperative economics), *Nia* (purpose), *Kuumba* (creativity), and *Imani* (faith). Kwanzaa starts every year on December 26.



And where did **Santa Claus** come from? The jolly fat man is apparently based on the Dutch “Sint Klass” who was based on Saint Nicholas, a Turkish bishop in around 300 AD. Saint Nicholas was known as a friend of children



who gave coins to the poor on Christmas eve. Over time, the myth of Santa Claus grew. In Italy, they call him Baboo Natale, or Father Christmas. In Spain and Brazil, he’s Papa Noel. But whatever he’s called, we have agreed on what he

looks like ever since newspaper artist Thomas Nast was the first to portray him in 1870.

– Wendy Skinner

Halloween Contest ITS Gets Most Votes

(and a \$25 gift certificate from
Tops!)

1



ITS's Santa and his Reindeer (and an elf) take first prize.

Hot on their heels: Solid Waste's "Hey Diddle Diddle."

2



3

Followed closely by the Health Department's Angels & Devils.



Runners-Up



The Chipmunks, Sheriff's Office



Flapper (Margo Polikoff, Health)



Franklin the Cat



Tootsie Roll Desperado (Sue Woodard, Health)



Supergirl (Debra Patterson, DSS)



Batgirl (Kelly Nickerson, Health)



Bat-a-tude (Janice Wood, Health)

Report from the Editorial Team

Over 200 Replied to County Corridors Survey

A survey was circulated this pasty summer to get an idea of whether anybody cared about having Corridors return, and if so, what could make it better. The 219 replies overwhelmingly indicated that people like having an employee newsletter. A summary of the survey results follows.

Q. Did you read Corridors?

A. Yes: 159 Partially: 38 No: 22

Q. Would you like to see Corridors return?

A. Yes: 173 No: 7 Not sure: 30 No response: 9

Q. Do you prefer paper, online, or e-mail version?

A. Paper: 128 Web: 96 E-mail :26 (Some people checked more than one preference.)

Q. What did you like most about Corridors?

A. Of the 163 replies to this question, just over half said they liked the news about other County employees and departments best. The next most favorite item was the classified ads, and Steve Whicher's column came in third. Other things people said they liked are stories about employee vacations, the Halloween pictures, health and wellness articles, and general information and updates – even budget news! There were several replies along the lines of "staying connected" and "a sense of belonging." Policy updates and the lovelorn column tied for last place.

Q. What didn't you like?

A. Only 97 people answered this question. The biggest complaint was not being able to access or read the newsletter online. The next most frequent complaint was "too much fluff" and not enough representation from all the departments. The County Administrator's column came in third again. People also said they didn't like "long, boring, or repetitive" features, and some people said they didn't want to see budget updates.

Q. What features would you like to see?

A. The top answers were: real-life experiences, articles by and about employees, employee recognition, union news, "fun stuff," and stories about peoples' lives away from work.

The survey answers have been very helpful in making the newsletter better. Most important, we were able to show that employees value Corridors and that it has an important purpose. And that it needs to be on paper! The County Administrator agreed to fund one issue this year and four next year. The 2006 budget, which primarily pays for printing and postage, is \$3,000 for four quarterly issues.

Puzzler

7 squared
747's
Hostile attackers
Credit card users
A dollar for corn
Used to be girls
Six rulers
Louis Armstrong classic
Rodeo equines
American gauchos
Metal workers
Army insects
They help you move
Senior Boy Scouts

Football Fun



Match 'em up!

Packers
Saints
Bengals
Raiders
49'ers
Eagles
Broncos
Buccanneers
Jets
Chargers
Cowboys
Giants
Vikings
Steelers



Peter Penniman, Ulysses/Enfield. 7 years on the Legislature



Nancy Schuler, City of Ithaca. 16 years on the Legislature.



Michael Lane, Dryden/Freeville. 12 years on the Legislature; 9 years as Vice-Chair.



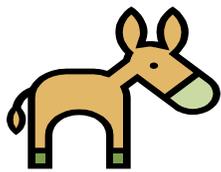
Daniel Winch, Newfield/Enfield. 21 years on the Legislature. Dan resigned on Nov. 30, 2005.



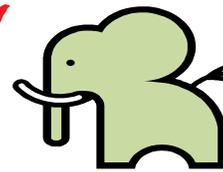
Barbara Blanchard, City and Town of Ithaca. 12 years on the Legislature.



L - R: **George Totman**, Groton/Dryden. 12 years on the Legislature; **Thomas Todd**, Lansing. 18 years on the Legislature.



Farewell!



Two "parties" honor our departing Legislators

Administration's Legislator Farewell Party

2 - 4 pm
Friday, December 16
3rd Floor, Old Jail

Open House
Dessert & Hors d'Oeuvres Buffet

Legislature Holiday Party

7:15 - 9 pm
Tuesday, December 20
Mural Lounge, Clinton House
116 North Cayuga Street

The Legislature's end-of-year thank you and retirement party.

All County Employees/Retirees Invited!

Classified Ads

Downhill Ski boots, Men's size 8, Nordica, black, new last year, only used one season (my son's feet grew two sizes in one year!). \$60. Can send you a digital picture or bring them in to downtown complex. Contact: tllinde@hotmail.com or 533-7647.

36" Magic Chef 4-burner smooth ceramic cook top. \$200.00 Compare at \$479. Like new; used only about a year or so. Beautiful black mirror finish. 272-7664.

2002 Ford Explorer V8, 4x4, 3rd row seat, alloy wheels, cruise, tilt, grey leather, CD, 57K, running boards, remote, safety lights, looks and drives great. 12,700/(lease). call for more info. 607-339-1430.



Truck Cap – Leer fiberglass high rise cap, black, great condition, fits 1999 – 2006 GM full size 8 foot box. \$795. E-mail MotoRudy@twcny.rr.com or call Tony, evenings at 539-7265.



2 Garage Heaters – Janitrol 125,000 BTU natural gas heaters. 2 units available, good condition, \$100 each. E-mail MotoRudy@twcny.rr.com or call Tony, evenings at 539-7265.

Ice Skates – Womens size 9 figure skates, like new, white leather boot, blades just sharpened. Cost \$60 new. \$25 for you. E-mail Wendy at ws@twcny.rr.com or call 277-7611.



A Tip From Solid Waste Management

Ask for a paper bag when you buy groceries. Why? To put your household's newspapers and junk mail in. Once it's full, you can lay it on top of the containers in your recycling bin to help keep the containers in place when you put your recycling out for curbside pickup! For more recycling, reduce, reuse, and rebuy ideas, visit the Solid Waste website at www.tompkins-co.org/solidwaste/main.



FUNNY BONES



A man and his wife are on a lakeside vacation. One morning, the husband returns after several hours of fishing and decides to take a nap. Although not familiar with the lake, the wife decides to take the boat out. She motors out a short distance, drops the anchor, and opens the book she brought.

Along comes a game warden in his boat. He pulls up alongside the woman and says, "Good morning Ma'am. What are you doing?"

"Reading a book," she replies.

"You're in a restricted fishing area," he says.

"Yes, officer, but I'm not fishing, I'm reading."

"I see that, but you have all the equipment. For all I know you could start at any moment. I'll have to take you in and write you up."

"If you do that sir, I'll have to charge you with sexual assault," says the woman.

"Ma'am, I haven't touched you!" says the game warden.

"That's true," she said, "but you have all the equipment. For all I know, you could start at any moment."

The game warden said, "Have a nice day Ma'am", and he quickly left.

MORAL: NEVER ARGUE WITH A WOMAN WHO READS. IT'S LIKELY SHE CAN ALSO THINK.

– Kathy Leinthall

THE CORRIDORS TEAM

Managing Editor

Linnett Short, SW Mgmt Division

Editorial Staff

Geri Lockwood, Highway

Sara Stark, DSS

Maureen Reynolds, County Clerk

Debra Patterson, DSS

Open

Classifieds Editor

Open

Multicultural Editor

Open

Advising Editor, Page Layout

Wendy Skinner, Public Information

Contributors

All County Employees and Retirees

Join the Corridors

Team. The time commitment is just a few hours a month, and you may be able to help without leaving your desk or workplace. Be sure to get your supervisor's okay. Then give us a call. We need your help!

CONTACT CORRIDORS: Got a story, event, picture, useful info, compliment or complaint? E-mail: Corridors@tompkins-co.org or call Linnett, 273-6632 or Wendy, 274-5555.

Corridors is printed on 30% recycled paper.

Readership Survey – Win A Prize

A new name for Corridors? What do you think?

- Keep County Corridors!
- I think a better name would be:

We'll tabulate the results, but we're not rushing into this! All (printable) suggestions for a new name will be published in the next issue. Then we'll take another vote. To participate, send this coupon to Corridors Editor Linnett Short, Solid Waste Management Division. Three coupons will be chosen at random to receive a \$5 gift certificate at the Purity Ice Cream store in Ithaca.

Your name: _____

Best way to contact you: _____