



US Army Corps
of Engineers
St. Paul District

Crosscurrents

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Diversity Appreciation Week draws over 600 employees for a wide variety of workshops, musical programs and discussion groups; termed great success by EEO Office.

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Bits and Pieces

TAXES TAXES

Paper Recycling at your desk

A great suggestion to make recycling district office paper really easy... put a box marked RECYCLE (so the maintenance people don't empty it) right next to your wastebasket! You will be amazed at how much less trash ends up in the wastebasket when you throw the recyclables in the RECYCLE box; and it is no more difficult to do than before. If you aren't sure what is recyclable, put it in there anyway. (no newsprint though; there is currently no one interested in recycling newsprint in the office). Then, when your box is full, call a Toastmaster (**John Blackstone** at x429 or **Walt Sternke** at x440) who will gladly come empty it and can tell you then what may not be recyclable. Keep the box, because it is being recycled too, as a RECYCLE box! If you need one, check with **William Hutchinson**, who gets them periodically, in room 1422 (next to the mail room). If the majority of us recycle in this office, we can substantially reduce the amount of garbage that is hauled away to some landfill.

Lake Ashtabula Park Ranger **Barb LaPierre Baasch** has received her Aquatics Resources Instructor certification from the state of North Dakota. This certifies Barb to initiate and instruct programs concerning boat safety, water safety and fishing seminars within the state. She will be coordinating with the state Game and Fish Department, Water and Boat Safety Coordinator, Aquatics Coordinator, US Fish and Wildlife Service and the US Coast

Guard to initiate water and boat safety programs and fishing seminars for local groups and organizations.

A bright red Corps umbrella

If you would like to stand out from the crowd of black umbrellas on the next rainy day, you can purchase a bright red umbrella with the Corps logo in white from the Baltimore District. They have a walking type (like a golf umbrella, but not as big) that opens to 40" diameter via an automatic push button, or a folding type (like a *Totes*) that opens manually to 36". Prices are \$16 and \$13.50, respectively. Call FTS 922-4920 to Clifford Burdeaux to order.

Three district employees have received Certificates of Achievement from the US Army Criminal Investigation Command (CID). OC employee **Linda Davis**, ED-GH employee **Paul Madison** and ED-M employee **Jean Bonn** are the first St. Paul District employees to receive such recognition from CID. They provided "distinguished assistance" for their work involving the investigation of procurement fraud by E.W.A. Inc. last fall. The awards are viewed as evidence of the district's dedication to combating procurement fraud, as well as a true partnership between the Corps, CID and the Department of Energy in the ongoing struggle against procurement fraud.

Recycling a single printing of the Sunday edition of the *New York Times* could leave 75,000 trees standing.

Where's my refund check?

IRS officials say it takes about eight weeks for a return to be processed and the refund check mailed to the taxpayer.

An automated refund system has been set up for people wanting to check the status of their returns. Wait at least eight weeks after filing before calling 1/800-829-4477 for an update. The IRS can track down the return given the taxpayer's full name, social security number, filing status and exact amount of expected return.

The system, open Monday through Friday, is updated once a week. If you have a push button phone, call between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. Hours for a rotary phone are local business hours.

IRS officials say the best time to check on a refund status is Wednesday mornings.

Want some free help?

The IRS offers many free services to help taxpayers with their federal income tax returns. Tax publications, telephone services, walk-in assistance, volunteer and education programs and information for the blind are just a few examples. For more information, call 1/800-829-3676 and ask for a copy of IRS publication 910, *Guide to Free Tax Services*.

Did you learn anything?

Employer educational assistance may be considered as part of an individual's taxable income. IRS publication 508, *Educational Expenses*, explains employer-related educational aid. Call 1/800-829-3676 for a free copy.

Student workers

Students who are 24 years or older by the end of 1990 and who have a gross income of \$2,050 or more may not be claimed as dependents by their parents. For information concerning student exemptions and dependency rules, call 1/800-829-3676 and request publication 929, *Tax Rules for Children and Dependents*.

Need some forms?

To obtain Internal Revenue Service publications and forms, call 1/800-829-3676 or write: IRS, Forms Distribution Center, PO Box 25866, Richmond VA 23289.

Savings Bonds interest

Interest from Series EE US Savings Bonds purchased after December 31, 1989, may be excluded from taxable income under certain conditions if used for higher education expenses. Publication 550, *Investment Income and Expenses*, explains the program. Call, yes, 1/800-829-3676 for a free copy.

Anyone not cashed last year's refund check yet?

US income tax refund checks need to be cashed within one year of the date on the check. After that, the check is invalid and the IRS will have to issue a new check.

1992 Election Campaign

By marking a special box on the federal income tax form, a person may participate in the 1992 presidential election campaign by contributing \$1 or \$2 for a joint return.

TAXES TAXES TAXES TAXES

Which form should I use?

Sometimes the hardest part in filling out federal income taxes is deciding which Form 1040 to use. IRS officials say there are guidelines that a person can use in deciding which is the best form for filing taxes.

Use Form 1040EZ if:

- Filing status is single (under 65 and not blind)
- Claiming only one exemption (self) and taxable income is less than \$50,000 (all of which came from wages, salaries, tips, taxable scholarships and fellowships) and does not include more than \$400 in interest earnings.

Use Form 1040A if:

- Any filing status
- Claiming one or more exemptions
- Claiming blind or over age 64 exemption
- Taxable income is less than \$50,000 (may consist of wages, salaries, tips, taxable scholarships and fellowships, dividends, unemployment compensation or more than \$400 in interest).
- Claiming contributions (other than "rollovers") to an IRA
- Claiming advanced earned income credit payments
- Claiming child and dependent care and earned income credits

Use Form 1040 for tax filing for any situation not covered by Form 1040EZ or 1040.

IRS officials said to use the form that allows the reporting of all income or tax payments and provides as many tax benefits as possible. It should speed up any refund, they added.

Child care costs could cut taxes

Child or dependent care expenses may qualify as a credit on federal tax returns. Based on the taxpayer's adjusted gross income, the credit could be as much as \$720 for one qualifying person or \$1,440 for two or more.

The qualifying dependent must be the taxpayer's child, disabled dependent or disabled spouse. The tax return must be filed using Form 1040 or 1040A. The taxpayer - and spouse, if married - must work or be looking for work. Married couples must file a joint return.

Social security numbers are required on the tax return for dependents aged two and older. If the number has been requested but not received by the time the return is filed, write "Applied for" in the space provided for that dependent's number.

The name, address and social security number for the dependent care provider must also be listed on the tax return. If some information is unavailable, the taxpayer must be able to show that an effort was made to get it.

Calculation of the care credit, requirements and limits are explained in the IRS publication 503, *Child Care and Dependent Expenses*.

Tax Trivia Question

Who said:

"Our Constitution is in actual operation; everything appears to promise that it will last; but in this world nothing is certain but death and taxes."

Answers on page eight.

Who said:

"When there is an income tax, the just man will pay more and the unjust, less on the same amount of income."

(hint: women didn't pay taxes when this was stated because they didn't own anything)

Marital status affects tax bottom lines

Divorce and legal separation can affect aspects of federal tax filing, including alimony, child support payments and exemptions for dependents. The IRS publication 504, *Tax Information for Divorced or Separated Individuals*, discusses each tax aspect affected by a marital breakup.

The IRS generally considers a person unmarried if there is a legal separation under a decree of divorce or separate maintenance.

A dependent child may be claimed by only one parent, usually the one who has custody. Non-custodial parents may claim exemptions only by proving they met IRS support tests or by having custodial parents sign an IRS Form 8332, "Release of Claim to Exemption for Child of Divorced or Separated Parents", or similar statement.

Decrees or written statements before 1985 have special provisions, said IRS officials.

Alimony and separate maintenance payments are taxable income to the recipient and deductible by the one who pays. However, child support payments are neither taxable income nor deductible.

Court costs and legal fees spent in obtaining a divorce are not deductible. However, the portion of legal costs covering any divorce-related tax advice is an itemized deduction, IRS officials said.

Five most common taxpayer errors

- Entry on the wrong line - 8.8%
- No entry necessary - 7.7%
- Incorrect entry - 19.1%
- Math error - 17.4%
- Omitted entry - 30.7%

These five errors make up more than half of all errors.

Diversity Appreciation Week Snapshots

Right: Chris Thao, currently the only Hmong attorney in the entire United States, spoke of the need for inter-cultural friendships and understanding between the Hmong and American communities, by relaying some of their ancient history and contributions to the U.S. during the Vietnam War. Promoting mutual understanding is an important factor for the future of the Hmong in this country.



At left: A Disability Awareness Fair held in the Post Office building lobby throughout the day Wednesday brought an increased awareness of the kinds of devices that exist to aid those with disabilities. Here, Joanne Meier (EEO) learns about a doorbell for the deaf from an exhibitor. A large type screen is at right for the visually impaired, allowing the reading of a wide variety of materials by simply placing them under the reader. The Fair was co-sponsored by the US Post Office.



At left: A group of Hmong traditional musicians from the arts group COM-PAS performed for an appreciative audience, demonstrating songs that are not merely amusement, but always tell a story. The Hmong language is similar to other Oriental languages in that the intonation of a word gives it its meaning. Courting songs by voice only and on traditional instruments and a funeral dance were among the demonstrations, along with explanation of the traditional outfits worn by the artists.

During only a one-week period, Diversity Appreciation Week exposed District employees to quite a variety of issues; issues of diversity and personnel matters, the cultures of East India, Jamaica, American Indian, Hmong and Black, diversity among people with and without disabilities, issues of female and maleness and how that relates to the work environment, to name a few. Through story-telling, music, dance, performance, panel discussions, workshops and, the old fashioned way to the heart - food - thoughts were provoked, issues considered and, perhaps, growth effected.

Over 600 employees attended the offering of 18 programs. Contrary to last year's DAW, no programs were cancelled due to lack of interest. Marianne Price, chief of EEO, felt that starting the week off with a supervisor's orientation to explain the goals and objectives of the Week may have enhanced employee participation. 1991 was the second year of celebrating diversity during one week, and may become the established pattern.

All offices had good participation, but Planning Division won the award for highest percentage of employees attending - 53%! They will receive and no doubt quickly consume a DAW Cake-of-Their-Choice. Individual names were drawn for a wonderful variety of other prizes, donated by the Employee Benefit Fund, from daily attendance boxes. Who finally won the Mexican pinata and the Scandinavian coat of arm?

EEO would like to thank all the volunteer hosts, the Logistics and Public Affairs Offices and the Employee Benefit Fund for their support and assistance. Events like this cannot be pulled off in a two-person office without lots and lots of help from others.



Above: Consultant Kathy Brown dealt with issues of personal power during her presentation "The Challenge of Change". How to walk, how to shake hands and how to 'not worry and be happy' were some of the points made.

Below: The Food Taste was an extremely popular event, continuing for almost two hours in the 12th floor conference room! Culinary delights from the cuisines of Japan, Scandinavia and Mexico were among those willingly sampled by many employees. Edith Pang leads the way here, closely followed by Karen Lewis and Marina Bruns, all of ED. Food was on the minds of employees attending the final luncheon on Friday, at the famous Boca Chica restaurant. Mexican decor, food and music were topped off with presentations by COL Baldwin, Al Rosenberg and Jan Schwalbe, a keynote speaker from the Multi-Resource Center, all of which were emceed by Russ Williams.



March is for fishing

By John Zahalka
Park Manager, Leech Lake

February 28 will soon slip by for yet another year and with it the end of another fishing season. Walleyes, northern, muskie and black bass then will be pursued only by anglers dreaming of a comfortable boat with a warm breeze and a gentle chop on crystal clear, northern Minnesota lakes. Gone will be the angling and spear house villages that have dotted the frozen lakes for several months, allowing sportsmen to enjoy the great outdoors while wind chills dipped to -40 & -50° F. Here is Onabani-gisiss, Ojibway for moon of crust on the snow, a month where temperatures can plummet to twenty below zero or soar to seventy above, where lakes are a frozen wasteland or an impassable combination of slush and knee deep water and where lake accesses turn into a quagmire of muck or axle breaking frozen ruts. A month to stay home and dream of catching fish? Wrong, for Onabani-gisiss is the month of the perch.

Classified as a rough fish until the late 1970's, this scrappy little fish is finally earning the respect it deserves. Although pursued by a few die-hard "perchers" all winter long, March is the month when anglers flock to the lakes by the thousands to pursue this tasty game fish that can average 1/2 to 3/4 of a pound and reach weights well over one or even two pounds. With a tenacity for feeding fast and furious for hours on end, perch are easily caught by fishermen of all ages (100 fish limit). Tackle, bait and equipment are as diversified as the anglers themselves. A homemade shovel-handle stick pole, a \$200 spinning outfit containing a fancy artificial lure or just a plain hook garnished with a minnow, eyeball, cutbait, a piece of leftover lunch or even a ball of fuzz from a brightly colored stocking cap have all been known to catch perch. On beautiful, warm, windless March days, a family fishing trip can take on the appearance of a spring picnic. Grills will be seen dotting the



John Zahalka catches a few rays while angling for perch beneath the surface of a frozen Leech Lake.

lake and the day's catch will be cleaned, fried and enjoyed right out on the ice.

Like any other type of fishing, success is not always guaranteed. Perch may be found in water depths from 6 to 40 feet deep and in a variety of habitats including sand/gravel bars or shallow water, weedy bays. Perch, which feed on a wide variety of natural foods, bite as if triggered on and off by the quickly changing March weather patterns which can cause vastly different scenarios in success from day to day. Ice can reach thicknesses of 35 to 40 inches making properly operating gas powered ice augers a luxury if not a necessity. Ice conditions can vary from smooth resort plowed ice roads sufficient for car travel, to conditions that test the best of 4-wheel-drive rigs and sometimes require travel by foot or all-terrain vehicles. But with a good lake map, a tip from a "local" and a little scouting, a good catch of perch is always a possibility. Cass, Leech, Winni, Boy, Round, Six Mile, Mille Lacs and many other northern & central Minnesota lakes support excellent perch populations. Although several other panfish species are legal game at this time of year, this is definitely the month of the perch. So come on out and enjoy perch fishing. You may just get HOOKED!

Security measures not taken lightly

By Dave Christenson, Emergency Operations

It's the old Girl Scout motto - *Be Prepared* - applied on a larger and more serious level. The current Middle East situation has created some concern about possible terrorism and the safety of District employees. The District is aware of employees' concerns and has taken appropriate action.

The Emergency Operations Office contacted the various law enforcement agencies to determine whether there is a threat to Corps of Engineers facilities and personnel. Currently, there is none. An immediate concern is potential disruption of federal buildings or Military Processing Centers due to anti-war protests

and demonstrations. Several such incidents have occurred at locations throughout the country, including Minneapolis and Duluth. This problem has not warranted a significant increase in security at our facilities.

The best security measure we can all employ is to heighten our security awareness by locking offices, challenging strangers and reporting suspicious behavior or packages. In that vein, the end stairwell doors have been locked from the inside to prevent entry to the Corps office area, and potential bomb receptacles (ashtrays, boxes, etc.) have been removed from

From co-op student to permanent employee...

Teri Sardinas

Graduated from Columbia Heights High School in 1977 and the U of M in 1983 with a degree in biology. Found out about the co-op program through the Urban Corps summer work study program. Joined the co-op program in 1982, worked as environmental protection specialist, compliance investigator and is currently a biologist in Planning Division.

Advice to students: Get good grades while you can. It probably means nothing to you now, but will mean lots to you if you decide to go back to school later!



Chris Schmitz

Graduated from Park High School in 1985 and the U of M in 1990 with a civil engineering degree. Found out about the co-op program from a high school career counselor. Worked as student trainee in drafting since 1985 under the Junior Fellowship Program and as civil engineer trainee (rotational). Currently is civil engineer in Engineering Division .

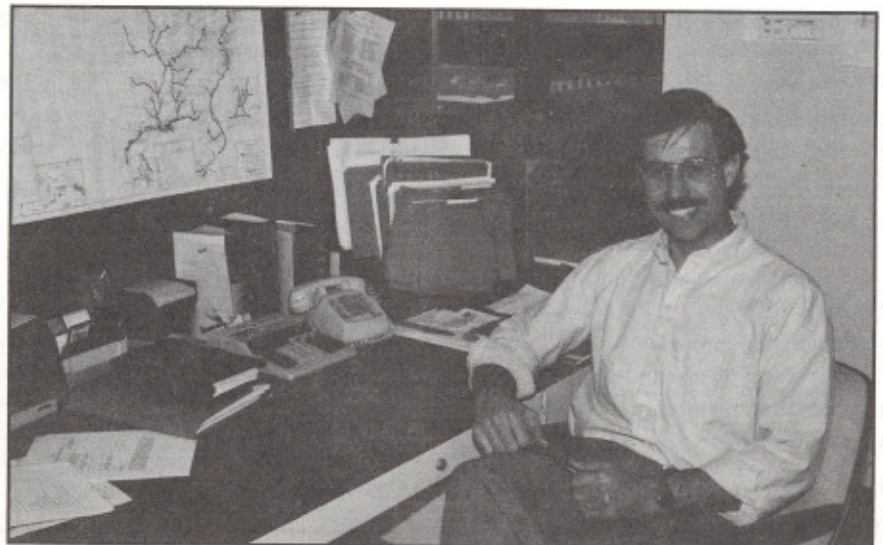
Advice to students: I am married and we have a four-year old daughter. I continued my education after having our daughter. I had to change my study habits, but anything can be done if you put your mind to it. It may not always be easy, but I always thought, and still do, that it will be worth it when I am done with school.



Jeff McGrath

Graduated from Cretin High School in 1973 and the U of M in 1979 with a degree in Agricultural and Applied Economics. Learned about the co-op program from the U of M Agricultural College Placement Office. Worked as an economist, investigator and regional economist since 1980. Currently the transportation analyst in Planning Division.

Advice to students: Don't pigeon-hole yourself too early in your employment career. Take every opportunity to diversify your experience. The job you enjoy most may be your next one.





Rehab Accomplished

For male employees who need washroom facilities that have been modified for wheelchair accessibility, it has been a little difficult. There have been only two floors in the Post Office building that had been modified - 12 and 6 - and if they were occupied... well, let's just say it has been a little difficult.

Now, thanks to some proactive work on the part of several employees, one more men's bathroom is now accessible to all and provides another and, for some, closer option. The 13th floor men's bathroom now has a lowered sink, lowered towel rack and a widened stall (that, for some strange reason, sports a "Fasten your seat belt" sign!). The Corps submitted the work plan to the Post Office, who did the actual work.

Pictured are a few of the participants involved in the rehab process: from left, Tom Novak, ED-D; Steve Adamski, OC; Olivia Vavreck, LO. Not pictured are Roger Christiansen, ED-D and Carl Gray, ED-D.

Security, from Page Six

office hallways. Employees should keep watch that these types of items don't reappear in the halls.

The District is also preparing to take actions if a threat develops. We are working with the Post Office on plans to control access to the building. We have contacted the Federal Protective Service, Criminal Investigation Command and the St. Paul Police for security assistance. Field facilities are reviewing their Physical Security Plans which dictate how to increase security at the sites.

The above named agencies, the FBI, the state Bureau of Criminal Investigation and others are continually investigating the potential for an incident. If a threat to Corps facilities develops, the agencies will immediately notify the District.

The potential for an incident is currently very low, but there is no guarantee that an incident won't occur. By remaining aware and vigilant, employees can help ensure that we are prepared.

Answers to tax trivia questions (page 3): Benjamin Franklin and Plato.



Toastmaster Toast

Walt Sternke (left), CTM past president of Heritage Toastmasters, receives tokens of appreciation for his service as president from current Heritage president, John Blackstone. Heritage Toastmasters meets every Tuesday at noon in room 1219.



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