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## Excel Newsletter, April 1993

Maine Bureau of Employment Services

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# Excel

THE BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER ON CUSTOMER SERVICE



April 1993

## Commissioner's Column

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As many of you are aware, one of the proposals in the state budget legislation for fiscal years 1994-95 calls for reorganizations between our Department and the Department of Human Services (DHS). I thought you might be interested to learn more about this prospect.

If the legislation passes, restructuring of certain DHS programs into our Department would be explored and an implementation plan developed. This would probably take place by spring of 1994.

Our Department would retain all of the same responsibilities and also manage some programs that are currently under DHS such as: Family Services, Additional Support for People in Retraining & Education, Food Stamps, Supplemental Security Income, General Assistance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

While we don't know what form the final legislation will take, we have met with representatives from Human Services to explore some of the issues.

We found areas of concern that all of us had, such as if field offices are consolidated then both staff and customers may be required to travel more, and existing programs in both Departments are already complex enough without adding more.

We also were encouraged by the positives that could result, including serving customers more efficiently by eliminating duplication, and by offering more services.

Some other points we discussed were the need to check with other states where this has taken place, and to carefully review all staff and program issues associated with the proposed consolidation.

Something that I will insist on is the need for on-going communication to employees in both Departments so that everyone will know what is being considered and which direction the plan is taking. Meanwhile, if you have any ideas on the proposal, please feel free to stop in to see me, or drop me a note.

Charles A. Morrison  
Commissioner

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## Myths & Legends versus Truths & Realities

Ever wonder what job responsibilities your coworkers or colleagues have? Do you really understand what they do and why they do it?

**Bob Ouellette** and **Carol Webb**, deputy division directors in Unemployment Compensation and Job Service, knew that these thoughts existed in their divisions. Carol and Bob felt that it was affecting the way people in their divisions were working — or not working — together, and they decided to do something about it.

"I knew that we were planning a series of joint meetings, so it seemed a natural to try and work in a session on dealing with the perceptions I had heard from the local offices," said Bob.

"When Bob first approached me with the idea, my reaction was that's too controversial," said Carol. "But then I thought about it and agreed that we needed to do something to improve working relationships between our staffs," continued Carol.

What resulted was a series of workshops held last fall involving 193 participants in 35

work groups from both Job Service and Unemployment Compensation.

"We got people from both divisions in the same room and had them tell us their perceptions and observations about each other," Bob said.

Many points were raised, but the most common were: lack of knowledge about what each division does and how they do it; lack of understanding about differences in workloads; and not enough sharing of information.

According to Carol, "The next step was to get these same people thinking about how to correct these misconceptions."

Here's some of what they came up with: have more staff training especially of the type that involves job shadowing and cross-training; try to establish parity in pay and job classification; and conduct regularly scheduled meetings between staffs in both divisions.

Carol and Bob both agree that their efforts were well worth it and are paying off in the form of closer cooperation among all participants.

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## Thanks from Judy Pelletier

"Just a note of thanks to everyone who contributed to my Catastrophic Leave Fund. I truly appreciate everyone's generosity. I am improving everyday and look forward to returning to work and seeing all of you."

*Ed. — Judy works in the Waterville Jobs Training Office, and is recovering from a serious long-term illness.*

## Employees of the Month

Here are the winners for January, February, and March:

|                  |                   |   |
|------------------|-------------------|---|
| <u>January:</u>  | Administrative I  | <b>Brad Brown</b> , Bureau of Labor Standards                     |
|                  | Administrative II | <b>Louise Salminen</b> , Unemployment Compensation Tax            |
|                  | Central           | <b>Margaret Gleason</b> , Augusta Local Office                    |
|                  | Southern          | <b>Rose Boissoneault</b> , Sanford Unemployment Compensation      |
| <u>February:</u> | Administrative I  | <b>John Rioux</b> , Bureau of Labor Standards                     |
|                  | Administrative II | <b>Charles O'Neill</b> , Unemployment Compensation Administration |
|                  | Central           | <b>Gerard Dennison</b> , Economic Analysis & Research - Lewiston  |
|                  | Northern          | <b>Craig Holland</b> , Economic Analysis & Research - Bangor      |
|                  | Southern          | <b>Stephanie Manson</b> , Portland Job Service                    |
| <u>March:</u>    | Administrative I  | <b>Jon Ryder</b> , Office of Administrative Services              |
|                  | Administrative II | <b>Winnie Malia</b> , Economic Analysis & Research                |
|                  | Central           | <b>Margaret Nickerson</b> , Waterville Unemployment Compensation  |
|                  | Southern          | <b>Brian Hodges</b> , Brunswick Unemployment Compensation         |

Congratulations to all award recipients, and thanks to those of you who submitted names. Please remember to submit nominations each month. We know that our colleagues are exceptional, but we need you to tell us about them!

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(Continued from page 5)

is often complimented for his pleasant and professional attitude.

Brian is a 1991 Business Administration graduate of the University of Maine at Orono. He began his career with DOL at the Bureau of Employment and Training Programs working summers while attending college. Brian came to the Brunswick office in August 1991 as an Employment Security Aide and

was promoted to Claims Specialist in September 1992.

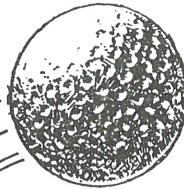
### **Rumford Staff Walks for March of Dimes**

By: Roger Whitehouse  
Rumford Unemployment  
Compensation

Thanks to those of you who contributed. We raised over \$400 through pledges from Department colleagues in many offices. Thanks!

### **THE SECOND ANNUAL DOL GOLF TOURNAMENT AND OUTING AT THE GOLF COURSE AT GREEN MEADOWS WILL BE held on June 10, 1993 at 12:30 PM. Just as last year, the format will be a Texas scramble. Under this format teams of four will be formed.**

Every team will have an expert golfer as Captain, an intermediate player, a high-handicapper and a hacker; so golf players of all abilities are encouraged to join up. The pro at Green Meadows, Bob Matthews, confirmed that the deal will be the same as last year: \$16.00 for golf and \$4.00 for the barbeque. It should be a lot of fun again this year.



So get on the phone and call Richard Jones at 287-2271. Or you can reserve a space by sending a note to me at D/EA&R, Station #54, Augusta, ME 04333. Be sure to include your handicap or level of playing ability.

**On June 10th you can  
tee it low and let it go!  
Or tee it high and let it fly!**

### **Department Golf Committee**

The Green Meadows event marks the official beginning of the 1993 golf schedule.

In addition, golf outings are also being planned for Poland Springs in July, Rockland in August, and Biddeford-Saco in September. More details to follow.

Meanwhile, if you have any ideas for a golf outing, please contact either Tom Allen, Bryan Saunders, or Gary Whitney at 624-5150.



## "Getting to Know You" ... Jon Ryder

By: Debbie Jones, Office of  
Administrative Services

Jon Ryder joined the Department's Office of Administrative Services in May of 1990. He is an Accountant II and previously worked for Accounts and Control as an Account Clerk II.

Jon is always eager to find new approaches to learn to do things in a simpler manner. Recently, he was appointed as one of the members of the Commissioner's Council on Customer Service. Also, due to a departure of one of our co-workers within the Accountant Unit, Jon has been filling that person's shoes along with performing his regular duties.

With a friendly smile, we can always depend on Jon to go

around and water-spray all the office plants. *He's what keeps them alive!!!* He goes around and fills most of the humidifiers on a daily basis and keeps a check on the humidity level for us too. We appreciate the many extra little things he volunteers to do.

Jon and his family live in the Augusta area. He has two beautiful girls - Whitney (6) and Bria (3). Last summer, he got remarried to a wonderful wife named Karen. She has two children - Brian (9) and Becky (6). *A new Brady Bunch!!!*

We all enjoy Jon and his great sense of humor, and appreciate all he does.

## Safety Committee Reorganized, Labor Member Needed

By: Roger Carpenter, Div. of Economic  
Analysis & Research

The Department of Labor Labor-Management Safety and Health Committee has been reorganized and its membership has been increased to 16 members, with 8 representing labor and 8 representing management. The Committee will help the Department provide safe and healthy work places for its employees.

The current members are:

### Management

Rona Backstrom, JS, Co-chair  
Bill Peabody, BLS  
Denis Fortier, MOICC  
Jack Bailey, UI  
Kathleen Dunford, OHR  
Jim Dionne, OAS  
Rosalind Morse, DEA&R  
Rusty Cyr, 12-County SDA

### Labor

Jonathan Lepoff, BLS, Co-chair  
George Thomas, UI  
Linda Doiron, UI  
Roger Carpenter, DEA&R  
Charles Picard, OIP  
Denise Potvin, BETP  
Jean Boucher, 12-County SDA

The Committee needs an additional labor member, preferably from a local office. If you are interested, please contact **Jonathan Lepoff** at 624-6464, or **Rachel Newman**, MESCO (Maine Employment Security Commission) Chapter President, at 287-3176.

# International Association of Personnel in Employment Security

By: Winnie Malia, Div. of Economic  
Analysis & Research

On March 31, 1993, the Maine Chapter of IAPES and the Department of Labor sponsored a day of training in "Wellness" at the Ramada Conference Center. The 36 DOL staff who attended enjoyed the entire program. The IAPES Education Committee has heard many comments that it was "the best training ever!" Unfortunately, we had to cancel the Bangor training because only six individuals signed up.

The training consisted of several sections dealing on Wellness. The program started with Motivation for Wellness, presented by Catherine Van Dyke. The main focus of this presentation was changing or beginning a habit, i.e., exercising and setting goals.

Next came the Healthy Heart, presented by Wendy Tardif of St. Mary's Regional Medical Center. Wendy discussed the Risk Factors for Coronary Heart Disease. Topics she covered included high blood pressure, high cholesterol and diet.

Bill Gordan presented HIV in the Workplace. He informed the group how the virus is transferred from one person to another. Bill also handed out pamphlets about HIV and a list of test sites for HIV where you don't have to give your name.

Debbie Gilmour of Kennebec Valley YMCA led the group in Exercise for Strength and Stress Reduction. Debbie discussed the three stages of stress. She listed some Stress Relievers

and cited physical activity-exercise as most important. Others she listed are to practice mental imagery, have a support group, know your limits, have a hobby, realize it is ok to cry, and, avoid self-medication - deal with it now.

The final segment was presented by **Stirling Kendall** of DOL. She discussed the Science of Support. She said that we already have support groups in our family, friends, and co-workers and these can have different impacts on our daily lives.

Finally, we ended the day with a "Whitewater Baseball" game. The rules are the same as regular baseball, except that any time the ball is in the air, anyone can move any base anywhere. This was a lot of fun. Unfortunately, someone popped the ball so we had to end the game!

The Healthy Heart and HIV Awareness segments were especially well received. Another important lesson is the value of FUN in reducing stress. If laughter is a sign of fun, the training reduced a lot of stress on that day.

We would appreciate your comments on the training and suggestions for future programs. Please contact **Stirling Kendall** (287-2876) in the DOL Office of Human Resources or **Louise Salminen** (287-1239), IAPES Education Committee, both at State House Station #54.

## Department's State Budget Proposals

The Department has been meeting with the Legislature to prepare the State Government Budget for fiscal years 1994-95.

While the process is still ongoing, here is what is being proposed to meet the Department's targets for reducing expenditures in the General Fund and Special Revenue Funds:

### Bureau of Labor Standards

- ▶ Reducing General Fund support by transferring all apprenticeship activities to a federal funding source in the Bureau of Employment and Training Programs.
- ▶ Transferring parts of positions involved with occupational safety and health education from the General Fund to the Safety Education and Training Fund.

### Bureau of Employment & Training Programs

- ▶ Reducing training slots in the following programs:

|   | <u>1993-94</u> | <u>1994-95</u> |
|---|----------------|----------------|
| Maine Training Initiative.....                          | 84             | 116            |
| Strategic Training for Accelerated<br>Reemployment..... | 223            | 218            |

- ▶ Reducing funding for the Health Occupations Training program by about a third.
- ▶ Reducing the five school expansion to four schools in the Jobs for Maine's Graduates program.

### Maine Labor Relations Board

- ▶ Reducing personal services by lowering per diem costs, foregoing a merit increase for the Director, and by cutting hours worked for two positions.

### Maine Occupational Information Coordinating Committee

- ▶ Saving General Fund dollars by shifting a position to a federal funded account.

Overall, our proposals would reduce state funded accounts by three positions and over one million dollars. At this time these proposals have been approved by the Labor Committee and the Appropriations Committee; however, all proposals are undergoing review by the executive and legislative branches, and are subject to change.



## Newsletter Contributors

Our thanks go to everyone who helped with this issue of *Excel*, especially the following:

|               |                  |                  |
|---------------|------------------|------------------|
| Debbie Jones  | Judy Pelletier   | Paul Gilbert     |
| Pamela Kelley | Ken Bridges      | Louise Salminen  |
| Winnie Malia  | Bob Pomerleau    | Kerry Tims       |
| Brenda Evans  | Linda Nickerson  | Roger Whitehouse |
| Rose Morse    | Kathleen Piecuch | Bob Ouellette    |
| Carol Webb    | Roger Carpentter | Connie Lachance  |
| Dick Lewis    | Roland Quirion   | Linda Layman     |
| Dick Hodgdon  | Rolanda Klapatch | Linda Stevens    |
| Sheila Moody  | Shirley Smith    | Robert Lane      |
| Richard Jones | Bryan Saunders   | Tom Allen        |
| Gary Whitney  |                  |                  |

Please remember to submit your articles for the next edition by June 10.

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### **CUSTOMER SERVICE TIP: Keeping customers happy**

- © **An answering machine** or automated phone system often provides a customer's first impression of our Department. If you use one, make sure it is up to date and doesn't waste customers' time.
- © **Tell coworkers** how important it is to get quick responses for irate customers. Arrange for someone to return calls if you can't get back to customers when expected.
- © **Schedule lunch** hours for employees with your customers in mind. Have the most employees available when most of your customers need them.
- © **If you have** people who can't serve customers because they are performing some other tasks, arrange for them to perform those duties out of sight. Customers are frustrated when they see apparently available employees "refusing" to wait on them.
- © **If a customer** has a problem and you solve it, tell the customer you did. Make follow up calls to these customers to be sure their problems have been solved.

## We Are Appreciated...

Many of you receive letters of appreciation for providing quality customer service. Here are excerpts from our in-basket:

TO: **Donna Cookson, Waterville  
Unemployment Compensation**  
FROM: Chester G.

I am writing to clear up the matter of over-payments... Your attention was greatly appreciated.

---

TO: **Barbara Tapley, Presque Isle  
Unemployment Compensation**  
FROM: Barbara Ouellette, Loring AF Base

I wish to express my thanks for the support **Barbara** provided during the NAF forum. **Barbara** was one of the main contributors to (its) success.

---

TO: **John Bouchard, Portland Job Service**  
FROM: Charles Roma, Work Opportunities  
Unlimited

Thanks so much for interviewing clients from our Employment Skills Workshop... It was a great experience for all.

---

TO: **Glen McLean, Unemployment  
Compensation, Tax**  
FROM: Bonnie Davis, Tri-Town Marine

I wanted to thank you for supplying me with copies of my 1986 and 1987 reports... I know what a time consuming task this must have been...

---

TO: **Commissioner Morrison**  
FROM: Wm. Reynolds Doughty, Jr., Ph.D,  
Pineland Center

(I) commend **Paul Luce** for his outstanding support of the Pineland Transition Team. **Paul** has provided us with information, insight, and inspiration.

---

TO: **Royal Bouchard, Bureau of Labor  
Standards**  
FROM: Charlotte N.

My sincere thanks for the efforts of you and your staff on my behalf. This... certainly helps maintain faith in the system.

---

TO: **Lois Von Hussen, Waterville Job Service**  
FROM: Kathy B.

Acts of thoughtfulness like yours make me glad to live where I do...

---

TO: **Bureau of Labor Standards Staff**  
FROM: Mark M.

Thanks for your help on Tuesday... I received the check... Three cheers to all who helped and many thanks.

---

TO: **Tom Flaherty, Portland Job Service**  
FROM: Wendy Q., Barber Foods

You're great!!

---

TO: **Diane Cote, Biddeford Unemployment  
Compensation**  
FROM: Douglas C.

**Diane's** enthusiasm and "up with people" spontaneity serve as strong motivators... I was extremely impressed with **Diane's** performance...

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(Continued on page 12)



(Continued from page 11)

TO: **Vaughn Leblanc, Job Service  
Administrative**  
From: Bob Lane, Augusta Job Service

Thank you for allowing **Pat Sliva** to work in the  
Augusta L.O... **Pat's** efficiency... and willingness  
to help out wherever needed were outstanding.

---

TO: **Gerard Dennison, Economic Analysis &  
Research**  
FROM: James B. Longley, Jr., Retirement Plan  
Services inc.

Thanks for the information - will be in touch.

---

TO: **John Bouchard, Portland Job Service**  
FROM: Raymond M.

M\_ offered me a full time job... Thank you for all  
your help, advice, and encouragement.

---

TO: **Roger Whitehouse, Rumford  
Unemployment Compensation**  
FROM: Tina LaFleur, Western Regional Council  
on Alcoholism

I would like to express my appreciation for your  
participation in the Key Informant Survey. Your  
input... was much needed and appreciated...

---

TO: **Portland Job Service Staff**  
FROM: Henry P.

..Thank the staff of the **Portland Job Service**,  
especially **Tena Wildes** and **Shirley Rosen** for the  
professional and yet courteous manner...

---

TO: **Rumford Job Service Staff**  
FROM: Doris G.

Thank you for your help and understanding.

---

TO: **Rachel Newman, Unemployment  
Compensation, Tax**  
From: Debbie Violette, Unemployment  
Compensation Tax

... Thank you and your staff for your hospitality  
and assistance during the week in which I was  
without an office...

---

TO: **Royal Bouchard, Bureau of Labor  
Standards**  
FROM: Alice Wilkins, Maine Restaurant &  
Lodging EXPO

Just a note to express our sincere appreciation for  
your time and effort in helping us make the Maine  
Restaurant and EXPO a big success.

---

TO: **Presque Isle Unemployment  
Compensation Staff**  
FROM: Glen T.

Thank you for the fast service you provided to  
me... I hope the State realizes what a great job you  
are doing. Thank you.

---

TO: **Gary Whitney, Job Service Field**  
FROM: David F.

... Thank you for your help and genuine interest  
you showed me... it was most reassuring to find  
people who care and want to be of assistance.

---

TO: **Unemployment Compensation, Tax**  
FROM: Muriel Lang, Paris Farmers Union

... Thank you... for the courteous service you have  
given me over the years. Whenever I have had to  
call for information, it was given promptly.

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# # #