

Courier

**Final week for
Open Enrollment!
The deadline is
Friday, Nov. 17**

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Several "Myths" Answered

Compensation Study Input: Positives, Concerns

The Compensation Task Force is close to having final results and recommendations from the consultants for the compensation review which began in July.

As explained to focus group participants and mentioned in previous Courier articles, the Compensation Task Force was given parameters for the overall study: The county will continue to use the pay-for-performance system, although recommendations are expected on changes to this system. Across-the-board cost-of-living increases will not be considered.

Focus Groups

Information gathered from the focus groups has been posted on the Compensation Task Force Infoweb page <http://infoweb/cex/comptaskforce>. Input from these

employees indicates that many people are positive about the county's benefits such as retirement and the "family-friendly" atmosphere, including flexible work schedules, teleworking and the ability to earn and use leave when needed. Employees also spoke positively about the concept of pay-for-performance, indicating that some improvement was needed.

Employees expressed a lot of concern about whether or not county salaries were competitive with other local jurisdictions in this area, the retention of employees, the internal inequities of employee salaries, policies that hindered existing employees in moving forward in their pay ranges (e.g., the current promotional *Compensation Study, page 2*



Change a Light, Change the World! Pledge Before Nov. 30!

Join hundreds of Fairfax County employees who have made the pledge to replace one light bulb at home with a compact florescent bulb. Act before Nov. 30 while local retailers may be offering coupons in your area. If you have any questions, contact **Jenna Gorter**, FMD, at 703-324-2808, TTY 711, or jennifer.gorter@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Visit www.energystar.gov and click on the "change a light" banner. Be sure to select "County of Fairfax, Virginia" as the referring organization.

Save money! Save the environment!

Compensation Study, from page 1

policy) as well as how the Market Rate Adjustment (MRA) was calculated and applied and other areas of concern.

The consultant has received copies of all the information gathered from focus groups which will be considered to formulate possible recommendations.

Myths and Facts

During the discussions at employee focus groups and in the e-mails sent to the task force, a number of "myths" have been identified. Please take a few minutes to carefully read a few that were mentioned often:

Myth: There are too many employees only receiving a "fully proficient" score of 1.7 percent.

Fact: The five evaluation ratings are unsatisfactory, in development, fully proficient, superior and exceptional. As shown in the chart below, less than 2 percent of employees received a fully proficient score of 1.7 percent in FY 2006 and to date in FY 2007. The fact is

pay-for-performance system (other than the five, countywide behaviors, the number of elements or goals varies by position and/or department), it is hard to summarize how individual employees arrive at their annual score and salary increase. It will vary depending upon the position and department.

However, for an employee who has the five countywide behaviors and six specific elements (no goal for this example) – all rated "fully proficient"; they will receive a 1.7 percent increase. What the two charts indicate is that most county employees are receiving more than just "fully proficient" scores on their evaluations for at least several elements and or behaviors. The county has changed the rating scale (from the original 0, 3, 5 and 7 percent to the 12-point scale shown in the charts). In doing so, the four "ratings" were kept the same (with the addition of "in development" in FY 2007), but the formulas used to calculate the final scores changed.

There appears to be some confusion about

the terminology (fully proficient) and the actual scores received and the increase to an employee's salary. The Compensation Task Force anticipates that there will be a recommendation to address this issue.

Myth: County employees received higher annual increases under the old step system than they do under the current

pay-for-performance system.

Fact: No, that is incorrect. Under the old step system, on average, 50 percent of employees each year would only receive a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) of 2 percent or in the case of FY 1997, 1 percent.

FY2007*			FY2006		
Evaluation Rating	Number Rated	Percent Rated	Evaluation Rating	Number Rated	Percent Rated
0	10	0.43%	0	29	0.38%
1.7	39	1.69%	1.7	135	1.77%
2.1	63	2.73%	2.1	175	2.29%
2.6	63	2.73%	2.6	272	3.57%
3	145	6.27%	3	469	6.15%
3.4	188	8.14%	3.4	643	8.43%
3.9	253	10.95%	3.9	715	9.37%
4.3	327	14.15%	4.3	1063	13.93%
4.7	358	15.49%	4.7	1275	16.71%
5.1	327	14.15%	5.1	1108	14.52%
5.6	299	12.94%	5.6	924	12.11%
6	239	10.34%	6	821	10.76%
	2311			7629	

*scores through 9/30/06

Source: Department of Human Resources

that the majority of county employees received substantially higher scores.

In FY 2005, approximately 2.37 percent of 7,686 employees evaluated received a 1.7 percent or less.

Because there is flexibility at the department level for the implementation of the

As you can see in the chart below, under the old step system (for general county employees), employees were usually hired at the first or second step and unless their performance was very poor, they received a “step” increase of approximately 5 percent each year, until they reached step 5. Then there was a hold period of two years for steps 5, 6 and 7, and then a hold step of three years for step 8. After step 9, the employee reached “longev-

ity,” and their annual salary was frozen, unless there was an adjustment of a COLA or they were promoted into a higher grade position. However, for the fiscal years FY 1993 through FY 1999 (average of 1.57 percent COLA) approximately 43.57 percent of all employees qualified for a merit increase – the others were in a hold step and only received the COLA for that year (e.g. 2 percent in FY 1996).

Fiscal Year	COLA	Average Step Increase	Total Increase	Approximate Percentage of Employees Eligible to Receive a Merit Raise (e.g., NOT in a hold step)
FY1993	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	Employees did not receive a merit increase
FY1994	2.0%	2.6%	4.6%	51% of employees received a 5% merit increase
FY1995	2.0%	2.7%	4.7%	53% of employees received a 5% merit increase
FY1996	2.0%	2.5%	4.5%	50% of employees received a 5% merit increase
FY1997	1.0%	2.8%	3.8%	55% of employees received a 5% merit increase
FY1998	2.0%	2.5%	4.5%	50% of employees received a 5% merit increase
FY1999	2.0%	2.3%	4.3%	46% of employees received a 5% merit increase

Source: Department of Management and Budget

ity,” and their annual salary was frozen, unless there was an adjustment of a COLA or they were promoted into a higher grade position. However, for the fiscal years FY 1993 through FY 1999 (average of 1.57 percent COLA) approximately 43.57 percent of all employees qualified for a merit increase – the others were in a hold step and only received the COLA for that year (e.g. 2 percent in FY 1996).

Myth: The Market Rate Adjustment (MRA) is not calculated looking at inflation factors in this area, because if it was, the county would see that our salaries are not keeping up with inflation.

Fact: Fairfax County uses a combination of federal statistics explained below.

- Consumer Price Index (CPI) for the Washington-Baltimore area. The U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics prepares this index. The CPI closely monitors changes in the cost of living. The CPI represents 70 percent of the MRA. The data used is for September based on its availability prior to discussions on the upcoming budget. If there is an unusually high or low September score,

- Employment Cost Index (ECI). The U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics prepares the ECI. The ECI measures the rate of change in employee compensation (wages and salaries). The index used by the

county measures changes in employee compensation for civilian workers. This includes private sector, state and local government employees. Federal employees are not included in this index. The ECI represents 20 percent of the MRA.

- Federal Wage Adjustment for the Washington-Baltimore area. The Federal Office of Personnel Management prepares this wage adjustment. Fairfax County will use the most current approved wage adjustment in budget calculations. However, because of the timing of the approval of the Federal Wage Adjustment and Fairfax County’s budget cycle, Fairfax County will use the wage adjustment from the previous January. The Federal Wage Adjustment represents 10 percent of the MRA.

Once an MRA is calculated (for example, 4.25 percent for FY 2007) it is applied across-the-board to all minimum, midpoint and maximum salaries in the salary structure.

For more information about the compensation review, go to <http://infoweb/cex/comptaskforce>. ■

2006 Security Awareness Day

Staying Safe and Secure Online



Sharon Arndt, HIPAA compliance manager, provided valuable information to employees during her session on protecting your health information.

More than 330 county employees attended the second annual Security Awareness Day held at the Government Center on Friday, Oct. 20. Sponsored by the Department of Information Technology (DIT), the event began with opening remarks by Information Technology Security Director **Michael Dent** and included seven information security sessions.

County employees who made presentations included **Todd Overstreet**, DIT; **Gary Moore**, DIT; **Sharon Arndt**, HIPAA compliance manager; **Philip Simpson**, DIT; Detective **Joseph Sorrentino**, Police, and **Matt Dowd**, DIT.

Kristen Wyckoff, Childhelp Children's Center of Virginia, also was a presenter.

Keynote speaker **Rick Smith**, a consultant with the SANS Institute, a security training company, provided information on home computer security. Smith's advice included be-

ing alert for signs of strange or unanticipated behavior on your computer, including strange e-mails, the appearance of computer applications that you did not install and pop-up advertisements that appear when you are not on the Internet. If any of these problems occur on your home computer, update and run antivirus and spyware removal software and update your operating system patches.

One of the most popular sessions during Security Awareness Day was "Internet Safety for Teens." Attendees received a list of warning signs that may indicate a child could be at risk for an online predator, including a teen spending a lot of time online at night, pornography on the teen's computer and the use of an online account belonging to someone else.

If you would like more information, all of the presentations are available on the Infoweb at <http://infoweb/DIT/ISO/education/security-awarenessday/>. A videotape of the presentations is available from ELLVIS, by contacting 703-324-8318, TTY 711. ■

Yikes! County Staff Enjoy Halloween



Several staff members in the Department of Vehicle Services (DVS) showed their Halloween spirit (above) in a variety of costumes, including (left to right) **Michelle Davis**, **Kelly Von Schwanitz** (behind Davis), **Tho Duong**, **Chuck Higdon**, **DVS Director Jim Gorby**, **Sheila Bishop**, **Dixie Gardner**, **Shenise Soto** and **Wes Blackwell** (kneeling). (Photo by Dalton McKenzie)

Friendly witches? **Sherry Sheth** and **Judi Blaine-Stewart**, Department of Tax Administration, (below) appear ready to cast spells on delinquent taxpayers.



Employees, Supervisors Participate in VolunteerFest on Oct. 28

County employees and the Board of Supervisors were among the more than 850 volunteers who contributed 3,400 volunteer hours for Volunteer Fairfax's VolunteerFest event on Saturday, Oct. 28. During the countywide day of service, held in conjunction with national "Make a Difference Day," volunteers helped 40 area nonprofits complete 45 projects.

VolunteerFest is supported by the Board of Supervisors who proclaimed Oct. 28 "VolunteerFest Day," and attended several of the project sites.

Board of Supervisors Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly** and Providence District Supervisor **Linda Q. Smyth** were among more than 50 volunteers who stopped by the James Lee Community Center in Falls Church to participate in the Adopt-a-Soldier project. Coordinated by **Bill Dunn**, director of the senior center, the project included sending electronic greeting cards and making 131 boxes of essentials (soap, batteries, books,



Volunteer Fairfax staff and county staff representing several agencies including the Department of Community and Recreation Services, the Health Department and the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board participated in the Adopt-a-Soldier project.

snacks, etc.) for U.S. soldiers serving in Iraq.

Dunn served for a year in Iraq with the U.S. Army Reserve and began the Adopt-a-Soldier project when he returned home in 2004. He calculates the project has sent more than 500 packages overseas.

"When I was in Iraq, I got packages from a school in Albuquerque (N.M.) and it meant a lot to me," he explained. "It lets you know that someone cares."

To learn more about the Adopt-a-Soldier project, contact Bill Dunn at 703-534-3387, TTY 711, or william.dunn@fairfaxcounty.gov.

For more information on Volunteer Fairfax, go to www.volunteer-fairfax.org.



Chairman Connolly sends an electronic greeting to U.S. soldiers in Iraq with Margaret Plenty, Department of Community and Recreation Services.



Project coordinator Bill Dunn, Mary Keeser, a representative from VolunteerFest sponsor Booz Allen, and Supervisor Smyth hold some of the boxes being mailed to Iraq.

Focus on Benefits



HR Central has benefit information. 703-324-4900, TTY 703-222-7314

Open Enrollment Ends Nov. 17

Only one week remains for county employees to make changes to their benefits elections for 2007. You can make changes to your elections by logging on to www.fairfaxcountybenefits.benelogic.com no later than midnight on Nov. 17.

Here are some frequently asked questions that can help with your benefit enrollment decisions.

Q: If I don't do anything, will I still have the same benefits for 2007?

A: If you do nothing, you will have the same health, dental, group term life and long-term disability coverage that is currently in effect. If you want to participate in the medical spending and dependent care accounts for 2007, you must re-enroll each year.

Q: How do I sign in to the Benelogic Web site?

A: First, go to the Benelogic enrollment site: www.fairfaxcountybenefits.benelogic.com. Enter your user name (the same ID you use to access PRISM or the county's e-mail system – typically your first initial and the first five letters of your last name) and password (the last four digits of your Social Security number). If you

have problems accessing the Web site, contact HR Central at 703-324-3311, TTY 711.

Q: How can I verify that my benefits enrollment and changes were accepted?

A: After you have finished entering all of your benefit enrollment changes, you must click the "Finish" button. This button is located on the lower right-hand corner of the last page of the enrollment screens.

After you do this, you should print an enrollment statement by clicking on "View a printable enrollment statement in a new window," then click on the printer icon near the top of the screen.

Final Open Enrollment Meeting and Health Fair

Monday, Nov. 13

Government Center

Presentations (Board Auditorium):

8:30 – 9 a.m.

Screenings: 9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

Don't wait until the last day of open enrollment to make your open enrollment elections! ■

DHR + DOF = Retirement Winners

A friendly competition between the Department of Human Resources, (DHR) and the Department of Finance (DOF) is helping employees from both agencies to be better prepared for retirement through the county's deferred compensation plan.

In July, **Peter Schroth**, director of human resources and **Bob Mears**, director of finance, encouraged their employees to participate in

a challenge between the two agencies. The two goals were to see which agency could get the highest percentage of eligible staff participating in deferred compensation, and/

or achieve the highest percentage increase in eligible staff who are actively deferring.

And, drumroll please, the winner announced in October was...both agencies. DHR staff won the challenge for highest percentage of employees who are actively deferring at 80.6 percent. DOF had the highest percentage increase of staff participating in the program with a 33.16 percent increase.

Employees from both agencies were invited to a deferred compensation luncheon on Oct. 30 and received kudos and pizza from Schroth and Mears. For more information about the deferred compensation plan, go to <http://infoweb/hr/benefits/DCOMP2006.htm>. If you would like a deferred compensation program conducted at your agency, contact **Mary Hoffman**, DHR, at 703-324-4915, TTY 711. ■

Peter Schroth (left) and Bob Mears (right) donned aprons and congratulated their employees for enrolling in deferred compensation.



<http://infoweb/courier>

Briefs

Pedestrian Safety

County officials held a media briefing on Oct. 31 in Seven Corners at Route 50 and Patrick Henry Drive to highlight the importance of pedestrian safety on Halloween and as the daylight hours become shorter after the time change. The Seven Corners area has been identified as one of the county's worst pedestrian crash areas where several safety improvements will be made. The Board of Supervisors has made pedestrian safety a priority in its Four-Year Transportation Plan.

Information on the county's pedestrian program can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/fcdot/pedestrian.htm.

Police Receive Award

The Fairfax County Police Department staff at the Mount Vernon station received the 2006 Community Leader Award from Progreso Hispano on Oct. 7. Progreso Hispano is a nonprofit volunteer community development organization that supports the Route One South Corridor Hispanic Community.



Representing the Mount Vernon Station staff are (left to right) Officer Louis Martinez, Pfc. Angela Linden, Station Commander Capt. Michael Kline, Master Police Officer Crystal Nicholson, Officer Susan Stoltzing and Pfc. Josh Laitinen. (Photo by Raul Castillo)

Briefs



Officials at the briefing included (left to right) Board of Supervisors Chairman Gerald E. Connolly, Mason District Supervisor Penelope A. Gross, Pedestrian Program Manager Chris Wells, Police Chief David M. Rohrer (standing) and Traffic Division Commander, Capt. Jesse Bowman. (Photo by Jeremy Lasich)

Holiday Food Drive

The Department of Human Resources is sponsoring the 14th annual Holiday Food Drive from Nov. 27 to Dec. 14. All contributions will be donated to FACETS, a nonprofit organization that provides services to homeless and low-income people living in Fairfax.

Non-perishable food items that are needed include: breakfast and granola bars, cereal, canned meats, canned soups and vegetables and spaghetti/tomato sauce.

Personal hygiene items also are needed, such as: baby wipes, diapers,

laundry detergent, shaving cream/gel, razors, tampons and maxi pads, antiperspirant, shampoo and conditioner, soap, toothpaste, and toothbrushes.

Collection boxes will be located in the Government Center cafeteria and the Department of Human Resources HR Central, Suite 270.

Briefs

Millennium Forum on Nov. 22

Joel Garreau is the keynote speaker for the Millennium Forum "Edge Cities" scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 22, from 10:30 a.m. to noon in the Government Center Board Auditorium. The free event is open to all county employees.

Garreau is a leading interpreter of social, geographic and psycho-demographic trends.

He is a reporter and editor at The Washington Post and a bestselling author. He is also a principal of the Garreau Group, a network of specialists and experts committed to understanding who we are, how we got that way and where we're headed.

Garreau's "Edge City: Life on the New Frontier," won wide acclaim including a Pulitzer Prize nomination when it was published in 1991. The groundbreaking work focuses on the enormous centers of commerce, away from the old downtowns, that are making dramatic changes in the way we live, work, play, pray, shop and die.

For more information on the Millennium Forum series, go to <http://infoweb/mfs>.



Joel Garreau is the featured speaker for the Nov. 22 Millennium Forum. (Photo provided by the Library)

Autumn Safety Tips

Autumn is here! Please consider these safety tips:

Falling Leaves:

- ♦ Raking leaves can be good exercise. However, proper stretching before raking and staying hydrated during yardwork is essential.
- ♦ Remember bagged leaves may be heavy. Use a wheelbarrow if possible. Remember to lift with your knees and not your back.
- ♦ Wear gloves when doing yardwork to prevent cuts and blisters.
- ♦ When cleaning gutters, use the correct type of ladder for the job. Always inspect a ladder before use and look for any damage.
- ♦ Place ladders on a level surface and stay away from overhead wires.
- ♦ When standing on a ladder, never overreach. This may cause the ladder to tip.
- ♦ Be cautious when driving on roads covered in leaves.

The leaves create a slippery surface, which can impact driving conditions.

Heating:

- ♦ Prior to the start of the heating season, it is beneficial to have the heating system checked by a qualified and licensed contractor. It is also recommended to have a qualified contractor inspect flues and chimneys before the fireplace is used.
- ♦ Place portable heaters at least three feet away from anything combustible, such as newspapers, bedding, clothing and draperies.
- ♦ When clearing ashes from the fireplace, be sure to put them into a metal container with a lid — never into a cardboard box or paper bag. Embers are capable of smoldering for days and may ignite.

Please contact **Robert Johnson**, safety analyst, Risk Management Division, Department of Finance, at 703-324-3043, TTY 711, or robert.johnson@fairfaxcounty.gov, if you have any questions regarding any safety issues. ■

Flu Shot Update!

Flu shots will be available to employees on Thursday, Nov. 30, from 8 to 11:30 a.m. in Conference Rooms 2/3 at the Government Center. The cost for the vaccination is \$25 and payable by cash or check.

To schedule an appointment, call the Department of Human Resources (DHR) at 703-324-4167, TTY 711. To shorten your wait on Nov. 30, go to <http://infoweb/HS/HEALTH/forms/fluform2006.htm> and com-

plete the Health Department forms as indicated and bring the forms with you. Questions on registration should be directed to DHR at 703-324-4167, TTY 711.

For questions about the forms or medical questions related to obtaining flu vaccine, you may call the Health Department at 703-246-7100, TTY 711. ■

Courier is published most payday Fridays. The deadline for articles and information is two weeks before publication.



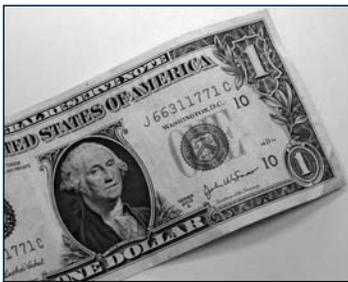
Lisa Connors, editor
703-324-3197, TTY 711
E-mail:
lisa.connors@fairfaxcounty.gov, or
courier@fairfaxcounty.gov

See *Courier* online at <http://infoweb/courier>.

Office of Public Affairs
12000 Government Center Pkwy.,
Suite 551
Fairfax, VA 22035-0065
Phone 703-324-3187, TTY 711
Fax 703-324-2010,

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Deadline Is Near to Make Change With a Dollar!

The deadline is quickly approaching to make your payroll deduction for the Fairfax County Charitable Campaign (FCCC) for the United Way of the National Capital Area,

which ends on Nov. 22. Don't miss this opportunity to make a difference in our community through pledges of payroll deductions.

This year's FCCC theme is "Make Change With a Dollar." The goal of the 2006 campaign is to have every county employee pledge \$1 a week. For more information go to <http://infoweb/opa/unitedway>. ■