



Courier

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Changes Coming in Employee Communications

A Fond Farewell to a 40-Year County Institution

On Jan. 1, 1969, then County Executive Carlton Massey introduced Fairfax County employees to a new employee newsletter - The Fairfax County Courier. The Courier was replacing the Fairfax Countian, which had been published by the Employees Advisory Council. He wrote:

"The purpose of the Courier is to bring you, the men and women who make the county government what it is, information which will promote your personal well being and help you in the performance of your duties.

The need for such a medium of communication is obvious. There are more than 4,000 of us, and we work in more than 200 buildings scattered widely over an area of 406 square miles. Many of you rarely visit the Court House [then the county government seat] and it would be impossible to bring all of us together at one time without interrupting essential services.

A newspaper is no substitute for face-to-face personal contact, or for official communication through normal organizational channels. But it can – and we hope the County Courier will – supplement these primary means of communication..."

The Fairfax **County Courier**

Published Monthly for County Employees

FAIRFAX, VIRGINIA, JANUARY 1, 1969

Fast forward four decades – in 2009 the number of county merit employees is more than 12,000 and communications has changed dramatically.

Like newsletters and newspapers across the country, it is no longer financially viable to produce a hard copy information resource. As part of the FY 2010 Budget reductions, Courier will cease publication with this final issue.

County Executive **Anthony H. Griffin** and the county's leadership recognize the importance of providing timely communications to employees and the different preferences that employees have for receiving and sharing information.

The Office of Public Affairs (OPA) has done extensive research including a recent survey and several focus groups to determine the best way to move forward. Research also was conducted on best practices of similarly sized jurisdictions across the country. OPA staff are reviewing this research and determining

the best ways to move forward and serve all employees; this long-term approach will be shared at a later date.

In the meantime, as noted by Massey, there is no substitute for face-to-face communication with a supervisor or other appropriate manager. Seek information and ask questions.

"Change is not easy and I will miss the Courier, but I look forward to a new direction for employee communications," says **Susan Woodruff**, director of the Department of Human Resources.

"One of the greater honors during

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Employee Communications: Coming this Summer

Changing communications is an evolving process and this summer OPA will be introducing a two-pronged plan:

- ▶ Expand NewsLink (the daily electronic newsletter) to include a link to longer format online articles and photos.
- ▶ Create a phone NewsLine, which will enable employees without easy access to a computer to receive current news and information. ■

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Courier is available online at <http://infoweb/courier>

my time in the Department of Human Resources has been working with the editors to publish the Courier. Courier has had a life and history of its own that shaped each publication in a unique way.

My thanks to all of the editors past and present who made the Courier the great newsletter it was.”

▶ If you have comments and memories to share about Courier and what it has meant to you, send an e-mail

to courier@fairfaxcounty.gov. A selection of the comments will be published in the expanded NewsLink this summer.

▶ A “thank you” to readers and contributors is on page 8. ■

Summary of Employee Communications Survey Results

Last month, the Office of Public Affairs asked county employees to provide feedback on employee communications. The survey was provided online through NewsLink and a hard copy was included in Courier. There were 588 online responses and seven hard copy responses.

Respondents with access to a county computer:

Yes - 99 percent

Information sources you rely upon (in order):

1. NewsLink
2. Manager/supervisor
3. Courier

County information you are interested in receiving (top 10)

1. Budget
2. Countywide news
3. HR and benefits
4. Emergency information
5. Training
6. Board of Supervisors meeting highlights
7. Technology
8. Links to articles in the media
9. Health and wellness
10. Retirements

Many Web sites let you share your ideas, thoughts and questions with others and communicate with them directly and publicly online. If I could do the same thing online at work, I believe this would:

Help me to share important information and knowledge with other employees countywide:

- Strongly Agree - 22 percent
- Agree - 39 percent
- Neutral - 28 percent
- Disagree - 6 percent
- Strongly Disagree - 2 percent

Don't Know - 3 percent
Give me access to valuable ideas and tips that would help me do my job better:

- Strongly Agree - 24 percent
- Agree - 44 percent
- Neutral - 22 percent
- Disagree - 5 percent
- Strongly Disagree - 2 percent
- Don't Know - 3 percent

Allow me to better understand what is happening in other agencies/departments that might have an impact on what I do:

- Strongly Agree - 26 percent
- Agree - 47 percent
- Neutral - 19 percent
- Disagree - 5 percent
- Strongly Disagree - 1 percent
- Don't Know - 2 percent

Facilitate better communication between employees and managers, such as agency directors:

- Strongly Agree - 23 percent
- Agree - 39 percent
- Neutral - 22 percent
- Disagree - 9 percent
- Strongly Disagree - 3 percent
- Don't Know - 4 percent

I am generally informed about countywide issues, changes and new initiatives.

- Strongly Agree - 7 percent
- Agree - 68 percent
- Neutral - 12 percent
- Disagree - 6 percent
- Strongly Disagree - 1 percent
- Don't Know - 6 percent

Fairfax County's top managers (county executive and deputy county executives) keep me informed about countywide issues, changes and new initiatives.

- Strongly Agree - 13 percent

- Agree - 55 percent
- Neutral - 16 percent
- Disagree - 9 percent
- Strongly Disagree - 3 percent
- Don't Know - 4 percent

Comments From Employees:

“We should replace the old format of paper newsletter (Courier) and transition to a more timely and technologically advanced mode like a blog or something.”

“By the time the Courier comes out, I have seen the information from some other source - time to put the Courier to rest (online only) and save the printing costs.”

“It is incumbent upon each employee to take the time to read various county communications and educate themselves on what is happening around them. Over the years, I have often heard people say that they didn't know or weren't told about things going on in the county. I knew, because I took the time to educate myself.”

“Supervisors should pass important information on for those folks without computer access.”

“Although far from a perfect system, I think that county leaders really try to communicate with staff in various ways. I think staff also has a responsibility to read and pay attention to the various communications that we receive.

Sometimes I hear people say they were unaware of an issue that was covered in both NewsLink and Courier.”

“We are asked to collaborate with each other but there isn't a mechanism that facilitates this.”

“Sometimes there is so much information the really important things can be lost. It helps to have information coming from more than one source to help folks get the important things.” ■

Three Employees to Receive Prestigious Onthank Award



Mary Kudless

Photo by Jarred VanGelder.



Michael Lucas

Photo by Jarred VanGelder.



Katherine Stemler

Photo provided by Stemler.

Mary W. Kudless, Michael J. Lucas and **Katherine L. Stemler** have been named recipients of the 2008 A. Heath Onthank Award, the county's highest honor for employees whose outstanding accomplishments have advanced and improved public service in the Fairfax County Government and Fairfax County Public Schools.

The awardees will be recognized by the Board of Supervisors at its June 22 meeting.

Kudless is the deputy director of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB). She was nominated for leading a comprehensive study of CSB nursing and nursing services, which will significantly impact more than 20,000 residents served annually by CSB's Mental Health, Alcohol and Drug, and Mental Retardation services. Her efforts include collaborating with CSB staff to successfully implement the study's findings, including working with the Health Department to initiate a new partnership with George Mason University's graduate nursing program. These efforts enhance the county's nurse recruitment and retention efforts, and heighten awareness of the critical importance of nursing services.

Lucas is the director of the

Police Department's Animal Control Division. In addition to other notable accomplishments, Lucas was instrumental in developing a plan to assist in the care and housing of pets belonging to people with special needs in the event of an emergency or disaster. He participated in a multi-agency exercise to test the plan and using available grants enabled the county to acquire a large emergency trailer and supplies that would be used to set up a temporary shelter for animals in case of an emergency evacuation. He also implemented several successful policy changes at the Animal Shelter.

Stemler is a transportation supervisor for Fairfax County Public Schools. In an effort to decrease preventable school bus accidents, she implemented an innovative and comprehensive approach to school bus safety that focuses on crash prevention through regular driver education, motivation and recognition. The "Accident-Free Challenge" is a contest that tracks accidents. Each quarter, the team with the most number of accident-free days is rewarded with a special luncheon. Cumulative results determine the overall winner, who is honored at a year-end event. The program is supported by county businesses with more than

\$7,500 in goods and services.

In addition to the award recipients, several other employees were nominated for the award, including **Mike Ciarrocchi**, Fire and Rescue Department; **Ellen Eggerton**, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services; **Jeanie Kuley**, Police Department; and **Brenda Sweet**, Department of Family Services.

► For more information on countywide employee awards, visit <http://infoweb/hr/Relate/awards.htm>. ■

Heros in Our Midst

ADHC Employees Recognized for Quick Action

Eight elderly Adult Day Health Care (ADHC) participants and two employees were en route to a bowling tournament last month when their Fastran handicapped bus was involved in an accident.

The two Braddock Glen ADHC employees **Martha Armstrong** and **Marybelle Kamara** unbuckled their seatbelts and immediately attended to the participants. ADHC is a division of the Health Department

The two remained calm and worked decisively to assess each participant for life-threatening injuries, while also providing comfort until rescue crews arrived.

Armstrong and Kamara accompanied the elderly participants to local hospitals. During the incident, they communicated with the Braddock Glen ADHC Center nurse, **Julie Warner**, who contacted caregivers and family members to keep them apprised of the situation.

Health Department officials noted that due to the quick action and expertise, all of the participants were released from the hospital the same day with no serious injuries. "An emergency situation of this nature rarely happens during normal operations of the ADHC centers. However, when this frightening experience did occur, Martha and Marybelle acted courageously and professionally to ensure the best outcome possible," said **Rosalyn Foroobar**, director of patient care.

County Employees Escort Fallen Soldiers to Arlington

By *Jarred VanGelder*,
Office of Public Affairs

As part of the Buffalo Soldiers Motorcycle Club, on May 29 **Claude Maxwell**, **Walter Hagans** and



Marybelle Kamara and Martha Armstrong
Photo provided by Health Department.

Sam Pearson, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services; Capt. **Chris Tilles**, Fire and Rescue Department; and Capt. **Joe Hill**, Police Department, escorted the bodies of three soldiers from Beckley, W.Va. to Arlington Cemetery.

"It was our duty to escort these guys to their final resting place," said Maxwell, vice president of the Northern Virginia chapter. "It brought me to tears."

Bey Brings Cable Production Skills to Children's Camp in South Africa

Channel 16 producer **Valerie Bey**, Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection, volunteered this spring at Camp Sizanani in rural South Africa. While there, she worked on the video production of a story about this camp for children and to support Global Camps Africa, a non-profit organization providing camping experiences for children affected by HIV/AIDS.



Valerie Bey at Camp Sizanani. Photo provided by Bey.

"It was time for me to step out of my comfort zone," she said. "I have made donations to charities, but always wanted to do something more proactive and this was the ideal opportunity."

On the last night of her stay, Bey said she experienced a moment she will never forget:

"I wasn't prepared for the night before the last day of camp. There was a campfire in the evening and many of the children gave heartfelt eloquent speeches about their gratitude for Camp Sizanani . . . it was hard for me to see out of my camera viewfinder because my eyes were so full of tears ."

Kudos for Donna Bird

Donna Bird, Department of Public Safety Communications (DPSC), received kudos from DPSC Director **Steve Souder** for her actions on June 4. According to Souder, while on her way to work at the DPSC Pine Ridge facility, Bird came upon a home on King Richard Drive with fire visible through the roof. She immediately called 9-1-1 and then attempted to alert the residents.

Bird was recognized for her efforts at the DPSC roll call that day and presented with a red fire helmet. ■

Ending Homelessness — A Partnership

According to the Department of Systems Management for Human Services' 2009 annual point-in-time count of persons who are homeless in the community, 52 percent of adults in families that are homeless are between the ages of 18-34, while 45 percent of children in these families are under 6.

"It's shocking that in one of the most affluent communities in the nation, close to 1,800 people are homeless and 60 percent of them are children," said **Dean Klein**, director of the county's new Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH). "Every person has the right to have a safe, affordable and appropriate place to live."

Last year, the Board of Supervisors established OPEH to manage, coordinate and monitor day-to-day implementation of the community's plan to end homelessness within the next 10 years. OPEH supports the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Partnership to Prevent and End Homelessness in implementing the plan. Through this partnership, OPEH engages nonprofits, businesses, faith-based groups and county agencies.

The 10-year plan focuses on rapid re-housing and preventing homelessness by increasing the availability of permanent affordable housing. OPEH works closely with the governing board

of the community partnership to build awareness and provide strong leadership for the plan.

OPEH also supports a new prevention model (Housing Opportunities Support Teams or HOSTs) that provides services and resources to at-risk families and individuals.

As part of the plan, an Interagency Work Group ensures coordination across service providers and a Consumer Advisory Council will provide input from persons who are or have been homeless. Ultimately a new nonprofit foundation will be created to expand fundraising.

OPEH works closely with several county agencies, such as the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Department of Family Services, the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board, the Health Department, the Department of Systems Management for Human Services, the Redevelopment and Housing Authority, the Office of Emergency Management, the Office of Public Affairs, as well as Fairfax County Public Schools.

Klein took over the helm of the new agency in March. He has years of experience in working with persons who are homeless, nonprofits, faith-based communities, foundations and other funders and the government. He previously worked at the Freddie



Dean Klein, director of the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness.

Photo by Jarred VanGelder.

Mac Foundation where he oversaw corporate philanthropic investments to 100 local and national homelessness housing nonprofits and secured an \$800,000 Housing First grant for the National Alliance to End Homelessness in the national capital region. He also has served as the executive director of Shelter House Inc.; executive director of Doorways for Women and Families; and vice president and chief operating officer of Greater D.C. Cares.

► For more information, go to www.fairfaxcounty.gov/homeless or call 703-324-9492. OPEH is located in the Government Center, Suite 561. ■

Jarred VanGelder contributed to this article.

A Soggy Sneak Peek at the Government Center

Rain, wind, mud and balancing umbrellas did not discourage county employees from venturing outside for the annual Celebrate Fairfax! Sneak Peek on June 5 in the Government Center parking lots. The motivation may have been the gyros, onion rings, cheesesteaks, funnel cake, fresh lemonade...



Focus on Benefits

Most Pay Advices Scheduled to Go Online in August

In late August, the Department of Human Resources will stop mailing pay advices to employees, except for exempt part-time (status T) employees who work less than 1,039 hours per year. Employees who are currently receiving pay advices by mail are encouraged to sign up now for the online program, prior to the automatic change in August.

The change is expected to take place effective pay period 17. Online pay advices will save the county nearly \$85,000 per year and is part of the FY 2010 Budget reductions.

What you need to know about the transition to receiving your pay advice online:

▶ If you are not already enrolled in the online pay advice program when the rollout begins, you will be automatically

set up to receive your pay advices by e-mail to your Fairfax County Outlook address.

▶ You will be able to access your pay advice from home (or any other location where you have access to the Internet) through the county's Web mail at <https://mail.fairfaxcounty.gov>. Use your county username and your password to access your e-mail.

▶ Employees generally have access to their online pay advice on or before the Tuesday prior to pay day Friday.

▶ The online pay advice will have the same format and appearance as the mailed pay advice.

▶ Once enrolled in the online pay advice program, employees can view or print up to 36 past pay advices.

▶ Representatives from the

HR Central

HR Central has benefit information.

▶ Call 703-324-3311

TTY 703-222-7314

▶ Visit <http://infoweb/hr/benefits>

Department of Human Resources (DHR) are meeting with payroll contacts and HR managers countywide to discuss issues and concerns such as computer access and ensuring those concerns are addressed prior to the change.

▶ For more information or instructions on how to sign up for online pay advice, contact your department payroll contact or call the DHR Payroll Division at 703-324-3412. ■

FBMC News: Submit Your Claims Online

Flexible Spending Account (FSA) medical or dependent care claims for reimbursement can now be filed online.

Fringe Benefits Management Company (FBMC) recently announced that employees can submit scanned claims and documentation directly

through www.myFBMC.com. Submitting claims online will speed reimbursement requests to FBMC and will allow them to expedite reimbursements.

Complete your claim form and scan it, along with any supporting documentation into .jpg, .bmp or .gif files

of less than one megabyte each. Then log on to your account at www.myFBMC.com and follow the directions on the site.

▶ If you have any questions, contact FBMC's Customer Care Center at www.myFBMC.com. ■

EZ Reimburse Card for Medical Spending Accounts Being Replaced Effective July 5

Fringe Benefits Management Company (FBMC) is issuing new myFBMC Visa cards to replace the current EZ Reimburse MasterCard. Only participants who are currently using

the debit card will receive the new card. Participants are scheduled to receive the two new Visa cards during the last week of June. The new cards will be effective July 5 but you must activate the card on

www.myfbmc.com. The old card will no longer work after July 4.

▶ For more information, contact HR Central at 703-324-3311, TTY 703-222-7314. ■

Live Well News

▶ Participation in the Live Well 12-week Shape Up the Nation program has increased to more than 1,600 employees. To learn more about the Shape Up program or to view photos from the June 1 kickoff events, go to <http://infoweb/LiveWell>.

▶ The Live Well Advisory Council and the Office of Public Private Partnerships have negotiated special member rates for Fairfax County Government employees at local private health clubs. For information, visit <http://infoweb/LiveWell>. Employees should contact the health clubs directly for membership inquiries. Special initiation fee waiver offers are valid until June 30.

New Name for CSB Mental Retardation Services Program

On July 1, the Mental Retardation Services program of the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board (CSB) will officially change its name to Intellectual Disability Services.

The change reflects the CSB's support of local and state advocacy efforts as part of a nationwide campaign to change the term "mental retardation" to "intellectual disability." Advocates and organizations throughout the U.S. and in other countries maintain that "r" words, such as "retardation," "retarded" or "retard" are derogatory, devaluing and hurtful to individuals with intellectual disabilities.

The Virginia General Assembly, in its 2009 session, passed legislation to change the name of the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services to the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Services.

Connector Bus Service Changes

Fairfax Connector will reduce service or eliminate some of its routes and increase fares on express routes, effective June 28. These changes are due to FY 2010 Budget reductions.

A fare increase to \$7 will affect three express routes which travel outside Fairfax County boundaries. These are routes 380, 595 and 597 that provide bus service to the Pentagon and Crystal City. This fare increase does not apply to any other routes.

Bus routes 380, 585, 980 will have reduced service on holidays.

Bus route 425 will have reduced weekend service.

Bus routes 301, 505, 553, 557, 585 will have reduced weekday service.

Bus routes 303, 556, 922, VRE EZ-Bus have been discontinued.

▶ A complete list of Fairfax Connector bus routes can be found at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/connector/fy10_changes.htm, indicating individual route status as of June 28.

Adapted Ice Skating – Volunteers Needed

Volunteers are needed to assist skating instructors at Mount Vernon RECenter, Alexandria, by providing individual encouragement and support to persons with disabilities. Volunteers must be able to support themselves on ice skates and a seven-week commitment is preferred as students build a relationship with their volunteer. Classes run Sundays 12:45-1:30 p.m., June 28-Aug. 9. For information, contact **Norma Brubacher** at norma.brubacher@fairfaxcounty.gov or call 703-768-3224.

Mosquito Control Awareness Week Is June 21-27

The Board of Supervisors has proclaimed June 21-27 as Mosquito Control Awareness Week in Fairfax County.

The Health Department emphasizes the importance of personal protection and prevention. You are encouraged to wear insect repellent containing DEET or other government-approved repellent when spending time outdoors and also to eliminate mosquito breeding sites around your home. The Health Department Disease Carrying Insects Program (DCIP) promotes environmentally sound mosquito control practices throughout the county and offers educational materials in many languages.

During the summer, the DCIP traps and tests mosquitoes to monitor West Nile virus activity throughout the county.

▶ To learn more, visit www.fairfaxcounty.gov/hd/westnile/wnvmosq.htm or call 703-246-2300 (TTY 703-591-6435).

Excess Property Pickup and Delivery

The Department of Purchasing and Supply Management (DPSM) has limited availability to respond to pickup and delivery requests from June 1 through Aug. 31; there may be delays in responding to agency requests.

▶ Continue to send requests from 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m. by e-mail to dpsmwarehouse@fairfaxcounty.gov. DPSM will address each request in the order it was received. For reasonable ADA accommodations, call 703-658-3706.



Avoiding Photo Manipulation

By Jarred VanGelder,
Office of Public Affairs

With today's technology, it is easy to Photoshop any image and turn the photo into the result you imagined. However, there are ethics that anyone with a camera needs to consider before "fixing" a photo.

According to the National Press Photographers Association (NPPA), the underlying principle of photography is "accuracy." Therefore, the NPPA believes it is "wrong to alter the content of a photograph in any way that deceives the public."

Common examples of altering a photograph that could deceive the public

- include:
- ▶ Removing and/or adding objects.
 - ▶ Combining subjects.
 - ▶ Altering a copyrighted or trademarked logo.
 - ▶ Cropping the photograph to omit information.

Here are some simple guidelines from the NPPA to follow the next time you take and edit a photo.

- ▶ Use pictures that tell the story you see, and avoid creating a picture that is inaccurate or untrue.
- ▶ Only promise what you can deliver, and don't exceed your boundaries.
- ▶ Understand copyright and trademark laws. In short, if you are not sure if you can use a licensed work or

logo, then don't use it.

To preserve credibility for all photos disseminated to the public or used internally, the NPPA provides three questions to consider before using Photoshop or other digital manipulation software:

- ▶ In what context is the photo being used?
- ▶ Is the photograph a fair and accurate representation of the information being presented?
- ▶ Does this photograph deceive the reader?

If you have any questions or need more information, contact the Office of Public Affairs at 703-324-3187. ■

And Last, but Not Least, Thank You!

On behalf of all the editors, writers and photographers who have contributed to this newsletter during its 40 years – when it was published by the Department of Human Resources or by the Office of Public Affairs – thank you for reading Courier.

Although it is only the editor's name that has appeared on every issue, there are many, many people who have made it possible to publish Courier and make it available online.

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