

A Newsletter for Tompkins County Employees and Retirees

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/countycorridors>

Meet Highway Director Jeff Smith

Tompkins County is happy to welcome Jeff Smith as its Highway Director.

Jeff has the following message for County employees and retirees through *County Corridors*:

At almost six months here in Tompkins County, I have to say it just gets better all the time. My wife Michele, son Cameron, and daughter Grace, are adjusting well to life in the area. We have been taking advantage of the parks with their swimming holes, and now as we get into winter, Ice Hockey keeps us running, as both kids play. We have purchased a house in Ithaca; and our kids now enjoy attending Boynton Middle School.

As a native of Malone, located along the Canadian border in Franklin County, New York, the move for us was in a southerly direction. In the weeks preceding my start of work, my wife was glad to track around a 10-degree increase in daily temperature. From the rural area we moved from, it seems we are in the middle of everything. There is so much to see and enjoy here in Tompkins County, it will be many years before we get to it all.

It is a privilege to have been selected to serve as Highway Director for Tompkins County. Although my wife and I have lived in other parts of the country, this was our first (and only) move with our children. We are very fortunate to have the opportunity to live in such a beautiful place, and I want to thank the Board Members, Department Heads, and the employees at the Highway Department for making us all feel very welcome here in Tompkins County!



New County Website Coming Soon!



As you have probably heard, the County is working on a new and improved County website—an update that will not only improve its aesthetics and improve functionality, but will highlight our services, making it easier for our citizens to connect with us and obtain what they need. This will include our online services—such as the Legislature’s meeting management portal—bringing them “front and center,” so our citizens can easily find them.

As well as providing improved access to County government services, the site will also showcase the natural beauty, character, and cultural richness of this area, and the many opportunities of all sorts that this area offers.

A joint project of Information Technology Services and the Public Information Office, with help from a web design team made up of department representatives and the County’s Public Information Advisory Board, the site is being developed and will be hosted off-site by *Catalog and Commerce*, with whom we already collaborate on Personnel’s online employment application program.

Departments will be able to easily manage and update their content through C&C’s content management system, and there will be increased exposure for your activities and events on the site’s front page. Also note the new URL (for purposes of the website only): TompkinsCountyNY.gov.

THANK YOU to the County employees who have submitted pictures to add to our image library, from which we will take images to use on the site, now and in the future.

We’ll have more on this—content development, system training, etc.—as the project moves forward. The new site is scheduled to be up and running early next year. Questions? Contact Marcia Lynch at Public Information or Greg Potter at ITS.



Christmas Tree Safety

Submitted by Geri Lockwood, PIO Team Member

Whether your Christmas tree is live or artificial, precautions must be followed to ensure safety for you and your family.

Below are some safety tips to follow:

- Check for frayed or broken wires and loose connections, on the light sets, and replace non-working bulbs.
- Candles should never be used to decorate a tree.
- Live trees should be fresh, and can be sprayed with a Fire Marshall approved flame-retardant chemical. They should also be watered regularly, without letting the tree holder become dry.
- Trees should never be placed near open flames, room exits, or heating sources.
- Electrical decorations and lights should not be within children's reach.
- Christmas lights should always be unplugged prior to leaving home or going to bed.
- Trees (and gift wrapping) should not be burned in a wood stove or fire place.

for a
SEASON of HAPPINESS

Enjoy a safe and happy holiday season with your loved ones.

What's New in Personnel

Submitted by Personnel Staff

Expanded Test Room – A little over a year ago, Personnel changed the format of the Decentralized exams from written paper examinations to computerized examinations through the State's COMPCATS program. We started with 5 computer stations, and candidates were asked to call to schedule a time/date to take their examination during a two-week period. Recently, we were able to double our computer stations, which allows for a larger number of candidates who can be tested at one time. With the COMPCATS program we are able to test more frequently, candidates get their scores instantly, and departments have a continuous list of candidates to choose from. A very big "thank you" to Office for the Aging for the recycled computers; to Facilities for the fresh coat of paint on the walls and getting the room nice and clean; and to ITS for all of the assistance in getting the computers up and running. This new program has been a great success so far!



New Administrative Assistant Titles and Typing Performance Testing - in order to increase promotional and lateral movement opportunities, Tompkins County is rolling out a series of broadly classified administrative titles:

- Administrative Assistant 1
- Administrative Assistant 2
- Administrative Assistant 3
- Administrative Assistant 4

For more information regarding these new titles and existing clerical titles please read the entire memo at <http://www.tompkins-co.org/personnel/documents/EmployeesNotification-AdministrativeAssistant1through4.pdf>

Electronic Application/Examination System – The new electronic application/examination system has been in place for a little over a year and has proved to be a great success for everyone; Personnel staff, Applicants, and Appointing Authorities.

The number of applications has more than doubled in the past year from 2,784 to 7,095! The feedback we have received from applicants is overwhelmingly positive. Once you have completed an application the new system will save all of your information, and all applications you file after that will be just a matter of updating your information if necessary and a couple of clicks. We also have the ability to notify applicants via email, saving time and money.

Email Notices - A great feature of our electronic system is that it allows you to click on the email notices button; enter your email address, select from the categories you are interested in, and when we post a vacancy or exam notice in those selected categories, an email will be sent to you. You are not required to create a login or to file an application to sign up for the email notices.

We are continuing to work with the staff at *Catalog and Commerce* to continue to tweak our system to make it the best that it can be. **Appointing Authorities can now request vacancy postings electronically through the agency user portal!** An enhancement to be implemented soon is adding status updates to the application. This will allow a person to see the current status of all of their applications when they log in. Your feedback and suggestions have been, and continue to be, a great help!

Second Floor Writers Group

Submitted by Terry Ward, DSS



Who knew there was so much talent in DSS? Last year, Mitzi Banner (MA), Danielle Lovejoy (Clerical), Deb Reid (Managed Care), and Terry Ward (MA) began a writer's group with meetings held about every two weeks at DSS. This month marks the one-year anniversary of their meetings, and they're still going strong.

During the first meeting, each member stated goals which they wanted to achieve for themselves over the next year. The good news is that almost all the goals have been accomplished! Members have invested in laptops, written and completed stories, and expanded their knowledge of the writing craft with each other's help.

Each member focuses on different areas. Mitzi is developing two adorable children's stories and has completed a heartfelt short story. Mitzi hopes to publish her short story in a local paper and is looking for an illustrator for her children's books. Danielle is working on two novels of suspense involving government espionage. Deb has written a short book of poetry inspired by a recent family illness, which she hopes to have published for use at Memorial Sloan Kettering Hospital. She is also working on a suspense novel about human trafficking. Terry has revised and published five books and is in the process of writing the last book of her historical romance series. Her books are available on Amazon for either Kindle or paperback.

Meetings are always fun and definitely active. Among other things, they've explored dialogue, character development, plotting, publishing, motivation, and conquering writer's block. They've done two "stories-in-the-round" where one member begins a story and it is passed from member to member to add onto.

This year, the writing group is looking into attending a conference together to expand their horizons.

Writing is such a subjective craft, and one in which the writer feels a lot of self-consciousness. "I think we've hit on a formula that works really well," says Terry. "The group is just the right size and make up for us to be comfortable in talking about our projects. No one feels left out or overwhelmed."

Hitting on that, writers also experience a great deal of rejection. The old saying that you could paper your walls with reject notices isn't just a saying. Mitzi states, "I'm glad for the encouragement that I've gotten. It's helped me to realize my own potential."

The writer's group would be happy to help anyone interested in forming their own group and encourages anyone who loves to write to keep plugging one page at a time!

MV-1 Taxi Service Starts; Increases Access to Transportation

Ithaca Dispatch and Tompkins County Transportation announce the MV-1 taxi which provided the first ride on November 26! The MV-1 taxi can board a person using a wheelchair or powered scooter and is the first accessible taxi in the county. Ithaca Dispatch is scheduling MV-1 taxi rides daytime hours, 7:00 AM-6:00 PM, Monday-Friday. Regular taxi fares apply and there is room for 4(3 seated and 1 wheelchair) passengers. To request a ride in your power or standard wheelchair on the MV-1 Taxi, call Ithaca Dispatch at (607) 277-7777.

Prior to the opening of the MV-1 taxi service at Ithaca Dispatch, individuals using wheelchairs didn't have a local taxi option unless able to transfer out of their foldable wheelchair into a taxi seat. Some last-minute transportation needs were accomplished with an ambulance ride. For non-ambulatory persons without wheelchair-adapted vans, many transportation needs have been met by TCAT and Gadabout. Gadabout drivers are constantly on the move. From January-June 2012, there were 6,046 Gadabout one-way rides taken by wheelchair on Gadabout services, and another 29,234 one-way rides and on ADA Paratransit, which is provided by Gadabout, there were an estimated 5,800 one-way



trips taken by wheelchair, and another 10,300 one way trips (source: Gadabout). Ithaca Dispatch is pleased to offer this new taxi service!

The new MV-1 taxi is a project of the Coordinated Public Transit and Human Service Transportation Committee, which is an open monthly meeting for coordinated human service and public transportation to enable comprehensive mobility services. Learn more about the Transportation Committee at <http://tccordinatedplan.weebly.com/>. To increase your transportation options and ensure that you can get to your destination, check out www.Way2Go.org. And view the newly released Bus videos! Multiple videos will show how to ride the bus using a wheelchair and even how to attach a bike to the bus.

Submitted by Cynthia Kloppel, Mobility Program Specialist, DSS

2012 Halloween Costume Contest



The winners are.....

Group



"Yolanda Vega, Lil Bit of Luck Man, and the Lottery Ball Crew" Yolanda-Mark Patterson, #11-Svetla Borovska, #8-Katy Prince, Lil Bit o Luck Man-Greg Potter, #29-Angie White, #42-Cattyann Campbell, #00-Kim Moore, #47-Karen Simpson, #4-Debi Friends, #69-Iretta Ellis (missing: Pat Nowakowski) (ITS Department)

Individual



"Mad Man" - David Weiner, DSS

See all the great entries at:

<http://www.tompkins-co.org/countycorridors/>

Thank you to all the participants who "dressed" for the contest, to all who voted, and to the Vending Committee for providing the awards (\$20.00 Group and \$10.00 Individual).

Department News



County Clerk/DMV

Commissioner of Motor Vehicles Visits Ithaca Office

By Aurora R. Valenti, Tompkins County Clerk

Honorable Barbara J. Fiala, Commissioner of the New York State Department of Motor Vehicles, spent the morning of Wednesday, September 19, 2012, with the Tompkins County Clerk and her staff. Commissioner expressed her approval and complimented us on the construction and decoration of our offices at 301 Third Street in Ithaca, and the manner in which business is conducted there.

During the course of her visit, the Commissioner was shown the "vault," in which room is contained our plate shredder. The photo shows Commissioner Fiala about to insert an outdated license plate into the shredder, which sounds like a large machine chewing its contents.



The visit was the first in a series of visits to be made by Commissioner to County offices in the Southern Tier, under the direction of Governor Andrew Cuomo.

Highway Division

The Highway Division welcomes *Jason Hall*, Motor Equipment Operator, and *Jim MacDuffee*, Temporary Motor Equipment Operator.

Department of Social Services

The Office of Child Support at DSS is one of the groups of County employees who adopted a family this season through the Salvation Army's "Adopt a Family Program." Darlene Robison says, "We are happy to share our willingness to participate with other County employees and departments." Darlene notes that Catholic Charities also accepts last-minute sponsors for participation in this program.



Kudos Korner

Thank you...to Foster Care Staff and Parents!

DSS Foster Care staff and foster parents are responding to the need we have in our Tompkins County for more foster and adoptive homes. They are out in the community volunteering their time to recruit additional foster and adoptive homes.

I'd like to express my appreciation to Tompkins County Homefinding staff Debbie McKane, Judy Voorheis, Tim Stephenson, and Heather Wise, and foster parents Tabitha Owens, Thomas Wright, and Don and Cheryl Moore. The Moores are pictured here at the Lansing Harbourfest. When I asked Mr. Moore if he would allow us to put this picture in *County Corridors*, he said, "Go right ahead, anything we can do to help kids. It's what we are all about."

We have a great group of staff and foster and adoptive parents here. Most foster parents give a considerable amount of time and consideration to becoming foster parents before they finally commit, so getting the word out is so important. If you, or people you know, are thinking about the possibility, call Judy Voorheis at DSS at 274-5266 or check out our webpage at www.tompkins-co.org/dss/childsvcl.

Maryanne Banks, DSS

Lansing Harbourfest



VENDING COMMITTEE

"VENDS"

Post-Trip Information:

NYC Spring Trip, June 2nd – around 45 passengers enjoyed a day in the City.
"Titanic", Musical at the Hangar Theatre, July 14th – was attended by 39 people.
Darien Lake, August 18th – was enjoyed by 51 people.
NYC Winter Trip, December 1st – 47 people had a great time in the City.

The Vending Committee also contributed the following money:

- \$750.00 toward the Annual Golf Tournament
- \$30.00 prize money for the Halloween Costume Contest
- \$5.00 per person for holiday parties
- Bereavement memorial donations

Website:

Don't miss out on a chance to enjoy one of the trips or events being scheduled in 2013. Please remember to visit our website, on the employee Intranet (click on the link under "Events/News"), or www.tompkins-co.org/employee_only/VendingCommitteeNews.pdf. Be sure to visit regularly for updated information on all trips, news, etc.

Please see your Department Representative (names listed on the website) to share other ideas.



Seven Ways to Confuse Santa Claus

1. Instead of milk and cookies, leave him a salad, and a note explaining that you think he stand to lose a few pounds.
2. While he's in the house, go find his sleigh and write him a speeding ticket.
3. Leave him a note, explaining that you've gone away for the holidays. Ask if he would mind watering your plants.
4. While he's in the house, replace all his reindeer with exact replicas. Then wait and see what happens when he tries to get them to fly.
5. Keep an angry bull in your living room. If you think a bull goes crazy when he sees a little red cape, wait until he sees that big, red Santa suit!
6. Build an army of mean-looking snowmen on the roof, holding signs that say "We hate Christmas," and "Go away Santa."
7. While he's in the house, find the sleigh and sit in it. As soon as he comes back and sees you, tell him that he shouldn't have missed that last payment, and take off.

Classified Ads

Dog Dayz Inn

A place where your dog feels "at home".

Located in North Lansing
Sandy Strehle, 315-497-3467
dogdayzinn@yahoo.com
<http://www.dogdayzinn.com>



FOR SALE – Gas dryer, Kitchen Aid, excellent working condition, \$100.00. Please call (607) 272-8988 evenings or weekends.

FOR SALE – Jotul Wood/Coal Stove - \$200.00 (this is a smaller stove, works well). Please call Skip at (607) 347-6721.

FOR SALE – 2002 Mazda Protégé hatchback - 5 speed, sun roof, front wheel drive, new battery & alternator, decent tires, 120K, \$1,600.00 OBO. Please call Skip at (607) 347-6721.



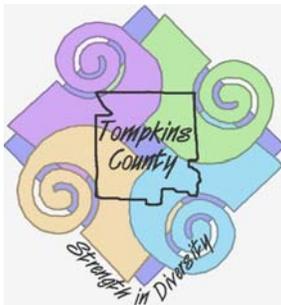
Custom Embroidery for everyone's needs. We work with other businesses, organization/groups, and the general public. We can use your design or work together to come up with a design. It's a great way to advertise your business or organization, or if you just need a gift for someone. We embroider on clothing, hats, bags, and much more.

Thank You!

From Karen Johnson, Health Department

A huge "thanks" to all our co-workers and friends for your thoughts, prayers, cards, support, and gifts after our accident. Kevin continues to heal and misses the camaraderie of the workplace. You are all very much appreciated!

Karen & Kevin Johnson



Inclusion Through Diversity

THE CORRIDORS TEAM

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Gerri Lockwood, Highway

Editorial Staff

Maureen Reynolds, County Clerk's Office

Katrina Schickel, COFA

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Marcia Lynch, Public Information

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All County Employees and Retirees

Interested in joining the Corridors team?

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