

# County Corridors

A Newsletter for  
Tompkins County  
Employees and Retirees  
March 2009  
Volume 21, Number 1

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

## Spring Clean Your Exercise Routine

By Theresa Lyczko, Health Department

It was 10° F this early March morning. Thoughts of gardening or taking a summer hike on the Finger Lakes Trail didn't surface when I looked at the thermometer outside the kitchen window. But there is a hopeful sign – the days are getting longer and warmer days can't be far behind. And I want to be ready to enjoy what the spring and summer weather has to offer.

"We all know we should exercise," a friend said recently, "but who does?" I know many people who are committed to an exercise routine. But I have to admit a routine can become tiresome. A few raindrops or snowflakes are enough to derail your best intentions. And setting aside time for physical activity because you "should" or because you want to be "healthy" often doesn't do it.

Think about setting a goal. What are some of your favorite spring and summer activities? Do you often wish that you had the stamina or energy to do them better? Maybe it's taking a longer bike ride with your children or grandchildren. You may want to be a more vigorous volleyball player and be competitive with your brother at the annual family picnic. Walking 3 miles instead of the usual 1 mile on your favorite trail could be your goal. There may be gardening or house projects that would be easier to do and would reduce the risk of injury if you were more physically fit.

Keep your goal in mind when you're reluctant to go on your scheduled walk or lift your hand weights. Set a time and stick to it. Decide how you'll increase the time you spend on physical activity and types of activity you'll do to achieve your goal. Tell friends and family of your plan and enlist their support.

One of your goals may be to be able to wear your favorite summer dress or pair of shorts again this year. Increased physical activity will help and so will reducing the number of calories you consume. That was proved in a study funded by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute (NHLBI) and published in the New England Journal of Medicine on February 26, 2009. "Heart healthy diets that reduce caloric intake – regardless of differing portions of fat, protein or carbohydrate – can help overweight and obese adults achieve and maintain weight loss," NHLBI said. On average, participants lost 13 pounds at 6 months and maintained a 9 pound loss over 2 years. Reducing calories is easier than you may think even if you're not part of a controlled study. Controlling portion sizes is the first step.



## "Spring" into Healthy

Spring presents the perfect opportunity to begin a walking exercise program and enjoy the fresh spring air at the same time.

This is something I keep saying that I would like to resume (something I used to enjoy), but haven't done for several years.



In January 2008, after months of trying, my daughter finally convinced me to join Weight Watchers (losing weight is also something I knew I needed to do, but not something I was really interested in putting any effort into.) Keeping in the back of my mind the Employee Wellness Committee's reimbursement program for weight management (they also have one for fitness membership or activity programs – reimbursement applications are available on the intranet), I continued attending the meetings and was pleasantly surprised how easy the program really was for me to follow, without the "effort" that I was dreading, and how well it actually worked for me.

Well, I didn't get back into walking until later in the spring last year, but one year and more than 110 pounds lighter, I am really looking forward to getting out there this spring! I continued my walks on a treadmill over the winter, but nothing beats a walk outside, especially with my neighborhood friends. Not only are we getting in great exercise with a goal of a healthier lifestyle, it also gives us a chance to visit with each other, and they are a wonderful support group! Why don't you give it a try?

Submitted by Geri Lockwood, Highway

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Notes From the County Administrator:

## Thanks For the Help This Winter!

As spring finally arrives, I'd like to recognize some of our own who are called upon to go above and beyond when winter hits.

The men and women of our County Highway Department did a great job keeping our roads clear and safe during a very difficult winter. A community like ours, where a hilly terrain can make snow and ice especially treacherous, depends on the people who drive our snowplows and keep them running. Fortunately, we have great people in our Highway Division who work long hours and in incredibly difficult conditions to make things better for the rest of us.

Our Facilities crews were often waking up as some of us were going to bed, making sure our parking lots and sidewalks were plowed before we got to work, and that our heating systems were operating.

Other County employees stepped up this winter, too, including those who helped process a record number of HEAP applications, ensuring that people of modest means would get through the winter with heat and lights. By all accounts, our employees did that crucial job in good cheer and with absolute dedication to the people they were serving.

The work done by our Home Health Aides and our colleagues in the human service agencies who help the homebound elderly is especially important in the winter, when their clients are even more isolated and dependent on our visits.

And anyone who has passed a Sheriff's Deputy assisting a stranded motorist in the middle of a howling blizzard knows that the always difficult work of our law enforcement professionals is even more difficult in winter.

To all of them, and many more of our County team who help us and our community get through the winter, thank you. You did a great job.

- Joe Mareane



Continued From Page 1

### Exercise

Here are a few examples:

- 4 slices of 14" pepperoni pizza (cut in 12 slices) = 920 calories, but  
2 slices of 14" pepperoni pizza (cut in 12 slices) = 460 calories
- 40 tortilla chips = 400 calories, choose to eat only,  
10 tortilla chips = 100 calories
- Large 4 oz. bagel, plain (usual size of bagel) = 320 calories  
1.5 oz. bagel, plain = 120 calories

Contact the Health Promotion Program for a copy of "Portion Distortion" that illustrates more examples of portion sizes:

An incentive may help you to achieve your physical activity or weight management goal. Join a fitness facility, participate in an organized fitness class, join Weight Watchers and you can receive a reimbursement from the **Tompkins County Employee Wellness Committee**. Join or participate for a continuous 6 month or 12 month period. After completion of that period, submit your proof of payment with the reimbursement form and you'll receive a reimbursement of \$100 for a 6 month or \$200 for a 12 month membership or participation. Send the form and proof of payment to Theresa Lyczko at the Health Department. Reimbursement forms can be downloaded from the County website. Go to the employee intranet and click on "forms".

### Solid Waste Staffers Vie for Weight Loss Prize

Inspired by the weight loss TV show 'The Biggest Loser', some Solid Waste employees have started their own weight loss contest. The contest runs for 10 weeks with weekly check-ins.

Participants check their weight at home and follow a calculation to come up with their weekly percent of weight loss. By using the percent of weight loss even the smallest participant has a chance to win.

A weekly email is sent with the week's biggest loser, health tips and recipes. Each participant donated \$10 each and the biggest loser at the end of the 10 weeks will receive the pot. Next time we may come up with an alternative incentive.

There are seven participants and we have collectively lost about 17 percent of our weight.

Submitted by Jackie Maloney, Solid Waste

## The Airport's "Green" Master Plan

By Bob Nicholas, Airport

With the demolition of the 1940s-era hangar/office complex in 2008, the transformation of the Ithaca Tompkins Regional Airport is almost complete. Over the past sixteen years we have replaced the old terminal building, general aviation facility, and private aircraft hangars. We have expanded the CFR building three times, relocated the parallel taxiway to meet new safety standards, and reconfigured the runway to comply with another safety mandate.

With all our basic infrastructure needs taken care of, the airport is about to embark on a ground-breaking initiative that seems certain to attract a lot of attention on the national airport scene - a "green" Master Plan.

Master plans are not new, of course. Airports have been doing them for decades. The essential master plan requires a qualified planning consultant to do a current airport inventory, to then calculate what needs the airport will have over the next 20 years, and then develop various options to meet those needs. The process involves detailed assessments of how these options are likely to impact the environment and how those impacts can be mitigated. Finally, the consultant comes up with a plan to finance the development. In the normal course of events most of that financing comes from federal and state grants that are generated from taxes on fuel and airline tickets.

Even though most of our infrastructure needs appear to have been met, the FAA still wants to know what our capital development plans are for the next 20 years and how the airport plans on spending its federal "entitlement" grants, even if it's just for eligible equipment purchases and overhauling the existing runway, taxiways, and ramps.

As we deal with and observe what's happening in the world, it is impossible to ignore the dire warnings about climate change. As I read industry magazines, particularly articles about European airports, I note how many are pursuing remedies with as much urgency as they can muster. After reading about one initiative after another, I began putting the articles in a folder to discuss with the airport's engineering consultant (C&S Companies of Syracuse). From those discussions C&S came up with the idea for a green master plan. This new vision for a master plan will attempt to integrate green and sustainable principles and ideas into the development plan for the airport in the long term. That could include finding opportunities to change the way we manage some of our operations, looking at the materials and products we use at the airport, and even how we generate energy to run our facilities. The technologies and strategies to become greener are numerous, and we are excited about finding the right solutions to apply to our airport.

Because the idea of a green master plan is new, and because we will be asking the FAA to pay for it, there will be some hard negotiating ahead of us. The FAA traditionally pays for all the basic components of a master plan, but this one is going places the FAA has never been before. The selling job may be at a level many steps above those we usually deal with, but given the new administration's public commitment towards improving the environment, we are hoping to find a receptive ear.



That's the first hurdle. Beyond that, once we have identified these initiatives to drastically reduce our carbon footprint, we need to find ways to finance those infrastructure and equipment changes.

Converting existing buildings to become more environmentally friendly is much more difficult than building from scratch. Part of our challenge is executing that conversion while the buildings are being used and doing so in a cost-effective manner. Since the fuel in our gasoline and diesel tanks is co-mingled with our tenants' fuel, the tenants have to agree to be part of the solution. And of course, because we have a symbiotic relationship with our tenants, the entire project has to be a cooperative effort.

All this will be done in an environment where green initiatives are cropping up almost daily with many of them yet to be tested for the long haul.

C&S Companies are always striving for excellence and make it a point to be on the cutting-edge of new sustainability ideas. As part of an effort to get community buy-in, they approached the Cornell community, making contact with two professors with expertise in the field. This has resulted in having our green master plan become part of two separate class projects. We have even discussed some wonderfully new carbon-neutral initiatives with a prize-winning airport in Europe.

So we begin this project with some trepidation, but with much excitement and confidence that this is the right thing to do. We are hopeful we will not only exceed the county's own plan for reducing carbon emissions but set an example for other airports in the United States to follow.

**Sustainability Spotlight:**

**Tompkins County Solid Waste Division “Going Green”**

*By Kat McCarthy, Solid Waste*

After receiving a ReBusiness Partners waste assessment in February of 2006, a team of employees at Tompkins County Solid Waste Division formed to identify additional opportunities for practicing the 4Rs (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Rebuy) in the office. Since its inception, the group has overcome numerous challenges and achieved multiple successes. Some of the team’s accomplishments include distributing recycling bins throughout the building, reducing paper towel waste in the bathrooms, providing onsite composting education, and focusing on scrap paper reuse.

Recognizing that there was additional room for improvement, the team began to look at options to further reduce waste. This resulted in the purchase of “hanging basket” trash cans that are significantly smaller than the current recycling bin which it hangs off the side of, and includes a lid. (See photo.)



Through this pilot, the team distributed the bins throughout the office, explaining that the smaller bins could help reduce waste by encouraging staff to think before they throw something away. While exchanging new bins for old trash cans was easy, convincing staff that these new smaller bins were just as effective, was a bit more challenging.

The team solicited and listened to feedback, answered questions, and worked towards developing an effective program that met the office’s

needs. “With a larger recycling bin and a small, lidded trash can, more paper is making it into the recycling bin,” says Leo Riley, “The Facilities Division cleaners also like it because it helps keep food waste out of our offices and saves them time.”

After focusing on trash cans inside the building, the Green Team wanted to understand what waste remained. By conducting some research, the team realized that most items produced were organic waste, including some food, paper towels, and compostable plastics. Working with Facilities Staff, including Barb O’Brien, Ida Besemer, and Ed Teeter, as well as a local composting

company, Cayuga Compost, the team was able to implement a program that features weekly organic waste pick-up in large, covered bins. “Now, instead of throwing away paper towels, waxed soda cups, and meat scraps, we are composting them,” says Margo Umholtz. “This program really has been successful as a result of the high level of interest and participation from Facilities staff and the educational efforts from our Green Team.” Currently, the group is benchmarking program results, and anticipates a 75-85% waste diversion rate as a result of the new program. This will not only reduce waste, but will also reduce the cost associated with the current dumpster service.



From Left to Right, Linnett Short, Kat McCarthy and Nicole Stumpf all from Solid Waste Division, Barb O’Brien, Facilities, Lisa Jehu, Purchasing, Cheryl Nelson, Public Works, Sharon Reagin, Comptrollers.

The Solid Waste Green Team meets regularly to discuss current projects, share feedback from coworkers throughout the office, and brainstorm ideas for further reducing waste, maximizing recycling, and buying green. The current Green Team is headed-up by Margo Umholtz, the office’s Waste Reduction Representative, with support from Ceil Grier, Kat McCarthy, Leo Riley, and Stephanie Egan.

*EPP Vendor Fair – Save the Date*  
Save the date! October 22 is not just another pay day. The Environmentally Preferred Procurement (EPP) sub-committee is planning an EPP Vendor Fair for all County employees. Time and location TBD. Stay tuned for more details.

**TCCOG Health Benefits Study Continues**

The Tompkins County Council of Governments continues to work on a plan to form a health benefits consortium that will provide employees and retirees with health benefits that are the same as, or better than now, but at a lower cost to taxpayers. Savings will be produced by pooling the business of all local governments within the County.

Information sessions for union leadership, retirees and employees will begin in April and continue through the late spring. If you’d like to learn more about this shared services initiative, you can go to the home page of the County’s web site at: [www.tompkins-co.org](http://www.tompkins-co.org) ; click on “Shared Services Health Benefits Study.”

# THE PUZZLE

By Jackie Kippola

R E C Y C R Y B X I B S C H U Y L T G  
C E Y R E T S A W S U O D R A Z A H R  
Y L C T A T I M R E P U C I N A G R O  
L O L Y E R R E T S P M U D C O E E S  
C A S I C A S C O P M O S E N I N N N  
D U M S F L N I T O F I N T R A S T I  
G R E E M D E P R E M E A S C A Y U K  
O N O N D E N O R G S R I A C G K I P  
T O O R S B A A C E I K I W T N X O M  
A P A U L I N M L O A R G N I I I C O  
T N E M N O R I V N E M A R M T S G T  
R R M I K D E B S T E L E O R S O R E  
E U S E R E M E C U D E R E E O T E L  
T I P P P N G R E D U Y L S P P E E C  
O P C A S E L L A Q U U A W A M N N Y  
E E F G N I P P I T A Y A T E O I E C  
M O N R E O C H E H M U N G E C N C E  
O R G N I P M U D L A G E L L I R K R  
F E E M E V A L A I C R E M M O C S T

## What Do I Do With This Stuff? Solid Waste

CASELLA	NINE TO SIX
COMMERCIAL AVE	ORGANIC
COMPOSTING	RECYCLE
DUMPSTER	RECYCLETOMPKINS.ORG
GREEN	REDUCE
ENVIRONMENT	PERMIT
HAULER	REUSE
HAZARDOUS WASTE	TIPPING FEE
ILLEGAL DUMPING	WASTE
LANDFILL	BONUS WORD: NAME OF COUNTY WHERE THE TRASH GOES

If you have comments or suggestions for future puzzles, contact Editor Maureen Reynolds at [mreynolds@tompkins-co.org](mailto:mreynolds@tompkins-co.org) or 274-5431.





**NINETEENTH ANNUAL TOMPKINS COUNTY**

**25-YEAR CLUB DINNER**

The Tompkins County Legislature cordially invites you to join them in honoring this year's inductees into the Tompkins County 25-Year Club. This year's dinner will be held at the Lake Watch Inn 1636 E. Shore Drive, Ithaca on May 28th, 2009. There will be a social hour from 5:30 until 6:30 and a banquet dinner at 6:30 p.m. Please return the **RSVP** with your entrée selection including payment of \$15.00 per person, by **May 1, 2009**. There is no charge for 25-Year Club members and their guest. This year's new inductees

*Frances Armstrong ~ Comptroller*  
*Richard Baker ~ Highway Division*  
*Mitzi Banner ~ Department of Social Services*  
*Patricia Buechel ~ Probation*  
*Dale Gregrow ~ Highway Division*  
*Daniel Kramer ~ Mental Health Department*  
*Michelle Pottorff ~ Legislature*  
*William VanDeMark ~ Highway Division*  
*Lauri Wallenbeck ~ Department of Social Services*

*will attend the 25-Year Club Dinner on Thursday May 28, 2009*

**Entrée Selections**

*Chicken Florentine \_\_\_\_\_*

*Baked Scallops \_\_\_\_\_*

*Three-meat Lasagna \_\_\_\_\_*

*Vegetarian entrée available upon request*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Guest: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to **TOMPKINS COUNTY** and send to:  
Tompkins County Personnel Department  
125 East Court Street Ithaca, NY 14850



## Results are in! City-County United Way Competition

United Way of Tompkins County has announced the results of last fall's City-County United Way Competition. United Way is recognizing those County and City departments who had the greatest increases in the number of staff members contributing during the 2008 United Way campaign.

Ann Colt, United Way's Director of Campaign and Community Relations reports that the winner is:

Tompkins County Administration with a 72.8% increase in participation.

Other County winners are:

Comptroller's Office - 28.6% increase in participation  
Youth Services - 14.3% increase in participation

The winners from the City are:

GIAC - 38.6% increase in participation  
Controller's Office - 20% increase in participation  
Building Department - 10% increase in participation

Ann says, "A very special thank you to all the winners and donors for their generosity throughout the City and County Departments. We will now work on planning the breakfast celebration!"

Winners receive a "thank you" breakfast from the United Way.

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## Cultural Competency Training

By Kit Kephart, DSS

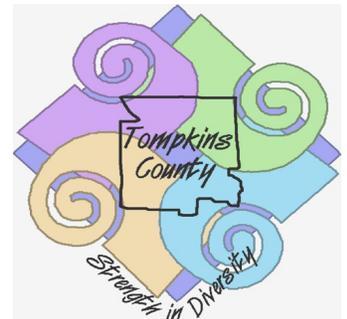
Tompkins County continued its cultural education in February. TFC (Training For Change) Associates, provided the one-day workshop, "Leading In A Culturally Competent Organization" on February 9 and 10 to 45 Tompkins County employees. Kirby Edmonds and Laura Branca trained each group, asking participants to learn in a multifaceted environment. Participants indicated that they had the opportunity both to examine their own values and to get to know others' thoughts and ideas, while engaging with the group.

The purpose of the training is to provide a comprehensive, sustained staff development process for increasing inclusion and cultural competency for all employees. This training is geared to support recruitment and retention efforts, as well as to build and maintain an inclusive climate and culture within departments and among county employees.

Last spring, this training was conducted as a pilot with 24 division and department heads in an abbreviated format. Feedback from that session was good, with attendees saying they came away feeling challenged to think about things in a new way and with a new way to approach their work. In November, the training "Leadership in a Culturally Competent Organization" was conducted for department heads. The training will eventually incorporate talking circles, designed to allow participants to deepen their dialogue and understanding with respect to issues of diversity and inclusion. Looking ahead, the County plans to make this training available to as many employees as possible.

TFC Associates is a local training agency with more than 25 years' experience. Kirby and Laura are committed to this kind of training and approach it from an empowering perspective.

Tompkins County is such a rich and unique area which offers so much to its residents. This training offers employees the opportunity to explore that richness.



## Employee Spotlights

### Andrew Bonavia



Andrew Bonavia is an Assistant District Attorney in the District Attorney's Office, a position he has held for five years.

Andrew responded to the following questions from *County Corridors*:

**What do you do here (your job duties)?**

I assist District Attorney Gwen Wilkinson in many ways, such as drinking her Diet Cokes. I also supply my co-workers with more than their recommended (or desired) daily allowance of sarcasm and dancing, the latter probably due to the Diet Cokes. I also prosecute crimes.

**What do you like best about your job?**

My favorite 70's red-orange colored chair in my office, legal brainstorming with my co-workers to put a case together, and the thrill of the chase for a parking space each morning.

**What do you like least about your job?**

Andy McElwee's visually exhausting ties, not finding a parking space, and the words "SOLD OUT" on the soda machine downstairs.

**What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?**

Why the qualifier "Outside of work?" You were afraid I'd list "work" as my favorite thing to do? Haha! I like hanging out with Andy McElwee when he's not wearing a tie and playing guitar. (I play the guitar. Not the tie-less Andy.)

**If you ran the world, what is the first thing you would do?**

Ice my knees. Even though I run a lot, the world is nearly 25,000 miles in circumference. I'd be tired. After that, I'd require people, including myself, to live in the moment a few hours each day.

### Brenda Jones

Brenda Jones is the Civil Account and Permit Clerk in the Tompkins County Sheriff's Office. She has worked for the County for more than 18 years, starting out in Personnel, then holding the position of Keyboard Specialist in the Department of Social Services (Child Protective Services), Health Department, Probation and Special Services, before joining the Sheriff's Office. Brenda responded to the following questions from *County Corridors*:

**What do you do here (your job duties)?**

I process and serve Civil papers, Orders of Protection, income and property executions, and pistol permits. I also do the purchasing for the Sheriff's Office and coordinate trainings for employees.



**What do you like best about your job?**

The challenge it brings. You can never say it's a dull place to work.

**What do you like least about your job?**

The long hours.

**What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?**

Spend time with family and friends.

### Missy Cooper

Missy Cooper is Administrative Assistant in the Records Department of Tompkins County Mental Health. In 18 years with the County, she has served in the positions of keyboard specialist, account clerk-typist, senior clerk and secretary before entering her current position.

Missy answered the following questions from *County Corridors*:

**What do you do here (your job duties)?**

I supervise the Medical Records Department.

**What do you like best about your job?**

The daily input on the computer.



**What do you like least about your job?**

Filing. It's never-ending in our office!

**What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?**

Racing, snowmobiling, spending time with my friends and family.

**If you ran the world, what is the first thing you would do?**

Lower gas prices forever!

Missy adds, "I enjoy working for Tompkins County. It is very family-oriented and has made for a strong future for me and my family."

## Employee Spotlights



### Karen Fuller

Karen Fuller is Deputy Clerk for the County Legislature

Karen responded to the following questions from *County Corridors*:

#### What do you do here (your job duties)?

Taking minutes of Committee and Legislature meetings, performing research as requested.

#### What do you like best about your job?

The ability to have first-hand knowledge of some of the many discussions, regulations, and/or funding streams (or lack thereof) that will ultimately make a difference to all the residents of the County as well as all of New York State.

#### What do you like least about your job?

No windows where I sit!

#### What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?

My favorite thing to do is primitive rendezvous, reenactments of the period between 1640 A.D. and 1840 A.D., or roughly during the heyday of the North American fur trade. Basically, it is a very different type of vacation, with black powder rifles, tomahawks, knives, etc. We have period tents, equipment, dress in period clothing, and go about the day seeing many of the same folks each year. When we change from our "normal" clothing, all aspects of our lives outside of camp disappear. Individuals from all walks of life participate in the camps.

My children not only enjoy this form of camping, but have learned a great deal of history at the same time. For anyone interested in seeing what this is like, there is going to be a Northeastern Primitive Rendezvous taking place July 11 – 18 in Newark Valley (Bement Billings Farm). There will be black powder shoots, hawk and knife throws, demonstrations in brain tanning, lacksmiths, and much more.

#### If you ran the world, what is the first thing you would do?

Try to find a way to ensure everyone had shelter, food, and necessary medical assistance.

## Highway Highlights...

Submitted by John Lampman, Associate Civil Engineer

### Bridges Reopened



The **School Street Bridge (McLean Road)** in the Hamlet of McLean, was reopened on Monday, November 24, 2008, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by several community members, County staff, and a second-grade class from Cassavant

School. Following greetings from Planning and Public Works Commissioner, Ed Marx, retired Public Works Commissioner, William Mobbs, who oversaw the project at its inception in 1997, opened the ceremony with remarks on improvements provided with the new bridge.

The ribbon was cut by McLean 1<sup>st</sup> Assistant Fire Chief, Kristie Rice, followed by the ceremonial first vehicles: Cassavant School Crossing Guard, Margie Albern, driving George Totman's (former Legislator) "McLean"-licensed Cadillac, and a McLean Fire Truck, driven by Fire Chief, Mike Totman. Following the ceremony, the McLean Women's Auxiliary provided refreshments at the Fire Hall.

The **Banks Road Bridge**, in the Town of Caroline, was reopened on Wednesday, December 3, 2008, with a ribbon-cutting ceremony attended by community members and several County and Town highway employees. After remarks from County Legislator, Frank Proto, and Town Supervisor, Don Barber, the ribbon was cut by surrounding property co-owner, Debra Halpern. Immediately following was the ceremonial first vehicle, a Town of Caroline Highway single-axle truck with plow, driven by employee, Lenny Whittaker.



## Department News

### County Clerk

#### Appointment, Records Officer

County Clerk Aurora R. Valenti announces the appointment of *Shanovah Moodie* as Tompkins County Records Officer, effective January 1, 2009.

Shanovah resides in Ithaca with her six-year-old son, Dyshawn. She was formerly employed by our county Personnel Department, EMS-911, Board of Elections, and Department of Social Services.

### Office for the Aging

Congratulations to planner *Danielle Conte* on the birth of her baby girl, Addison Dec 29th.



### Solid Waste Division

Congratulations to *Paul Cowles* for the marriage of his daughter, Emily Cowles, to Jacob Ehrgott on Saturday, February 7.

### Probation Department

Congratulations to *Erma Peterson* on the birth of her new grandchild, Brian Albert, born on Friday, March 6. He weighed 7 lb. 10 oz. and was 20 inches long.



## Kudos Korner...

### Kim Moore Honored as “Officer of the Month”

Kim Moore of Information Technology Services, was honored by the Ithaca Kiwanis Club in February as the *Frank G. Hammer Officer of the Month*. Kim was recognized for her ongoing technical support to benefit public safety—including valuable assistance related to investigation of the recent death of Deborah Rumsey.

District Attorney Gwen Wilkinson praises Moore’s contributions:

“21st century criminal investigations in Tompkins County require the support and skill of the county ITS office, and never has the importance of their contribution been more evident than in the Rumsey homicide investigation. Kim Moore worked tirelessly, and very late, to get the command center up and running. As all of us in law enforcement well understand, the speedy establishment of a lead desk to organize information in a central location is invaluable. Thanks to Ms. Moore’s dedication the lead desk was operational quickly and, thanks to her skill, it is operating smoothly and efficiently. Our thanks for a job well done. It’s an honor and privilege to work with Kim Moore.”

Congratulations, Kim!

### Shanovah Moodie Recognized as Dedicated Mentor

Records Management Officer Shanovah Moodie was recognized by the County Legislature at its January 20<sup>th</sup> meeting, as Legislature Chair Mike Koplinka-Loehr proclaimed January as *Mentoring Month in Tompkins County*. Shanovah was honored for her service in mentoring local youth through The Learning Web.

“The importance of being a mentor is more than words can express,” Shanovah says. “To know that you can give back, just by lending a helping hand to someone who is in need of guidance or encouragement, is immense. The most satisfying reward of being a mentor is to see the person you nurtured grow and achieve his or her goals. Mentoring is essential because there are so many young people who need someone to assist them in their beliefs and aspirations for what they can achieve. It is the little things that we all do to help one another that make a difference in our communities, which will in turn affect this world.”

Thank you, Shanovah, for your service!



# FUNNY BONES

*The Lighter Side of Tax Season*

## **How do you know you've met a good tax accountant?**

He has a loophole named after him.

A visitor from Holland was chatting with his American friend and was jokingly explaining about the red, white and blue in the Netherlands flag.

"Our flag symbolizes our taxes," he said. "We get red when we talk about them, white when we get our tax bill, and blue after we pay them."

"That's the same with us," the American said, "only we see stars, too."

## **Family Assessment Response: Another Road to Safety**

*By Karen K. Smith, Child Protective Services*

After many months of careful preparation, on January 1, 2009 Tompkins County's Child Protective Services (CPS) began handling reports of possible child abuse or neglect in a new way: the department now selects one of two methods to use in responding to accepted reports. Higher-risk cases are still handled with a traditional investigation, and the new, alternative approach is a "Family Assessment Response" (often abbreviated FAR). This change evolved to develop increased flexibility and effectiveness in responding to families with complex needs.

With a Family Assessment Response, after the children's safety has been evaluated and the family has chosen to participate in this program, the caseworker then teams with the family to help identify family strengths, concerns, and needs. The family leads this partnership process to best support their family's stabilization. Family Assessment Response does not require the caseworker to make a formal decision whether child abuse or neglect occurred, and authorized persons who may legally inquire if a family is listed in the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment will not receive the family's name.

While both tracks focus on ensuring child safety and well-being and both promote permanency within the family whenever possible, Family Assessment Response is non-accusatory and supportive, with the focus on engaging parents to voluntarily participate in services and supports. Some of the underlying assumptions with this approach are that family members themselves are the best experts on their family, and that a less adversarial approach will foster greater family change. The hope is also that with this less confrontational approach, DSS is more likely to be viewed by the family as a helping entity in the future should issues arise that create risk to children.

Over 20 states have been providing this new response to CPS reports for several years. Results in the 11 states that have implemented this change statewide (variously known as differential response, dual response, alternative response, and multiple track) have been positive, showing measurable improvements in many areas, and a positive reaction from families, caseworkers, and community representatives.

Tompkins is one of six counties participating in this New York pilot project, along with Chautauqua, Erie, Onondaga, Orange, and Westchester; we are also participating in the state evaluation of the project. In addition, the project is receiving support from the American Humane Association, the New York State Office of Children and Family Services, the Casey Foundation, and several local groups, agencies, and volunteers, including the Family Life Development Center at Cornell University.

While the Family Assessment Response program has only been in place for a brief time, initial responses from both caseworkers doing FAR and families receiving this response have been mostly positive, along with the growing pains that might be expected when implementing such a major systemic change. It is important to bear in mind that Child Protective Services will still be responding to child abuse and maltreatment reports with an investigation whenever that response is called for, and that child safety is always the primary concern of Child Protective Services, in both a family assessment and a traditional investigative response.

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