

APRIL 2008

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ONE 2 ONE

WITH DIRECTOR NANCY RICHARDSON

About a year ago, I asked readers to send me their favorite sayings and about a half dozen of you did so. I printed the E-mails, clipped my notes about my own sayings to them, and put them in my briefcase to use some month when I thought the time was right for that column.

Well, the time is right. But, there's just one problem; now I can't find the E-mails and notes. And, in an unusual fit of E-mail tidiness, I deleted the notes when I printed them so I cannot find them again. My administrative assistant, Cheryl, is right, of course. The material has to be somewhere and will show up someday, in some file, paper clipped to something else, but for now I must move on without them.

There's probably a saying to cover this situation, like "she who hesitates is lost!" My hesitation led to the misplacement of the material. So, to you who responded, thank you, and I am sorry that I cannot use your submissions in my column.

Although I cannot remember exactly who responded and what they submitted, I have a general recollection of their tone. I remember being struck by how positive and uplifting, yet serious, they all were. The sayings submitted were about making the best of situations, appreciating what we have, not taking things for granted, and other similar, commendable ideas. All of them were great mantras to live by ... you guys are all so "glass half full" types. I, on the other hand, must be a "glass half empty" type if this experience shows anything! My most commonly used sayings are short and...well, I guess you could say they highlight my cynical side.

First, there is the old standard, "be careful what you wish for; you might just get it." For example, here at work, on particularly long days or at most challenging times, I find myself thinking "I want this job; I want this job!" The point is, many, if not all, of the new things we want and get come with some downside. Normally the benefits outweigh the costs, but that does not mean we all don't have those occasions where we say "what did I get myself into." Oh well, "nothing ventured, nothing gained," "no pain, no gain," etc.

My second most frequently used saying is "don't confuse me with the facts, my mind is made up." Of course, I never use this saying to refer to myself as I am infinitely open-minded! It's all those other people I deal with who don't seem to want to know all that I know about an issue. If they listened to me and really understood what I was saying, they would, I am sure, always see things my way and agree

with me. I am sure you, too, have to deal with those same people. Wouldn't life be grand if everyone always saw things my way? Hmm...maybe and maybe not. It might be boring, and there has been that very rare instance where I did not know everything and someone else had a better insight. Maybe I should be careful what I wish for in this area!

My third, and final, saying is my all-time favorite. Those of you who spend time with me likely tire of hearing it, but it seems to apply a lot of the time. "No good deed goes unpunished." Sometimes, some days, it seems that the good things I or DOT do don't quite work out in the warm and fuzzy, everybody's happy way we expected. Let me generally explain a couple examples.

Each year DOT develops a legislative package that includes proposals for law changes that we think are either needed or desirable. Sometimes our proposals are attempts to streamline something we do to make it more reasonable and customer friendly. The next thing you know, some other group wants the same or similar ability in situations that are not so reasonable... the old "slippery slope." We end up faced with giving up on what we thought was a good idea or accepting a broader, bad idea...no good deed has gone unpunished.

Or, we decide as an agency to change the way we do something with

the public, again to make things easier for everyone, only to have people want a bigger change or a different change. My mother's version of this as I was growing up was, "enough is never enough for you, young lady; I give you an inch and you take a mile!" For me they all become good deeds that don't go unpunished.

I guess - I know - I can be a bit of a cynic; some say I can even be sarcastic. Actually, I think and hope my favorite sayings say more about my wit and humor than about my attitude. I certainly don't see myself as someone paralyzed by the fear that if I get a good thing it will become a burden, or as one who thinks others never can teach me something, or that anything good we do will always backfire - that truly would make me a "glass half empty" or pessimistic-type person. I see myself as someone who occasionally likes to lighten the moment and have some fun at work and my commonly used sayings are one way I do that. And, of course, there usually is some truth in them!

So, regardless of what I say, I will continue to wish for new and better things, try to see others' points of view and do the right things and hopefully the "punishment" for my optimism - or yours - will not be too severe. *Always remember, no pain, no gain!*

Nancy

What a winter!

Do you hear that? It's the collective breath of all the snowfighters who worked so hard this winter. These dedicated men and women can finally breathe a sigh of relief now that spring is here.

For all the non-maintenance folks at the DOT, the winter has been harsh, but nothing compared to the days-upon-days of clearing snow and ice accomplished by the DOT's dedicated snowfighters.

According to the bi-weekly report compiled by the Office of Maintenance, statistics for the winter through March 20 are staggering. The total snow/ice hours so far for this winter season were 501,311. That's 162.8 percent of the five-year average. During all those hours, more than 294,000 tons of salt, 15 million gallons of salt brine, and 120,000 gallons of calcium chloride brine were used, all around 150 percent of the five-year average for each commodity. Sand use was over the top with almost 400 percent of the five-year average used this winter.

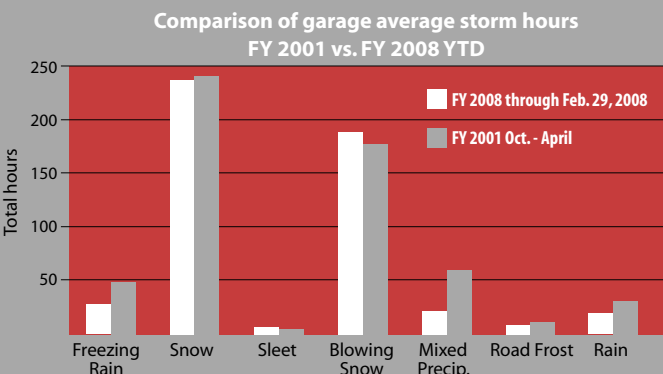
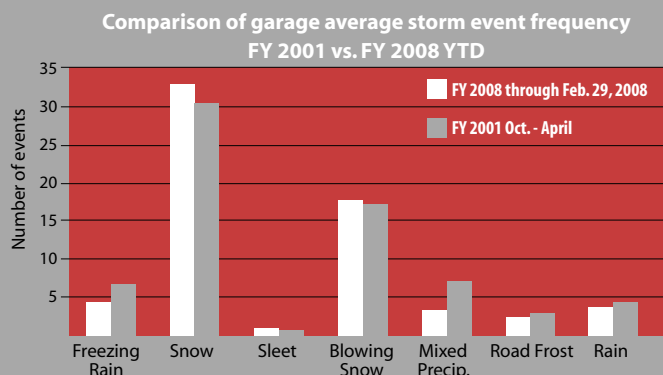
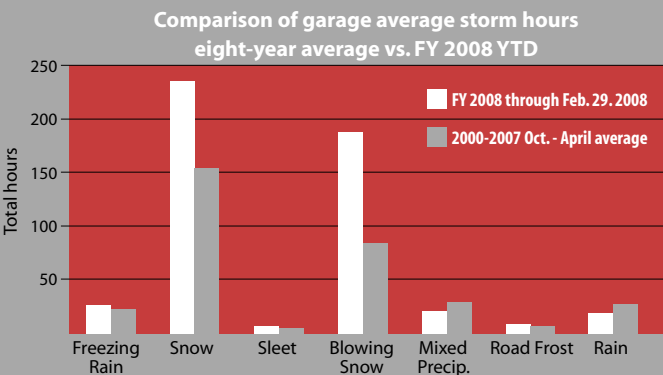
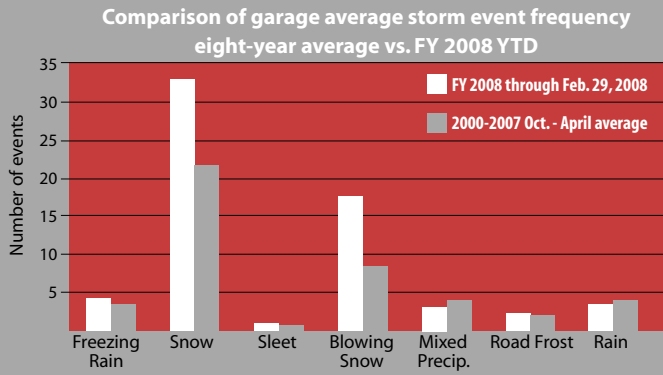
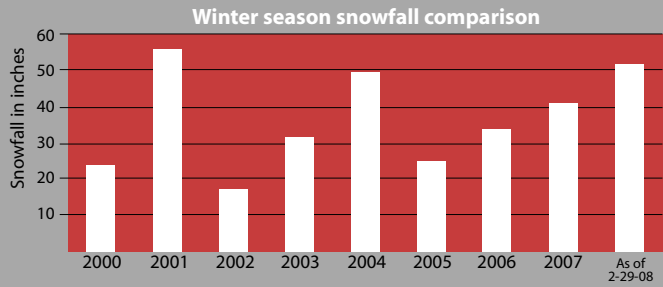
"This has been a tough winter," said Dennis Burkheimer, winter operations administrator. "It seemed like one storm right after another rolled through from late November to early March. The Climatology Bureau of the Iowa Department

of Agriculture and Land Stewardship ranks the period December through February as the 23rd coldest and eighth wettest winter season out of the 135 years of record keeping. The most recent winter with that level of extremes was the winter of 2000-2001, when it was the 17th coldest and seventh wettest in recorded history."

So now that the snow and ice have melted, it's easy street for the snowfighters, right? "Potholes and roadway repairs, that's our next challenge," said Burkheimer. "All the moisture and temperature fluctuations are creating potholes and causing other damage to roadways. We rely on the same folks who have spent weeks plowing snow to now shift gears to spring maintenance activities. On some weeks they are plowing one day and filling potholes the next. Our hats go off to these men and women that provide a valuable service to the state of Iowa."



The employees in the Decorah shop either added or erased the "snow" around this chalkboard snowman during the winter to show what was happening outside. By the middle of March the snowman was buried!



It can happen to you

Driver safety is one of the DOT's goals. DOT staff, particularly those in the offices of Traffic and Safety and Driver Services, work to reduce crashes on Iowa roadways. Driver behavior is one of the key emphasis areas for reducing crashes.

ThinkFirst Iowa is a program offered through Iowa Health System, a community-based organization of physicians, hospitals, civic leaders and volunteers in 11 Iowa cities, focused on helping middle and high school students understand the importance of making good choices and the consequences of bad ones. The program, partially funded by the Governor's Traffic Safety Bureau and AAA Iowa/Minnesota, is in its 20th year and provides about 200 programs annually reaching about 30,000 students each year. ThinkFirst Iowa was also a sponsor group for the Iowa DOT's Sweet Ride on the Safe Side contest, including details of the contest in their presentations. ThinkFirst Iowa's director is Chad Thomas.

Chad Thomas was a typical, active young man. He worked three summer jobs, played baseball and partied harder than he should. On Friday, July 17, 1998, Thomas had just picked up his paycheck and was on his way to baseball practice, when he started to get really sleepy. "I thought to myself that I really need to pull off the road, which was hard for me to admit since I'm as stubborn as most people. I know I nodded off because I woke up driving down the bottom of the ditch parallel to the road at 64 miles per hour where my cruise control had been set. I started to drive out, but before I made it out I hit a field entrance driveway that launched my Ford Explorer 168 feet, the distance of more than half a football field. When the vehicle came down it rolled end over end many times and I sustained a T-10 spinal cord injury among a few other injuries that now seem minor, one punctured lung, one collapsed lung, broken ribs, broken scapula, broken collar bone, and cuts on my neck and left hand that still bear the scars."

Thomas was taken by helicopter to a Sioux City hospital after a short trip by ambulance to Spencer. At the hospital, Thomas was heavily sedated and had a breathing tube inserted down his throat. "I really hated that," he recalls. After one anterior back surgery in Sioux City, Thomas was transferred to Craig Hospital, a rehabilitation center for brain and spinal cord injuries in Denver, Colo. on Aug. 12. He credits Craig

Hospital (rated as one of the leading rehabilitation centers in the country) for helping him regain his sense of a normal life in a wheelchair.

"I had two more surgeries in Colorado on top of therapy for eight hours per day, five days per week. It was very tiring, both mentally and physically," explained Thomas. "I had physical therapy, which consisted of mostly strength training, a wheelchair skills class and occupational therapy to learn how to "live" in my wheelchair. We covered everything from cooking and cleaning around the house to dressing myself while in my wheelchair. I had to learn how to do all of the little daily activities, that most people take for granted, in my wheelchair. We also went through educational classes that included information on topics from American Disabilities Act laws to medical information to how to ask someone to help you get something off the top shelf at the grocery store and every topic in between." Thomas was ready to leave Craig after a long 10-week stay.

After returning home, Thomas had to adjust to his new life in a wheelchair, and the many physical and societal barriers that continue to challenge him daily. "I realized once I arrived home that the hospital was like a sort of safe place for me. Now the reality of what happened began to set in. Some days were not bad, but some days were really hard for about three or four months as my family and I adjusted to a new world."



Photo courtesy of ME&V

Chad Thomas, director of ThinkFirst Iowa uses his personal experience to help young Iowans see the importance of thinking before they act and making good choices.

Within weeks of being released from the hospital, Thomas was driving again in a car equipped with hand-controls. His parents modified their family home to be accessible for his wheelchair. Thomas said the cost of a spinal cord injury is staggering, on average the total bill can reach \$4.5 million throughout the patient's lifetime. Thomas was fortunate to have adequate health insurance that covered most of the medical costs, but the modifications to his vehicle and parent's home were all out-of-pocket expenses.

"Once I got over the initial hump of the reality of the situation things went well, and have advanced to the point in life that I am at now," he said. "I would not change my life for anything in the world, I feel incredibly lucky to be here and truly enjoy life. I feel that I have learned more about the world and people at my young age than most people do in a lifetime. My accident changed my life, but I feel from the bottom of my heart for the better. Craig Hospital opened my eyes to the world and helped me realize that I

Chad Thomas, continued on page 8

Argentine visitors

by Keven Arrowsmith

It's easy to see how snow removal and Iowa go together, especially with the winter we just finished.

How do you think Argentina fits into that picture? It's easy to see the connection when you learn that, on a snowy February day in eastern Iowa, DOT staff had the opportunity to showcase our winter operations to an Argentine delegation of 11 winter maintenance engineers and an interpreter/translator.

The visit was a result of a July 2000 trip to Argentina made by Dr. Wilfred Nixon from the University of Iowa and Rick Nelson of the Nevada DOT. The two traveled to South America to see roads where winter maintenance was a problem. Following that visit, a report was written with suggestions on how Argentine engineers might update their winter maintenance program. Funds were then raised by the engineers to help implement some of the suggested measures and a trip by the Argentine delegation to the United States was planned.

The delegation began their visit with three days in Dr. Nixon's classroom in Iowa City studying winter maintenance. On Feb. 21 the group stopped at the Oakdale garage for a presentation by Travis Nitcher, highway maintenance supervisor, and Terry Zimmerman, garage operations assistant. Bret Hodne, public works superintendent for the city of West Des Moines, was invited on the tour to answer questions about snow-removal techniques for his city. Presentations included information about the structure of the DOT districts, shops, areas of operation, and winter operations at Oakdale. Discussion covered pre-wetting, pre-treating, anti-icing, general shop operations, and training for full- and part-time employees.



Highway Maintenance Supervisor Danny Laing (second from left) talks about snow fence with the group from Argentina.

After the presentations, the group saw a demonstration of the laser-guided wing plow by Mark Turkal, highway technician associate, and his brother, Matt Turkal, transportation aide. Matt began working part-time as a driver for the DOT in October 2007 so he was able to explain the benefits of the guidance system to a new driver. The brothers demonstrated the features of the laser-guided wing plow and answered questions from the group.

The group then toured the garage area and fleet of DOT trucks and snow removal equipment. The presentation and tour provided an up close look at the types of equipment, materials and resources necessary to keep the roads clear in Iowa. The group from Argentina concluded their visit of the Oakdale garage by inviting everyone there to come and visit them in Argentina. Employees were told they were welcome to bring along their snow removal equipment as well when they come for the visit.

"This was an excellent opportunity for us to share information with others who may learn and benefit from our way of doing business," said Nitcher. "They were really interested in listening to us, and we all had a really great time. This is something we do not always have a chance to participate in, and it was a most positive experience and an honor to be asked to showcase our areas."

The afternoon portion of the tour consisted of a visit to the Tipton area. Danny Laing, highway maintenance supervisor, led a bus tour to show how snow was being removed along the sides of the highways to accommodate additional snowfall. Laing took the group to Iowa 130 where snow was being blown with a tractor rear-mount blower. Being able to see DOT snowplows and snowblowers in action generated additional questions from the Argentine guests. Laing then led the group to four different locations on Iowa 130 and Iowa 38 to show the benefits of fences and roadside vegetation in controlling drifting snow.

Argentine visitors, continued on page 8



Lasers installed on DOT trucks

by **Keven Arrowsmith**

The Iowa DOT is constantly looking for ways to make a snowplow driver's job safer, easier and more efficient. Recently, the DOT installed a wing plow guidance laser system on one truck in each district to test the effectiveness of the device.

Jim Dowd with the DOT'S Office of Maintenance said the idea was presented to the snow and ice section of Maintenance as a way to reduce the cost of wing repairs due to hitting obstructions along the roadways.

The laser is mounted at the top of the truck. It emits a green light 60 feet ahead of the plow to show the projected path of the wing plow and, hopefully, avoid collisions with

objects on the side of the road.

District 6 has a laser mounted on a truck based out of the Oakdale maintenance garage. The laser is mounted on a heavy-duty tandem truck that Mark Turkal, highway technician associate, and his brother Matt Turkal, a transportation aide, operate. Both plow operators are quite pleased with the performance of the device. "Matt turns

Matt (left) and Mark (right) Turkal have experimented with the laser technology over the past winter season.

the laser on as soon as he gets into the truck to begin his shift," said Mark Turkal. "The laser really makes it easier for a new operator to determine the path of the wing plow to avoid hitting objects along the side of the roadway." The device was easily installed with the help of Ken DeGood, Oakdale mechanic, and Terry Zimmerman, the shop's garage operations assistant.

At the end of the snow removal season, a survey will be sent to each of the operators of vehicles that used lasers. Operators will be asked to answer specific questions about the laser guidance system. The results will help determine if the systems will be added to more trucks in the future.

◀ *The laser is controlled by a switch in the cab.*



The laser is mounted on the top of the truck.



Mark Turkal adjusts the laser beam.



Sweatshirts for troops

How do you show you care for the troops in Afghanistan?

You send them sweatshirts, of course!

Dianne Eppert, the DOT's receptionist at the central complex in Ames, sent a sweatshirt and a pair of sweatpants to a soldier who is a neighbor of a co-worker. In a thank you E-mail back to the states, this soldier wrote, "Thanks for all the support, you guys from home are great. Love the packages, they are awesome. The sweats and things are great. Keep it up. It's so nice to have support from home."

He followed this thank you with an explanation of the situation in his unit. He wrote "To put it mildly (where I am) is the deadliest spot in the country. Remember we need small sweatpants and large hoodie tops. Thanks so much for everything."

Following this E-mail, Eppert, who lives in Boone, began her mission more urgently than ever. She remembered buying misprinted apparel from a manufacturer in Ames in the past for a very reasonable price. She contacted Sigler Printing to see if they still sold these items. Much to her surprise, the company offered to donate 500 pieces for the troops. After the initial excitement of the donation, Eppert realized it would take \$700 to ship the clothing to the troops. And there was the little matter of her need for emergency surgery.

“Thanks for all the support, you guys from home are great. Love the packages, they are awesome. The sweats and things are great. Keep it up. It's so nice to have support from home.”

U.S. soldier in Afghanistan

"I wasn't sure what I was going to do," said Eppert. "Even though I had never met this soldier, my motherly instincts were pushing me to get these things shipped, but I couldn't do that from the hospital. So I asked my friends to help."



(front row, from left) Dawn Westrum, Dianne Eppert
(back row, from left) Marilyn Straight, Lynette Leopold, Carol Houge

One friend, Marilyn Straight, went to work soliciting funds from friends and encouraged the participation of the Boone` women's Red Hat club, the Dipsey Dames. With \$75 from the Red Hat club, Straight took her message to area businesses and other community groups in Boone, Ogden and Ames.

With Eppert still hospitalized, DOTers Lynette Leopold from the Information Technology Division, Dawn Westrum from Employee Services and Carol Houge from Policy and Legislative Services collected donations at the DOT. Houge not only helped collect donations, she boxed the clothing and hauled the boxes to the post office.

By the time Eppert was released from the hospital, eight boxes had been shipped, each containing 20 shirts. A week later 13 more boxes were on the way to Afghanistan, and the final five boxes were sent Jan. 19. "The soldier we sent these to shared them with his whole unit," she said. "He sent an E-mail almost immediately after he started getting the boxes."

He wrote to Eppert, "We've been getting the packages you are sending. The sweatshirts are a big hit. They are keeping us real warm. Thanks for all you are doing and have done."

Eppert would like to thank everyone at the DOT who donated to the project. "It's times like these that we realize whatever we may be going through here at home, there are brave men and women facing dangers overseas that most of us can't even imagine. A small gesture like sending a sweatshirt might not seem like much, but it means a lot to the troops to know we care and are doing what we can to ease their burdens."

Research lunch and learn



The Research and Technology Bureau is pleased to announce the third program in a series of seminars. Every few months

the bureau plans to provide an opportunity for employees to see and hear about important research being done for the Iowa DOT. Researchers will spend an hour presenting current or recently completed projects, giving employees the chance to see how research results can be implemented into their daily work. The February lunch and learn had a good turnout both centrally and from each district.

Professional development hours (PDHs) are offered for these sessions, which can be used to meet some of the annual requirements for professional engineers.

The next seminar will be Friday, April 11, from noon to 1 p.m. in the Materials east/west conference room with Mike Jackson from the Research and Technology Bureau presenting an update on statewide real-time kinematic-global positioning system (RTK-GPS) implementation. This will be presented as both a live and Web-based seminar. That means anyone at the Iowa DOT (including field offices) who has Internet access will be able to participate without having to travel. An E-mail message will be sent to all employees prior to the seminar with link information.

The following is an abstract of the project that Mike will be presenting:

The Iowa DOT is furnishing and installing a network of GPS base stations at DOT facilities across Iowa. The base stations will transmit satellite data to servers at the DOT's data center in Ames via the DOT's wide area network (WAN). Vendor-supplied RTK-GPS network software will process data from multiple receivers to compute appropriate corrections to provide survey-grade accuracy. The RTK-GPS network software will possess the ability to compensate seamlessly for the loss of data from any base station(s) in the network. Corrections for any location in the state will be sent to end users via commercial cellular telephone network(s), and will be accessible to all public and private entities, independent of rover manufacturer, who are registered users with the DOT.

If you have any questions, please contact Mark Dunn, mark.dunn@dot.iowa.gov or 515-239-1447.

Chad Thomas, continued from page 4

have nothing to complain or pout about. On days that I start feeling sorry for myself the best way to feel better was to look at the patients around me. There was always someone in a worse situation. It really helped to put things in perspective."

Although his wheelchair will forever be a part of his life, Thomas remains very active. "I play wheelchair basketball; water-ski and downhill ski, both called sit-skiing; hunt and fish. I went on RAGBRAI a couple of years ago and plan to do more this year. I am lucky because I still have the use of my upper body, which gives me the ability to still participate in most of the activities that I did before my accident I just have to find a different way to do them through adaptive equipment," he said.

As director of ThinkFirst Iowa, Thomas spends his time speaking to students. "I travel around Iowa and talk to middle and high-school students about the importance of thinking before you act. That includes wearing seat belts, not drinking and driving, wearing helmets, checking water depth before diving, and avoiding violent situations.

To learn more about ThinkFirst Iowa, visit www.thinkfirstiowa.org.

Argentine visitors, continued from page 5

"The group seemed very impressed with the results of our snow fence placement and all of the deep snow," said Laing. "They took a lot of pictures and were very excited about the tour. It was a pleasure to have the group in our area, and they were very friendly. It was a great experience for them to see as much as they could about our snow operations, and have a chance to look at our garages and equipment. I would welcome them back anytime and thank everyone who made this tour possible."

Alejandro Magaz is an engineer from the Los Andes Region of Argentina. Magaz was impressed with the DOT presentations and tour. "We selected Iowa as a state to visit because of your knowledge of dealing with ice and snow," said Magaz. "Our workers have different challenges when it comes to snow removal. Imagine trying to remove snow and ice at elevations of 10,000 plus feet while a small city of cars is backed up behind you."

The Argentina delegation was very impressed with the Iowa DOT, its staff and its snow removal equipment. Many did not realize that the plows came off of the trucks so they could be used year round. Everyone was in agreement that it was a great experience to be able to exchange information about snow removal. The group then traveled to Kansas, Colorado, Nevada, and California before heading back to Argentina.



Steve Steel

Materials Employee of the Year

Steve Steel, materials technician 4 in the soils section, was recently honored as the 2007 Materials Employee of the Year.

A nominating committee chose Steel, a 36-year DOT veteran, because of his dedication to detail, testing knowledge and skill, professionalism, and work ethic. They praised Steel for the computer programs he has developed and his efforts to improve the test data recording as technology changed. Included in his accomplishments are computer applications developed to calculate the soils test results, print the test reports and store the data for use by the Office of Design.

Steel said he was overwhelmed by the honor. "I really didn't expect this," he said. "I have always thought of myself as a team player and didn't aspire to individual awards."

In his 36 years at the DOT, mostly in the soils section of the Materials lab, Steel has seen many changes in the amount of work his section performs and way technology has enhanced the testing process. Making sure the designers have accurate information on the soil characteristics is very important. The soil is the foundation of the roadway, and designers need to know what they are working with to make the safest and most long-lasting design. "Years ago there were 20 people in the soils section," explained Steel. "We were doing a lot of work on the interstate system and other roads. As the work has shifted more to maintenance from new construction, our section is down to three people."

Steel says that, like everything else, computers have changed the way the technicians in his section do business. "The testing procedures have basically stayed the same, but the way we record the data is all different," he said.

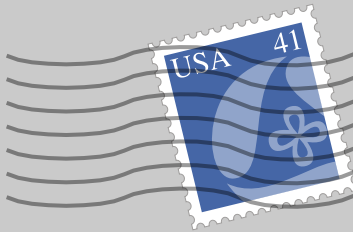


Shoe shine?



For the past 20 Novembers Noe Villarreal, highway technician associate in the Swea City shop, has organized a taco dinner fund-raiser to supply kids in north Iowa with toys for Christmas. Working alongside Noe was his wife, Monica. Now Monica is going out on her own goodwill mission with the couple's church to help children in Tanzania this summer. Noe said, "I'm very proud of Monica wanting to take this mission trip, and I want to do everything I can to help her."

Never short on ideas, Noe gathered equipment necessary to shine shoes and has been getting the word out to anyone who will listen that for \$5, you too can have shiny shoes. Since the market for shoe shines is fairly limited in Swea City, Noe is branching out. If anyone is interested in the Villarreal's charity work, please contact Noe at 515-272-4295.



Kudos!

These are letters that have been submitted to the editor. They may have been edited for length and continuity.

To: Nancy Richardson, DOT director
From: Ted H. Cate

I'm writing this letter to thank you and your staff, especially Richard Michaelis, for your prompt response to the concerns of the citizens of Spencer in regard to the lack of a railing on the east barrier of our new bridge. The city council approved the contract amendment at their Feb. 18 meeting. I look forward to the improvement, and I'm sure it will save a life or two during the life expectancy of the new bridge. Thank you very much.

(Editor's note: The bridge Mr. Cate refers to is in Clay County on U.S. 18/71 over the Little Sioux River in Spencer. The DOT completed the replacement of this bridge and incorporated a 10-foot trail on the west side and a 5-foot sidewalk on the east side. The east side of the bridge was designed properly for the intended use (sidewalk). Community members were concerned about the height of railing between the sidewalk and the traffic as bicyclists use the sidewalk in addition to pedestrians. The DOT agreed to share with the city the costs to place a 12-inch railing on top of the 30-inch concrete barrier to provide a 42-inch high barrier separating the sidewalk from the traffic.)

To: Governor Chet Culver
From: Michael Krakowiak, Cove, Texas

I'm a Department of the Army civilian employee visiting your state on business and attending a class in Camp Dodge. I've been here for a week now, and I just wanted to let you know how much I've enjoyed your state. I'm staying in Johnston at the Stoney Creek Inn, I've attended Saint Theresa's Catholic Church, and have visited many businesses here, from a barber shop to breakfast at the Machine Shed, and I just want you to know how friendly and polite everyone has been. Your city is very clean, and I compliment your Department of Transportation on their excellent job of clearing the snow this past week (Feb. 4-8). I have truly enjoyed my time here and look forward to the rest of my stay as I'll be here for the remainder of February. I can truly say I would have no problem relocating to Iowa, if the opportunity presented itself. Thank you for all that you and your staff do.

To: Our DOT State of Iowa Servants
From: Chuck and Jan Woods, Gold Star Parents

We appreciate your efforts in the new processes you must have set up to make these Gold Star License plates available to families such as ours. As most Iowans have, over the past four decades I've dealt with your public servants and have yet to meet an unkind person. My latest positive experience was with Desiree this morning in your Ankeny DOT office. She was most pleasant and helpful; again showing compassion for us Gold Star families in her unique way. Please let her know how much we appreciate her service to our state.

(Editor's note: The Woods' son Eric was killed in combat in Iraq. They applied for a Gold Star license plate and were assisted by Desiree Burrows, information technology support worker 2 in the Office of Vehicle Services.)

To: Gwen Ballard, Office of Right of Way
From: Glenn Peterson, Kitchens Plus, Waterloo

Debbie and I wanted to personally thank you for your help in guiding us through the acquisition of the excess land next to our shop on Rainbow Drive. Although we have never officially met, after five years of phone communication and letters, we feel that we are old friends. We are aware that you and the DOT have much more pressing matters than to deal with a small business such as ours, but you always returned our calls promptly and have guided us through the red tape with the Department of Natural Resources for test wells, etc. You deal with acquisitions and disposals much larger and most likely more important than our small project, yet we never felt that we were not the most important project that you were dealing with as you spoke to us. It is very reassuring that the State of Iowa has people like you to help a small business like ours to grow. Again, thank you for all your help and be encouraged to keep up the good work!

(Editor's note: Gwen Ballard is a right-of-way agent 3 in the property management section of the Office of Right of Way.)

To: Brian Morrissey, District 5 engineer
From: L.D. Morrison, Fairfield

Thank you for the outstanding job you are doing with the highways. Keeping them open is very helpful. Smoothing the bridge approaches when the highway depresses or the bridge raises is very good.

To: Nancy Richardson, DOT director
From: Jeff Franzen, Motor Vehicle Enforcement

I want to share a personal story with you and tell you something you already know, that we have some very good employees here. One such employee is Dawn Westrum. Recently our family was dealing with two problems at the same time (see article on page 16). My daughter, Jessica, who survived an anonymous bone marrow transplant after being diagnosed with leukemia in 2002, relapsed this past November. After she was admitted to the hospital, we learned that her Wellmark policy was not covering her as it had back in 2002. After making several calls to Wellmark and getting nowhere, I called Dawn. After several tension-filled weeks, the insurance coverage problem was resolved, thanks to her work and persistence. At the time this insurance problem happened, I did not have the emotional strength to fight with Wellmark over a coverage issue. Dealing with a daughter's leukemia was enough at that time. The good news today is that Jessica's leukemia is in remission, and thanks to Dawn's help, Jessica's insurance problems are resolved.

(Editor's note: Dawn Westrum is a human resources associate in the Office of Employee Services.)

To: Iowa DOT
From: Mike Speed

I have wanted to compliment those who maintain U.S. 65 from Indianola to Des Moines for quite awhile. I travel that road most days and I believe it is the best maintained road I ever travel on. I know this winter is very trying on them, but they have done a great job. Please thank those responsible for taking care of this road.

(Editor's note: U.S. 65 from Indianola to Des Moines is maintained by the Martensdale and Carlisle shops.)

To: Iowa DOT
From: Trudy Crawford

The snowplow drivers that service Iowa 5 in Warren and Marion counties do a fantastic job! Recently, we had a concern, and Rhonda Giebelstein in claims management and the folks in the Carlisle garage had it dealt with in no time. Thank you Rhonda and the folks in the Carlisle garage!

(Editor's note: Iowa 5 in Warren and Marion counties maintained by the Carlisle shop.)

Interstate memorabilia collector alert



I-29 south of Sioux City, April 30, 1959

Want to take part in preserving Iowa DOT history? Lynn Purcell of the Office of Media and Marketing Services was recently given a partial set of interstate medallions by Ed O'Connor, retired DOT engineer. Purcell plans to have the commemorative items framed and donate them to the DOT, but the collection is incomplete. If you have one of the metal plates from I-129, I-80 N, I-480 or I-380, please contact Purcell at 515-239-1730. The DOT will be placing the names of donors on a plaque near the medallions.



Family happenings

District 3

Marybeth Banta



Rich Michaelis, District 3 engineer, retired Thursday, Feb. 21, 2008, after more than 22 years of service. Michaelis was honored with two coffees, one in Ames Feb. 13 and another at the District 3 Office Feb. 20.

Michaelis, a native of Kansas and graduate of Kansas State University, became enamored with construction at a very early age. His family farmed and had an excavation business. Michaelis learned to operate heavy machinery before he ever got his first driver's license.

Hired right out of college by the Iowa State Highway Commission (ISHC) as an engineer-in-training in January 1971, Michaelis was one of 16 new ISHC engineers to complete the 18-month career training that included time spent learning development, planning, and operations, gaining experience in the district and field offices. During his training, Michaelis was able to share some office time with his new bride, Dianna, an employee at the time in the Office of Contracts.

Once properly trained by the ISHC, Michaelis tested for his professional engineering license in Iowa. He then left the ISHC to become the Union County engineer and then on to be the engineer in Carroll County.

Michaelis returned in July 1985 as District 3 planner to what had become the Iowa DOT. He was promoted to district development engineer in 1998 and district engineer in 2000.

An avid airplane buff, Michaelis spent many hours in his younger years behind the controls of a Piper Cherokee. While Michaelis expressed no immediate retirement plans, all the District 3 employees wish him well in his future endeavors.

Design

Judy Lensing



Ryan Miller, transportation engineer intern, and his wife, Kristy, are the proud parents of a baby girl. Addyson Rayn was born Feb. 13 weighing 7 pounds, 3 ounces and measuring 20 inches in length. Baby Addyson joins proud big brother, Caden, 3. The family is doing well and thanks everyone for their thoughts and prayers.

In Memory

LeRoy M. Bigelow, 77, of Charles City, died Wednesday, Feb. 20, at the Floyd County Medical Center in Charles City. Bigelow was born June 7, 1930, at Bassett, the son of Orlo and Marie (Springer) Bigelow. He graduated from Charles City High School in 1949. LeRoy proudly served in the United States Air Force during the Korean Conflict. On Sept. 14, 1953, he was united in marriage to Mary Anne Foley at Saint Patrick's Catholic Church in Nevada. In 1955, they moved to Charles City. Bigelow retired from the Iowa Department of Transportation in September 1992. He was a member of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church and had served as treasurer of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. His interests included reading, working on family genealogy, collecting postcards, attending auctions and spending time on the computer. Bigelow took special interest in his grandchildren and looked forward to spending time with them. Living family members include his wife, Mary Bigelow of Charles City; four children, Denise (Loren) Goodrich of Boulder, Colo.; Nancy (Bruce) Biekert of Nashua; Jolene (Mike) Gesing of Postville; and Bill (JoEllen) Bigelow of Urbandale; five grandchildren, a step-granddaughter, and several nieces and nephews. He was preceded in death by his parents; a brother, Raymond Bigelow; and sister, LeOra McFate.

Passwords are the key

The Iowa DOT provides employees who regularly use state computer equipment with up-to-date technology and information on how to protect from unauthorized use of workstations by others. While the DOT provides the technology, it is up to you to use it, including locking your workstation when you are not seated at the keyboard.

We all want to trust our co-workers, but the reality in any organization the size of the Iowa DOT is that you need to take some basic steps to protect yourself.

The Information Resources Security Policy, PPM 030.11, states:

1. If only one person uses the workstation, the workstation must be locked (either manually or through a password enabled screen saver) when the user leaves the workstation unattended. At the end of the work shift, the user must log off all systems.
2. If the workstation is shared, the user shall log off when finished using the workstation.

The first step when locking your computer is to create and use effective passwords. Creating a password and then writing that password on a piece of paper stuck to the side of your monitor is not protection. To be safe, create a password that is a minimum of eight alphanumeric characters. Microsoft offers these suggestions on its Web site.

What makes a strong password

To an attacker, a strong password should appear to be a random string of characters. The following criteria can help you create a strong password:

Make it lengthy. Each character that you add to your password increases the protection that it provides many times over. The technology used at the DOT will synchronize your Windows and mainframe passwords. The ideal length for this password is eight characters.

Combine letters, numbers and symbols. The greater variety of characters that you have in your password, the harder it is to guess. *For DOT computers, use only letters (upper and lower case) and numbers. Because of the mainframe limitations, avoid using symbols and spaces, although they may be useful for your home computer passwords.*



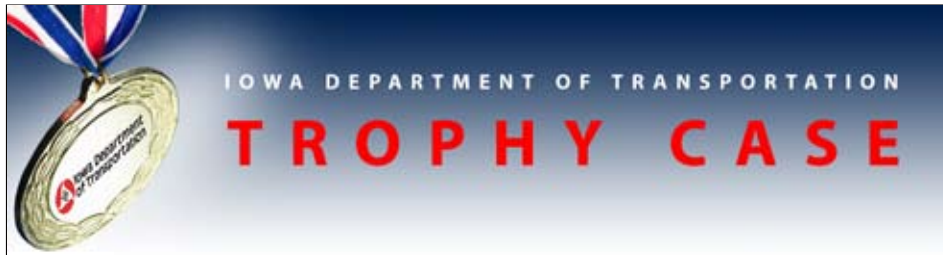
Use words and phrases that are easy for you to remember, but difficult for others to guess. The easiest way to remember your password is to write it down. Contrary to popular belief, there is nothing wrong with writing passwords down, but they need to be adequately protected to remain secure and effective.

In general, a password written on a piece of paper is more difficult to compromise than keeping track of passwords using password manager software or Web sites. More clearly stated, it's safer to store passwords the old-fashioned way on a piece of paper, rather than in electronic formats.

Create a strong, memorable password

Use these steps to develop a strong password.

1. Think of a sentence that you can remember. This will be the basis of your strong password or pass phrase. Use a memorable sentence, such as "My son Aiden is three years old."
2. Take the first letter of each word of the sentence that you've created to create a new, nonsensical word. Using the example above, you'd get: "msaityo."
4. Add complexity by mixing uppercase and lowercase letters and numbers. It is valuable to use some letter swapping or misspellings as well. There are many possible substitutions and, the longer the sentence, the more complex your password can be. This might yield a password like "MsAy3yo."



Mitchell and Iowa tops in fatality reporting



Evelyn Mitchell, statistical research analyst 2 in Driver Services, was given the "Outstanding Analyst 2007" award at the 33rd annual training conference for the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS). The conference, held last October in Louisville, Ky., honored Mitchell and the State of Iowa's fatality reporting system for excellent work, and as one of two states in the nation to meet the FARS criteria in advance of goal dates.

Mitchell was recognized for her perseverance through the facility emergency at Park Fair Mall last fall when her office was forced into an emergency relocation due to water damage. Even a second relocation to the Office of Driver Services' permanent location in Ankeny didn't fluster Mitchell, who continued to meet and even exceed very stringent FARS deadlines.

Snow is good for something



The Drake team consisted of Brian Booher, Kelly Donovan, Mistique Hecksel-Read, Tara Lange, Anthony Roark, Hunter Seuntjeus, Paul Utesch, and Nicki Werner.



The Drake University basketball team has been honored in many ways for its outstanding season. One of the more creative kudos

came in the form of a snow sculpture of "Spike," the university's mascot holding a basketball. The chilly monument was sculpted by a group of Drake students, including Anthony Roark, son of Tony Roark, design technician in the District 3 Office. Continuing the winning Drake ways, the sculpture took top honors at a charity fund-raiser Feb. 1 where artists from several Iowa schools replicated their mascots in the snow. The leader of the Drake group, Kelly Donovan, said the oversized sphere in the Spike sculpture not only represented basketball, but also the global impact Drake students make, specifically for their chosen charity, the Central Asia Institute.

Service Awards

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for April 2008

40 Years

Carol Houge, Policy and Legislative Services

35 Years

Roger Bierbaum, Contracts; **Bruce Kuehl**, District 6 Office; **Bruce Page**, Location and Environment

30 Years

Gary Graham, Maintenance; **Dennis Willadsen**, Finance

25 Years

Douglas Manley, District 3 Office; **Terry Melick**, Design; **Tim Molacek**, Algona garage; **Bradley Osborne**, Maintenance; **Cy Quick**, District 1 field staff; **William Stroud**, Oakdale garage; **Linda Wolff**, District 2 materials

20 Years

Kennard Barker, Carroll DL station; **Roger Boydston**, Location and Environment; **Eugene Busch**, De Soto garage; **Todd Frank**, Avoca garage; **Dena Gray-Fisher**, Media and Marketing Services; **Rick Gustoff**, Maintenance; **Elaine Kunzman**, Vehicle Services; **James Merdinger**, Neola garage; **Rodney Rhiner**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Frederick Schmidt**, Council Bluffs-north garage; **Neal Torneten**, Atlantic garage

15 Years

None

10 Years

Jared Laermans, Des Moines construction

5 Years

Vicki Elscott, Traffic and Safety; **Patrick Ketchum**, District 4 bridge crew; **Doreen Lee**, Ames DL station; **James Phillips**, District 5 field staff; **Rhonda Ruark**, Procurement and Distribution; **Cynthia Watkins**, Clinton DL station

Personnel Updates

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for Jan. 11, to Feb. 7, 2008

New Hires

Adam Anderson, highway technician associate, Waukon garage; **Gregory Anderson**, mechanic, Williams garage; **Nicholas Ballard**, highway technician associate, Des Moines-north garage; **Laurie Carnahan**, administrative assistant 1, Public Transit; **Dustin Conover**, highway technician associate, Ames garage; **William Cook**, driver's license clerk senior, Ankeny DL station; **Kristen Dohman**, driver's license clerk, Burlington DL station; **Emily Egeland**, administrative assistant 1, Specifications; **Rusty Hedlund**, highway technician associate, Malcom garage; **Erick Lack**, highway technician associate, Des Moines-north garage; **Jeffrey Little**, highway technician associate, Malcom garage; **Chad Moser**, highway technician associate, Ames garage; **Joel Monroe**, highway technician associate, Waukon garage; **William Nielsen**, highway technician associate, Williamsburg garage; **Gary Parker**, bridge inspector 1, Bridges and Structures; **Chris Pruismann**, highway technician associate, Williams garage; **Michael Roller**, highway technician, Rockwell City garage; **Andrew Van Wyk**, information technology specialist 3, Information Technology Division

Promotions

David Anderson, from driver's license clerk senior to driver's license examiner, Iowa City DL station; **Lorrain Bremer**, from driver's license clerk senior, Sioux City DL station to driver's license examiner, Ankeny DL station; **Melissa Grimes**, from transportation engineer intern to transportation engineer, Design; **Alan Hammarmister**, from highway technician, Williamsburg garage to construction technician, Cedar Rapids construction

Transfers

Kendall Anderson, highway technician associate, from Ashton garage to Alton garage; **Tami Bailiff**, secretary 2, from I-235 project office to Research and Technology Bureau; **Larry Hargis**, equipment operator senior, from Grimes garage to Des Moines-north garage; **Jon Kleven**, materials technician 4, from Materials (central) to Mason City materials; **Scott Reed**, highway technician associate, from Grimes garage to Carlisle garage; **Jim Van Holland**, highway technician associate, from Rock Valley garage to Rock Rapids garage; **Valerie Wright**, secretary 1, from Mason City maintenance to Britt construction

Retirements

William Lusher, executive officer 2, District 1



Time to think Golf!!!

DOT League is looking for all who love the game of golf. League play begins May 7. All levels of experience welcome. Form a six-member team or contact Paul Flattery, if interested in joining a team.

E-mail: paul.flattery@iowa.gov or phone 515-239-1863

INSIDE

INSIDE is developed to help keep all Iowa DOT employees informed about critical issues affecting them, recognize DOT employees for their excellent service and share interesting aspects in the lives of our co-workers. For more information contact Tracey Bramble, Office of Media and Marketing Services, at 515-239-1314 or e-mail tracey.bramble@dot.iowa.gov.

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PLEASE RECYCLE THIS ISSUE

On the cover: Mark Navratil of Marion takes his father for a ride in the Vans RV-8A airplane they built together.

Service Area	Correspondent	Phone
District 1	Kay Ridgway , Des Moines	515-986-5729
District 2	Lu Mohorne , Mason City	641-423-7584
District 3	Mary Beth Banta , Sioux City	712-276-1451
District 4	Marlene Jensen , Atlantic	712-243-3355
District 5	Brenda Hadley , Fairfield	641-472-6142
District 6	Sandi Byers , Cedar Rapids	319-364-0235
Bridges and Structures	Judy Whitney , Ames	515-233-7917
Construction	Nancy McMenamin , Ames	515-239-1043
Contracts	Peg Muxfeldt , Ames	515-239-1422
Design	Judy Lensing , Ames	515-239-1469
Driver Services	Noralee Warrick , Ankeny	515-237-3253
General Counsel	Chris Crow , Ames	515-239-1509
Information Technology Division	Colette Simpson , Ames	515-233-7728
Local Systems	Kathy LaRue , Ames	515-239-1081
Location and Environment	Jean Jesse , Ames	515-239-1225
Maintenance	Cindy Shipley , Ames	515-239-1971
Materials	Brian Squier , Ames	515-233-7915
Planning, Programming and Modal Division	Mary Kay Reimers , Ames	515-239-1661
Motor Carrier Services	Diann McMillen , Ankeny	515-237-3250
Motor Vehicle Enforcement	Kerry Kirkpatrick , Ankeny	515-237-3260
Operations and Finance Division	Sheri Anderson , Ames	515-239-1340
Research and Technology Bureau	Phyllis Geer , Ames	515-239-1646
Right of Way	Linda Kriegel , Ames	515-239-1135
Traffic and Safety	Linda McBride , Ames	515-239-1557
Vehicle Services	Thelma Huffman , Ankeny	515-237-3182

100 reasons...

"If anyone wants a reason why they should donate blood, I have 100 of them," said Jeff Franzen from the Office of Motor Vehicle Enforcement. Franzen is the proud dad of Jessica, 27, who is on the road to recovery from her second bout with leukemia.

Back in 2002, Jessica was hospitalized for 79 days while undergoing a bone marrow transplant. In that 79 days, Jessica received 100 units of blood and platelets. Franzen, who had never donated before, calculated that if he gave blood every 56 days, it would still take 17 years to donate enough blood to cover what his daughter received in that 79 days. "That was amazing to me," said Franzen. "At that time I found out that, like me, 95 percent of the population does not donate blood. I got up my courage and made my first blood donation in 2002, and in February I achieved the five gallon level of donated blood, in addition to cochairing blood drives in Waverly six times a year."

Franzen wants to get the facts about blood donation to anyone who will listen. In Iowa, donating to the Red Cross means your blood will most likely be sent to a center in Madison, Wisc., and not used locally. If that is not an issue for you, Franzen says the Red Cross is a great organization.

If you, like Franzen, would like to know the blood you donate is helping someone closer to home, he suggests donating at a regional Iowa Blood Center (see map).

Your giving spirit doesn't have to stop with blood. Franzen is also a huge advocate of bone marrow donation, because this procedure saved Jessica's life in 2002, and again last year when her leukemia relapsed.

"Bone marrow donation sounds horrible and looks even worse with a large needle stick in your hip bone, but I would consider it less uncomfortable than a colonoscopy," said Franzen. "If you consider the recipient has an equal chance of living or dying from the side



Motor vehicle investigator Jeff Franzen and his daughter, Jessica, promote blood and bone marrow donation following Jessica's fight against leukemia.

effects of the transplant, donating is a lot less painful than watching your child receive that transplant," he explained.

Franzen says the science behind bone marrow transplants is fascinating. "Basically the doctors use chemotherapy to kill all the old bone marrow cells and then replace the old with donated bone marrow. It is very hard to kill the old cells and the new cells need to locate the old cells infected with leukemia and kill them. To cure this disease, you have to have healthy cells that will fight the diseased ones."

Jessica's health is now stable, but her dad's crusade to educate people about leukemia and blood and bone marrow donations will continue. "Our first clue there was a problem with Jessica came when she was home on a break from college in 2002. She has always been active, but that break she just wanted to sleep all the time. We took her to the doctor and have been fighting this terrible disease ever since. But good things have come from this experience," said Franzen, "I know now that by coordinating blood drives and trying to educate people about blood and bone marrow transplants, I'm helping save lives in my community."

Iowa Blood Collection Service Areas

