

# INSIDE

IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION NEWSLETTER DECEMBER 2006



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# ONE 2 ONE

WITH DIRECTOR NANCY RICHARDSON

**T**his is the time of year when we are gearing up for the upcoming seasons. From an operational perspective, the construction season is winding down and the winter season is upon us. This brings the work of our highway maintenance forces to the forefront. There is nothing we can do at the Iowa DOT that our customers think is more important than our winter road maintenance effort. The amazing ice and snow removal job done by about 1,200 field maintenance workers doesn't just happen. Much preparation by many people lays the foundation for our winter maintenance success, from purchasing contracts that assure we have road salt where and when we need it, to equipment acquisition and preparation to make sure we have the tools ready to do the job, to data analysis and research that help us know how and when to best attack ice and snow, to operator training and practice to keep skill sets sharp, etc. It truly "takes a village" to keep Iowa's roads safe for winter travel and I want to pass on both my encouragement and thanks to all of the staff involved in keeping our roads clean and safe this winter. You are the image of the DOT during the winter, and I commend you for your commitment – you make DOT look good all winter long!

Another impending season is the legislative season and that is also a very important time for DOT. The election is over and we will soon have a new Governor, Lieutenant Governor and many new legislators in both chambers. A post-election session is particularly interesting as we work to establish relationships with new legislators and renew our relationships with returning legislators.

We have two traditional legislative efforts: a budget bill and a general legislative package. Our FY 2008 budget request is for \$316.5 million across the three departmental operational categories. This represents a net increase of just \$1.7 million, or one-half of one percent, over the FY 07 operations appropriations. The budget requests 3,374 FTEs, just one less than we have now, and minimal increases in the two primary ways that higher fuel costs affect DOT operations: road salt and fuel for our vehicle fleet. The budget also requests new funding for the replacement of the Clarinda garage. The remainder of the FY 2008 budget request is generally a status quo request based on 2007 funding levels.

The one non-operations part of the DOT budget bill is funding requests for the aviation, rail and trails programs. In that area we are seeking status quo funding levels for state aviation and trails programs, but are seeking to provide a stable source of funding for the Railroad Revolving Loan and Grant Program (RRLGP)

legislatively created two years ago. Access Rail is the name given to our financing effort which seeks \$2 million from the Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund for five years, starting with FY 2008, for the RRLGP, where it will be mixed with some limited loan repayments to provide a small, but stable, rail program to support economic development in Iowa.

The second part of our legislative activity centers around a legislative package that includes proposed changes to current Iowa law. These proposed changes typically are generated from issues we've dealt with during the past year, often with our customers, or are proposed tweaking of the prior year's legislation. This year's package includes proposals to:

- change signage on entrance ramps;
- allow the DOT to use associate appraisers;
- allow DOT to issue a temporary restricted driver's license without an ignition interlock requirement in certain limited situations; and
- make minor changes to vehicle registration, license plate, dealer licensing and motor carrier registration regulations.

Both our legislative package and budget request are developed through a grass roots effort in the department where each division forwards ideas and requests through their division director. I review all requests, discuss them with the department's management team as a group, and then decide which items to include. Elizabeth Baird, from the Operations and Finance Division, is our legislative liaison. In that role she serves as the primary face of the DOT with the legislature. She

## OES teams reorganize to improve service

Three teams now comprise the Office of Employee Services: employee relations; compensation and benefits; and training and recruitment. Because they might be the least known, INSIDE will focus first on the employee relations team. The other two teams will be highlighted in future editions of INSIDE.

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***“Our goal is to have equality and fairness for all employees.”***

**Mary Wheelock**

**Office of Employee Services**

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“Employee confidentiality is such a priority with our employee relations team, most people don’t see how quietly successful they are in helping employees,” said Kate Murphy, director of the Office of Employee Services (OES).

With only three members, the employee relations team is small, but productive. Mary Wheelock, a 32-year DOT veteran, serves as a team leader for Fran Frazier and Steve Hermann. Frazier, a 23-year DOTer, has more than seven years experience with the OES. Steve Hermann is a newcomer to the DOT, starting here last year after 12 years in human resources work with TWA and American Airlines. Each team member is referred to as an employee relations officer (ERO).

The EROs work with conflict resolution issues related to workplace rules, investigation of workplace environment issues, and administration of the DOT’s union contracts (AFSCME and IUP) and the Iowa Department of Administrative Services’ (DAS) administrative rules. The EROs also represent the DOT when new union contracts are being negotiated.

So what does that mean? “A lot of phone calls,” says Wheelock. “We are here as a resource for all employees who have questions about workplace rules, union contracts or related issues. When an employee needs a neutral third party to look at a dispute, we’re here to help. Additionally, supervisors partner with our team prior to beginning any investigation into an alleged work rule violation.”



Mary Wheelock, Fran Frazier and Steve Hermann

Besides assisting in conflict resolution, the team’s other tasks include continuing education. The EROs participate in the supervisor round table meetings to ensure supervisors stay up-to-date on new laws, policies, procedures, and administrative rules. The three EROs also work with supervisors to improve workplace practices, confer with DAS personnel officers and consult with the nine regional labor-management committees.

“Our goal is to have equality and fairness for all employees,” explained Mary Wheelock. “This is a challenge because employees may not know we exist to help them be successful.”

Contact information for employee relations team members:

Mary Wheelock, 515-233-7749,  
mary.wheelock@dot.iowa.gov

Fran Frazier, 515-233-7846,  
fran.frazier@dot.iowa.gov

Steve Hermann, 515-239-1070,  
steve.hermann@dot.iowa.gov

## AMBER Alert notification system available on your desktop and DOT dynamic message signs



by Christina Andersen

**T**he availability of a new E-mail notification system allows state employees to automatically receive notifications from the Iowa Department of Public Safety when an AMBER Alert is issued.

While the E-mail alert system is new, the DOT has been involved in getting the word out for AMBER Alerts since Iowa adopted the service in March 2003 using the department's dynamic message signs (DMS). When local law enforcement identifies a possible AMBER Alert, they contact Iowa State Patrol communications and submit an informational packet with the details of the abduction. The Iowa State Patrol then contacts the DOT.

Before an alert will be issued, stringent criteria must be met.

1. Law enforcement must confirm a child has been abducted.
2. The child must be under 18 years of age.
3. The child must be in danger of serious bodily harm or death.
4. There must be enough descriptive information to believe an immediate broadcast alert will help.

If these four criteria are met, an alert will be issued. An Iowa State Patrol officer will then notify one of three DOT employees about the AMBER Alert. Once notified, either Willy Sorenson, Research and Technology Bureau; Mike Krohn, District 1 maintenance manager; or Lance Starbuck, District 1 operations manager, will craft the message using the information supplied. The DOT currently has DMS sites in Iowa City, Cedar Rapids, Council Bluffs, Des Moines, and the Quad Cities area. Once the message is set, DOT staff in those five cities are contacted to activate the signs.

By this time next year the process will be more streamlined. The DOT's Office of Research and Technology anticipates there will be 40 overhead signs statewide and 40 signs inside rest areas all tied to a single, statewide computer server. This will reduce the process of issuing an alert from a regional operation, where various employees are charged to post alerts in a specific section of the state, to a single-contact operation, where one person will activate all signs from one location. Conversion to that single server will drastically reduce the time it takes from the issue of an alert to the display of information on the signs. Information would be posted in as little as five to ten minutes for 80 signs, as opposed to the 20 to 40 minutes it now takes to program one-quarter that number of DMS. At the same time the DOT is contacted to post the alert, the information is released to the National Weather Channel, Emergency Broadcast System, and the media. The message is posted to the DOT signs for 24 hours as long as there are no emergency traffic issues where the signs are needed to post that information.

To get more information on emergency E-mail notifications or enroll to receive E-mails about a number of other public safety issues, go to <http://dpsemailnotify.iowa.gov> and click "log in." Use the same user ID and password used to access your Operations and Finance applications menu.

## Supervisors Conference held Oct. 26 - 27

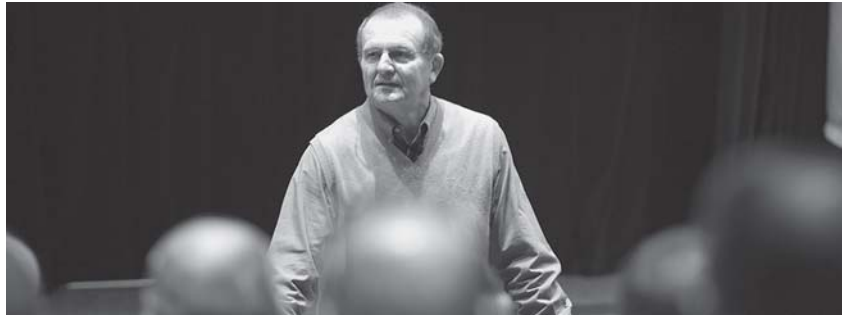
**I**t was a quick day and a half for all DOT managers and supervisors to sharpen their management skills and learn what's new at the DOT. The Supervisors Conference, held Oct. 26-27 in Ames, started off on a positive note when DOT Director Nancy Richardson shared with attendees parts of her performance evaluation recently completed by the Governor's Chief of Staff. Richardson was told that the DOT is seen as an agency with the ability to set long-term plans and stick to the plans while remaining flexible. The five-year program was pointed out as the prime example of this. The DOT was also commended for its involvement of customers in DOT processes.

Myra Golden, the keynote speaker on Thursday morning focused on "People-centered Leadership." Golden, an author and public speaker on customer service issues, has a background in psychology and human relations. The majority of her presentation centered on age diversity. She explained the general characteristics of veterans (born 1922-1943), baby boomers (born 1943-1960), generation Xers (born 1960-1980), and generation Yers (born 1980-2000) and how these various generations interact with one another. Information on her presentation can be found at [www.myragolden.com/idot.html](http://www.myragolden.com/idot.html).

The afternoon was spent in smaller break-out sessions. Cheri Norris from the DOT's Office of Employee Services (OES) and Sharleen Newton from the Iowa Department of Administrative Services led the sessions highlighting the state of Iowa's new job applicant/hiring process called Brass Ring. Currently Brass Ring is in the pilot phase at the DOT in the Office of Motor Vehicle Enforcement. Watch future editions of INSIDE for more information as the program is expanded to other offices.

The second DOT-led session by Mary Wheelock and Kate Murphy of OES centered on the supervisor's process for investigating employee misconduct. An "investigation process" folder, a new tool to assist with investigations, was given to each supervisor, and the details of the process were explained. This new tool includes information on the "Just Cause" checklist that must be followed and helps supervisors organize and track information involved with an investigation. Additional folders are available from inventory.

Excellent outside speakers discussed "Difficult Conversations" and "Employee Coaching/



Keynote speakers Mike McKinley (top) and Myra Golden provided useful information to supervisors.

Mentoring." These speakers used their time to the fullest to give supervisors ideas on how to respectfully discuss difficult issues and become a mentor or coach to employees.

The conference wrapped up on Friday morning with an entertaining presentation from Mike McKinley, a long-time business leader and consultant who used his 25-plus years of speaking experience to make valid points about leadership while keeping his audience in stitches. McKinley's main message was that supervisors and managers should be a resource to their employees. Supporting, communicating and listening to employees, as well as being open to new ideas and dealing with issues sooner rather than later, were only a few of the many topics McKinley touched upon.

For more information about any of the topics discussed, contact your supervisor. The committee responsible for this year's conference included Barb Espeland, Information Technology Division; Tina Hargis, Vehicle Services; John Adam, Highway Division; Vicki Dumdei, District 2; John Selmer, District 4; Jon Ranney, Program Management; Lee Wilkinson, Maintenance; and Fran Rout and Kate Murphy, Employee Services.

## Mac goes to Washington

**I**t would be tough to find anyone who would describe Pat McNamara as shy or quiet. McNamara, an accountant 2 in the Office of Finance, is using her outspoken nature to positively influence continuing research and funding for the American Cancer Society (ACS) as an Iowa advocate. McNamara joined approximately 75 Iowans and nearly 10,000 others from around the country on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Sept. 20 for "Celebration on the Hill" to enlist our elected officials in the fight against cancer and make researching the disease a national priority.

The Congressional Cancer Promise is a commitment the ACS is asking members of Congress to make in support of the organization's federal legislative agenda for the American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network. Throughout the month of August, Iowa's "Celebration on the Hill" ambassadors, including McNamara, held meetings around the state with Rep. Leonard Boswell, Rep. Tom Latham, Rep. Jim Leach, Sen. Charles Grassley, and a member of Rep. Jim Nussle's staff. During these meetings, both Rep. Boswell and Rep. Latham signed the Congressional Cancer Promise. In Washington, Sen. Tom Harkin and Rep. Jim Leach both signed the document.

For McNamara, the national push for funding comes from a very personal point of view. She served as a caregiver to her mother for the last six months of her life. McNamara has also seen her mother-in-law and two very close friends die of cancer. Even more recently, one of the ambassadors who was set to attend the Sept. 20 event was diagnosed with



Pat McNamara, Senator Tom Harkin and Stacy Frelund

a rare form of liver cancer.

"On Sept. 12 Dr. Donald Young, a good friend, cancer advocate and retired radiologist and instructor at the University of Iowa received his diagnosis," said McNamara. "Because of the nature of his cancer, he needed to begin treatment right away and so missed the national event."

Young's wife of 11 years, Tess, said in an interview shortly after her husband was diagnosed, "We've had such a vibrant, active, happy time together. Now our lives just stop because we don't know what the future holds. This is the message we wanted to get across. You have to tell them or they don't know."

The messages were everywhere in Washington that day as the 10,000 ambassadors representing all 50 states and Guam held meetings and lobbied their local delegations. Each state ACS chapter set up a booth, some with state-specific themes, to bring the need for continued financial support of cancer research to the forefront. "Because some statistics show cancer rates decreasing in the past few years, there are some who want to cut funding for research programs," said McNamara. One of our tasks as

advocates is to educate the congressional delegations that funding cuts would have a significant and negative impact on any gains that have been made in increasing screenings for uninsured and underinsured patients, and improved treatments for cancer."

Dr. Young backs McNamara's statement. He said, "Early detection is the most valuable tool. With early detection the treatment is much less expensive and more successful." McNamara adds, "Without public funding, those without insurance won't have the opportunity for mammograms, prostate exams or other early detection screenings."

McNamara's trip to Washington, D.C. was just one more event on this busy advocate's schedule. On behalf of the ACS, she, along with advocates of every age group and walk of life, has been to events at baseball games and been involved in letter writing, phone call campaigns, and Relay for Life events. "At every event you meet new friends, whether they are survivors or have been care givers. Nearly everyone has been touched in some way by this disease," said McNamara.

## And the survey says . . .



**T**he latest survey of INSIDE readers shows that the DOT's employee publication is hitting the mark for those who responded. Of major interest to respondents was the need to increase information on personnel topics. Therefore, INSIDE staff will work with Kate Murphy, director of the Office of Employee Services, and her staff to include more articles on benefits and other personnel topics.

This year's survey differed from ones taken in 2000 and 2004 in that the message from the director now ranks second in importance to employees who responded. Written comments received also demonstrate a positive response to Director Richardson's heartfelt messages.

One repeated need area from the two earlier surveys was the desire of respondents to have their own work locations and job responsibilities included in INSIDE. Readers who responded in this way, should contact Tracey Bramble to discuss potential articles. INSIDE staff does not know what they don't know, but

are convinced there is a great article lurking in every DOT building. Someone just has to share the story idea before an article can be written. Each month INSIDE publishes the names and phone numbers of the INSIDE correspondents on the inside back cover of the publication. Readers should contact the correspondent in their area, or contact INSIDE editor Tracey Bramble directly (tracey.bramble@dot.iowa.gov or 515-239-1314) with any story ideas. Someone suggesting an article does not have to be writer; INSIDE staff will take care of that part. All the staff needs from you is the basic story idea.

Back to the survey results, most responded that the article length is just right (91.4 percent), and 39 percent wouldn't change a thing about the publication. However, 26 percent want to see more color. Because of equipment updates in the printing section of the Office of Document Services, a full color publication will be printed starting next month at no additional cost to the department. This is an exciting change and it is anticipated the majority of readers will appreciate the updated look. Not only will it mean a more vibrant and reader-friendly printed publication, INSIDE on DOTNET will be much more eye-catching as well.

According to the survey, there is progress in getting people to read INSIDE on DOTNET, but because more than half of DOT's employees don't have regular access to a computer during work time, the publication will not be converted to a strictly online format. The current way of publishing the printed version to DOTNET will be continued. The 2006 survey showed 56 percent of respondents read at least some of

INSIDE on DOTNET, up from 38 percent in 2004. This includes 25.7 percent from the 2006 survey who said they read the publication electronically every month.

Even though the survey shows DOTNET readership increasing, the majority of survey respondents work in the central complex and have easy access to computers, so the increase may not be indicative of the majority of field employees who do not access DOTNET on a regular basis.

### More survey nuts and bolts

Of the 217 surveys returned, 53.5 percent came from the central complex, 25.8 percent from small field offices, 10.8 percent from Park Fair Mall and 9.9 percent from large field offices. Most respondents (86.6 percent) were non-supervisory. Nearly every respondent said he/she read the publication monthly and 47.7 percent said they read the entire edition each month, compared to 52.3 percent who read selected sections.

Read the full survey report, including all written comments, on DOTNET under the "publications" drop-down menu with the December edition of the newsletter.

# Family happenings

## District 6

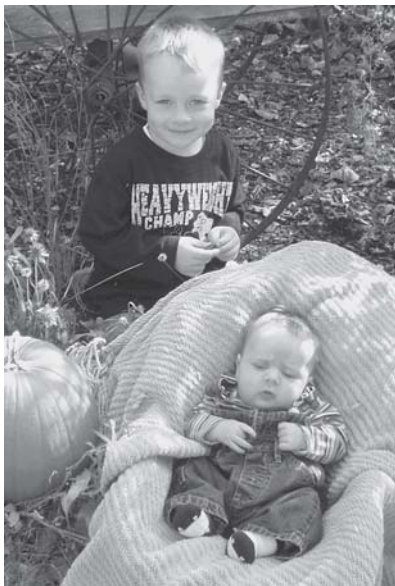
**Jeanne Heeren**



**Lee Benfield**, District 6 transportation planner in Cedar Rapids, retired from the DOT Sept. 21, 2006, after 28 years of service. An open house was held at the district office in his honor. Lee and his wife, Mary, have become full-time RVers and plan to travel the country. Good luck and best wishes to the Benfields!

## District 3

**MaryBeth Banta**



**Angi and Jason Meyer** are the proud parents of their second son. Although Baby Peyton was born three weeks early on Aug. 26, he weighed 6 lbs., 15 ozs. and was 20 inches long. Four-year-old

brother, Teagan, loves helping take care of his new baby brother. Mommy Angi is the maintenance management assistant and Daddy Jason is an equipment operator in the Storm Lake garage. Congratulations to the Meyer family!

## Driver Services

**Noralee Warrick**



**Trista Hills**, driver's license clerk specialist in the Office of Driver Services, and her husband, Terry, are the proud first-time parents of a beautiful baby girl. Emmerson Delany was born Oct. 12 weighing 5 lbs., 15 ozs. and was 19 1/4 inches long. Mommy and baby are doing very well.



**Denise Said**, driver's license supervisor 2 in the Dubuque DL station, and her husband, Ron, are proud parents of a second son. Baby Caden Ronnie was born Oct. 6 weighing 8 lbs., 5 ozs. and was 20 inches long. He joins big brother, Devin, 5, at home. Congratulations to the Said family!

## Systems Planning

**Mary Kay Reimers**



**Phil Mescher**, transportation planner, and his wife, Carrie, are excited to announce the birth of their third daughter. Kaylee Catherine was born July 29 weighing 6 lbs., 6.5 ozs. Kaylee joins big sisters Taylor, 10, and Lindsey, 6. Congratulations to the Meschers!



## Iowans choose e-filing

**M**ore than 900,000 of 1.4 million Iowa taxpayers filed their income tax returns electronically last year. The popularity of e-filing continues to grow for a variety of reasons.

**E-filing is safe.** Tax information is transmitted from one secure computer system to another with little, if any, interference.

**E-filing is accurate.** E-filed returns have significantly fewer errors than paper. Correcting errors in e-filed returns is fast. A paper return with errors can take up to six months to correct.

**E-filing is fast.** Refunds are in taxpayers' hands in less than two weeks instead of six weeks. Direct deposit cuts additional days and gives the fastest refund. Approximately 67 percent of Iowa taxpayers receive refunds.

**E-filing is easy.** Most taxpayers e-file through their tax preparers. Others do it themselves with purchased or online software.

Check your e-file options on the Iowa Department of Revenue's Web site at [www.state.ia.us/tax](http://www.state.ia.us/tax). You may qualify to file your federal and state returns at no charge. In addition, Iowa is once again offering TeleFile to qualifying taxpayers.

### And if you owe additional Iowa tax...

Use the e-Pay feature of the e-File and e-Pay system to pay your balance due. From the Iowa Department of Revenue's Web site, follow the e-File and e-Pay link to make an individual income tax e-Payment (direct debit). If you file early, you may schedule your payment to be made on April 30, 2007, Iowa's due date.



### Estimated income tax payments

And, if you make estimated income tax payments, you may use e-Pay not only to pay, but also to schedule payments in advance.

### Questions about e-filing?

If you have questions about electronic filing or the electronic payment process, contact the e-File Service Unit at 515-281-8453 or 866-503-3453, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 4:15 p.m.

### Questions about Iowa tax law?

To talk to a tax specialist call 800-367-3388 or e-mail [idr@iowa.gov](mailto:idr@iowa.gov). Staff is available Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. until 4:15 p.m.

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explains our requests and fields many questions on a wide array of DOT issues. Much of her time is spent linking the right DOT "expert" with a legislator in order to answer questions and provide information on some aspect of what we do.

I have also previously mentioned the Road Use Tax Fund study mandated by the legislature two years ago. That report is being finalized and will be submitted by December 31, 2006, as required. I fully expect legislative attention and discussion – and hopefully action – as a result of that report, which will add to the DOT's "normal" legislative exposure and activity during the 2007 session. Once that

report is completed, we'll make sure you learn what the report says either through INSIDE or another way.

The final season that is upon us is the holiday season. Regardless of our cultural or religious backgrounds, the next couple of months typically are a time of fellowship and celebration with family, friends and co-workers. My wish for each of you is that the holiday season be a time of personal peace and happiness and, whatever your involvement in the three impending seasons, that you remain safe.

*Nancy*

## Personnel Updates

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for Sept. 22 to Oct. 19, 2006

### New Hires

**Debra Covington**, information technology specialist 4, Information Technology Division; **David Dellamuth**, equipment operator, Williamsburg garage; **James Deppe**, right-of-way agent 2, Right of Way; **Kurtis Grubb**, equipment operator, Ottumwa garage; **Alton Mast**, equipment operator, Bloomfield garage; **Janet Vine**, program planner 3, Location and Environment

### Promotions

**Anthony Batcheller**, motor vehicle investigator to motor vehicle captain, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Leo Garreau**, power plant engineer 3 to power plant engineer supervisor, Facilities Support; **Robert Johnson**, motor vehicle investigator to motor vehicle captain, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Jeffrey Leyda**, motor vehicle officer to motor vehicle investigator, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Ron Loecher**, transportation engineer to transportation engineer manager, New Hampton construction; **Donald Sharr**, driver's license clerk senior to driver's license examiner, Des Moines DL station; **Jeffery Stoffa**, from equipment operator to equipment operator senior, Albia garage

### Transfers

**Scott Blanchard**, equipment operator, from Burlington to Donnellson garage; **Kevin Cary**, construction technician, from Cherokee to Council Bluffs construction; **Traci Lorenzen**, driver's license clerk, from Cedar Rapids to Des Moines DL station

### Retirements

**Lloyd Doehrmann**, equipment operator, Williamsburg garage; **Larry Coffman**, equipment operator, Osceola garage; **Richard Kinsella**, engineering operations technician, District 5 field staff; **Donald Page**, motor vehicle captain, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Harold Risner**, equipment operator, Newhall garage; **Kathryn Tiensvold**, planning aide 2, Transportation Data

## Service Awards

Information supplied by the Office of Employee Services for December 2006

### 40 Years

**Kenneth Spencer**, Materials

### 35 Years

**LeRoy Johnson**, Hanlontown garage

### 30 Years

**Debra Crook**, District 1 Office; **Deborah Risvold**, Employee Services

### 25 Years

**Rick Burr**, Adair garage; **Francis Foarde**, Oakdale garage; **Lori Halverson**, Driver Services; **Lavonne Short**, Vehicle Services; **Ronald Wittman**, Dubuque garage

### 20 Years

**Brian Carlson**, Transportation Data; **David Drummond**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Lloyd Henderson Jr.**, Anamosa garage; **George Hurd**, West Union garage; **Dave Lorenzen**, Motor Vehicle Enforcement; **Scott Nelson**, Facilities Support; **Thomas Nixon**, Williams garage; **Vilma Pankey**, Information Technology Division; **Jeffrey Stratton**, Traffic and Safety; **Randy Terrell**, Finance; **Dennis Wagoner**, Washington garage

### 15 Years

**Tammi Bell**, Local Systems; **Mike Jenkins**, Des Moines construction

### 10 Years

**Stuart Allen**, Independence garage; **Todd Chrasta**, Waterloo garage; **Danny Doren**, Sioux City-Hamilton garage; **Mark Haack**, De Witt garage; **Jason Jochims**, Cherokee construction; **Larry Letze**, Altoona garage; **Todd Loges**, Donnellson garage; **Larry Osborn**, Des Moines garage; **Dave Putz**, Employee Services; **S. Sinclair Stolle**, Design; **Byron Wheels**, Grimes garage; **Valerie Lynn Wright**, Mason City maintenance; **Michael Zeimen**, Cherokee construction

### 5 Years

**Brian Skartvedt**, Ames garage

**35 YEARS**  
Iowa Department  
of Transportation



LeRoy Johnson  
Hanlontown garage

# TOYS FOR TOTS

**The spirit** of giving is alive and well in Ames! The central complex Toys for Tots campaign is set for Dec. 4-15. To allow enough time for the collection of donations from the online auction, this event will be held Monday-Thursday, Dec. 4-7. Other events include:

**Soup lunch**

Dec. 5 11 a.m. until gone  
Café 800

**Bake sale/cookie buckets**

Dec. 7 8 a.m. – 2 p.m.  
northwest glass walkway

**Ornament/popcorn sale**

Dec. 12 8 a.m. – 3 p.m.  
northwest glass walkway (a.m.)  
Materials lab (p.m. - popcorn only)

**Caramel/cinnamon roll sale**

Dec. 14 8 – 11 a.m.  
Café 800

*Toys will be collected in each office. The Marine Corps will pick up all donations the week of Dec. 18.*



# 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 coworkers. For more information, contact Tracey Bramble, Office of Media and Marketing Services, 515-239-1314 or e-mail tracey.bramble@dot.iowa.gov.

Nancy J. Richardson, Iowa DOT Director

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PLEASE RECYCLE THIS ISSUE

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District 4	Marlene Jensen, Atlantic	712-243-3355
District 5	Brenda Hadley, Fairfield	641-472-6142
District 6	Jeanne Heeren, Cedar Rapids	319-364-0235
Bridges and Structures	Judy Whitney, Ames	515-239-1564
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, Des Moines	515-237-3153
General Counsel	Sheri Anderson, 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	515-239-1824
Materials	Brian Quay, Ames	515-233-7915
Modal and Planning & Programming Divisions	Mary Kay Reimers, Ames	515-239-1661
Motor Carrier Services	Diann McMillen, Des Moines	515-237-3250
Motor Vehicle Enforcement	Val Hunter, Des Moines	515-237-3218
Operations and Finance Division	Janet Kout-Samson, 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, Des Moines	515-237-3182

On the cover: It's winter time in Iowa!

# Tree farm preserves history

by Christina Andersen

**T**he Enchanted Valley Tree Farm on 1323 Montana Road in Boone captivates visitors with natural beauty, historical scenery and glimpses of rare wildlife.

“In addition to the occasional bald eagle, it has been rumored that Big Foot lives here,” said Joe Reutter, Office of Bridges and Structures.

Reutter and his wife, Janice, purchased the 73-acre property in 1982 from a chain of previous owners, including the father of DOT employee Lois Davis, Office of Design. In addition to connections throughout the DOT, the tree farm is directly linked to one of Iowa’s greatest stories of bravery and heroism. Before the land was purchased by Davis’ father, it was owned by the family of Kate Shelley, famous railroad heroine who saved the lives of many one stormy night.



When the Reutters initially purchased the land it wasn’t for its historical value. Reutter enjoys working with black walnut wood and wanted to replenish the scarce resource he was using. The tree farm harvests lumber, firewood and nursery stock. Today, the tree farm is much more than an economic resource for the Reutters, it’s an enriching asset available to anyone who wishes to visit the farm.

On the first Saturday after Thanksgiving the Reutters light a fire, break out the cider and turn on the holiday music as families engage in their search for the perfect Christmas tree. Nine acres of the land have been cleared for growing Christmas trees, allowing families a unique opportunity to create cherished memories and family traditions. “I have one family who comes to Enchanted Valley every year. I’ve watched their children grow and have fond memories of when they were younger; there’s something nostalgic about that,” said Reutter. Reutter has approximately 1,500 Christmas trees on the farm and makes wreathes out of those that don’t sell.

The Reutters allow the land to be used by the Lions Club for fund-raisers, ISU for forestry classes and field days, Boy Scouts for camp-outs, and the Boone County Historical Society. Providing others with access to the land has allowed Reutter to learn more about its history, including its Native American settlement. He also enjoys educating others about Kate Shelley and Iowa history. Reutter said he learned from Kueire Chung, an Ames resident who grew up in Taiwan, that the story of Kate Shelley has been translated into a Chinese caricature and is a well known lesson throughout Taiwan that encourages, “Doing the right thing under difficult circumstances.” The tree farm benefits the community in many quality-of-life areas. “We emphasize a lot of environmental issues by raising trees. The trees prevent soil erosion and improve the water quality of the Des Moines River,” said Reutter.

Reutter has experienced some trouble with trespassers, but feels the biggest threat is urbanization. Throughout his years on the farm, Reutter has had opportunities to sell the land for development, but Reutter feels the legacy of the land and what it means to him and his visitors could never be matched with monetary compensation.

Joe Reutter stands tall on his tree farm near Boone.

