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Spotlight on the District

By Mark Kane

After the holiday season, Larry Staten, Eastern Area Office, Engineering and Construction, has a chance to wind down following a busy time warming the hearts of little girls and boys by playing the popular role of Santa Claus.

Staten has been working for the Corps since the Savannah District sought him out and hired him in November 2002 at Seymour Johnson AFB, N.C.

The Springbay, Ill., resident now works with the Rock Island District in Peoria, Ill., but is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, where he was first pegged as looking like jolly old Saint Nick at the Cincinnati Mall.

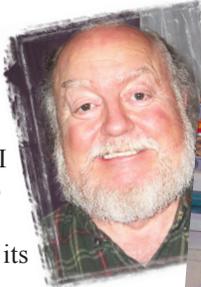
"I was walking in the mall, and the Santa there thought I was his replacement for the day," said Staten. "Next thing I knew, I was being offered a job for the season."

Staten said being Santa has its rewards.

"I love being Santa, because I love bringing smiles to the kids' faces," said Staten. "To have a child warm up to you in about 30 seconds, after the parents said he or she was afraid of Santa, gives me a warm feeling inside. It's great to have the kids wave at you and say to their parents, 'Hey, I just saw Santa!' It's all about the kids."

Today, Staten and his wife, Janis, are a team in the holiday tradition of spreading good cheer.

"This was the second year my wife — and I — were Mr. and Mrs. Santa at the Salvation Army's Senior Annual Luncheon," said Staten. "(In 2006) there were more than 300 seniors there. You must be 65 to get in, and there were six people over 100-years-old, and one was 106. The seniors get a big kick out of seeing Santa



and sitting on Santa's lap."

Staten said the memories he comes away with each year from playing Santa are ones he will never forget, and that some stand out more than others.

"The most memorable time was when, out of five different Santa's, I was picked to be the Santa at a party for special needs children," said Staten. "I had fun dancing with the kids, and it warmed my heart that I could get them to smile."

While the image of Kris Kringle may make most children smile, Staten said that's not the case with all of



them, even his grandchildren.

"I have seven grandkids; before I became Santa, they were afraid of Santa," said Staten. "Now that I have put on the red suit, all my grandkids call me grandpa Santa and love to sit on my lap."

The Santa look alike might don the red suit, but his resume includes job experience that might not come to mind if you're thinking of Father Christmas.

"I served in the U.S. Air Force from

Larry Staten

Eastern Area Office, Engineering and Construction

June 1969 through December 1978 and left the military service as a staff sergeant after fulfilling my obligation and receiving an honorable discharge," said Staten.

Today, Staten is a construction representative and has put his military experience to good use since the early 80s, when he first started working for the Army. Staten said there are similar reasons he enjoys being Santa and working in the Army and with the Corps of Engineers.

"I like meeting people," said Staten. "(I like) being able to be deployed when there's a need to help people ... I was deployed for Hurricane Charlie in Florida for four months and in Louisiana for two tours. Every job is different. I learn something new on every job I am involved in. As of today, I have been the inspector on 188 government contracts, since I started with the Army at Fort Polk in 1982."

More recently, Staten went the extra mile and earned a certification few have in the Corps.

"I believe I am the only Corps of Engineers employee, maybe worldwide, who has become an OSHA (Occupational Safety and Health Administration) construction outreach trainer," said Staten. "I am authorized by the U.S. Department of Labor to conduct the 10 and 30-hour construction safety courses."

Staten has also completed more than 40 Corps courses dealing with contract administration and inspection.

Staten, and his wife Janis, have three children and seven grandchildren. His hobbies include, "Spending as much time with my grandkids as possible."

His advice to anyone reading this article is, "Life is too short to be miserable! Keep a smile on your face and let the world wonder what you're up too." ■

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District Commander
Col. Robert A. Sinkler

Editor
Mark Kane

Chief, Corporate
Communications
Ron Fournier

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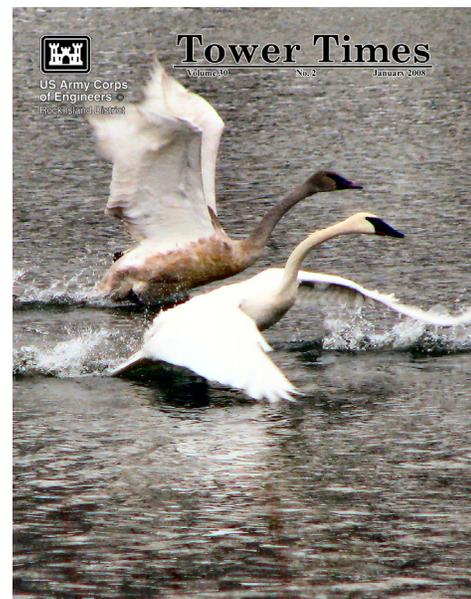
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Coralville Lake Buys 5 Green



On the Cover

Two trumpeter swans take flight at Saylorville Lake in front of the dam's control tower. Photo by Jonathan Wuebker, Saylorville Lake. See page 4 for more on the swans at the reservoir.

New Year, New Challenges, Great Team

By Col. Robert Sinkler, District Commander

I personally wish all of you a very Happy New Year! We will be very busy again in 2008 since our civil works program is one of the largest we've ever had. Also, our military program nearly doubled in 2007, and I expect it to continue to remain an important part of our program. With the recent passing of the 2007 Water Resources Development Act, I expect 2009 to be even busier for us because of the new projects that have been authorized for the Rock Island District area. The taxpayers (through Congress) have given the Rock Island District about \$10 million more than what the Administration asked for in 2008. This only happened because of your customer-focused mindset, and the servant's heart that each one of you have. With all of the competing demands for our limited national resources, the American people will only invest in things that are absolutely critical, and things in which they truly believe. They will only come to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to do the work if: 1) they trust us; 2) they understand us, and what we are doing; 3) we work shoulder-to-shoulder with our teammates and partners to solve water-resource problems; and 4) they believe that we will produce things that are of good value to the taxpayer. Telling our story is an absolutely critical component of achieving these four things the taxpayers expect from us. We need to be project funded, project managed and customer focused. All of our customers are important to us. And, as you know, the Rock Island District and the Corps has a great story to tell. I appreciate what you are doing to tell it. I am proud of all of you and the great reputation and relationships you have built (and are building) in the region.

I do need to talk about safety, because I care about each and every one of you. As most of you know, the objective of our safety program is not to improve our safety statistics, but to ensure each one of you (and our contractors and customers) can make it to retirement and still have their health intact. It is absolutely neces-

sary that we look out for each other in order to prevent accidents. We are responsible for each other's safety. Historically, we have had more accidents in the winter months, so please be extra vigilant. We cannot talk enough about the importance of the health, welfare and safety of our workforce. And, of course, being safe is more important than talking about being safe. So please continue to make safety a priority in everything you do at work and at home!

The Rock Island District's future is dependent upon us being (and being recognized as) national leaders in interagency integrated water-resources management. This is our vision. What this means is that we must be better than anyone else in teaming with customers and stakeholders to produce watersheds where the needs of navigation, flood-risk management, emergency management and response, ecosystem restoration and regulation, recreation, water supply, land management and national security are met. With five multi-state river basins, this is a big job. But, serving five river basins in five states is what we are all about. The taxpayer (through Congress) will not invest in us if we ever become an organization that is singularly focused on one mission or business program over another. I appreciate all you are doing to implement our current strategic plan that will ensure we are a thriving public service engineering organization in the years to come.

Finally, I ask that you keep those of us who are deployed (and their families) in your thoughts and prayers. There is nothing more important to our nation right now than completing the missions in Iraq, Afghanistan and on the Gulf Coast.

I appreciate what you do for our nation each and every day.

May God bless each and every one of you during this coming year! ■



Swans Draw Attention at Saylorville Lake

By Marvin Morris, photo by Jonathan Wuebker, Saylorville Lake

Seven swans a swimming, actually only five (two pictured), were seen in clear water in front of the Saylorville Dam control tower, which provided a gathering spot for five trumpeter swans and a good viewing area for bird watching visitors.

Both Saylorville Lake maintenance and ranger staff kept a look-out for unusual visitors (birds) as they completed their other duties and passed the information on to clerical staff to answer public inquiries.

The swans weren't the only birds drawing attention at the reservoir. Check out the other avian species which drew attention; this one nationwide ... see page 6. ■



On the 'Net



Drive Green with GSA
www.autochoice.gsa.gov



Coralville Lake Buys Green

By Mark Kane

As the price of gasoline rises, so does the cost of conducting ranger patrols for the District at its reservoirs and on the Mississippi and Illinois Rivers.

At Coralville Lake, the first step has been taken to move toward a more fuel-efficient vehicle to save Uncle Sam some money.

"I personally own a Toyota Prius and driving it through a campground one day I got to thinking that a hybrid might be just the thing for a ranger patrol vehicle," said John Castle, operations manager at Coralville Lake. "I felt the vehicle had to be a full hybrid, which means it can run on gas alone, electricity alone or both. The Prius and Ford Escape are one of the only full hybrids at this time."

Acquiring the eco-vehicle for the reservoir wasn't as easy as going to the local car lot, kicking the tires of some preferred models, and putting down a federal credit card.

"I started checking with the General Services Administration in 2005 and, at that time, they said they didn't have any hybrids available," said Castle. "In 2006, Escape hybrids were available, but GSA was charging an additional \$7,000 premium on new ones. We finally found a used one another agency was turning in during the fall of 2006. Not knowing for sure if the hybrid would work out, \$7,000 for a new one was more than we could afford to risk. After finding the vehicle, GSA said we had to get a waiver signed from Corps' Headquarters since it wasn't on the list of vehicles authorized by Headquarters. Headquarters wanted a memo signed by

the District Commander, or the deputy, agreeing to accept the hybrid. While I was arranging for the memo, President Bush made a speech and said the federal government should lead the way with hybrids. The next day I got a message from Headquarters saying we could go ahead with the Escape."

By the spring of last year, Coralville Lake had added the Ford Escape to its



The Ford Escape acquired by Coralville Lake through the General Services Administration. Photo by Randy Haas, Coralville Lake.

fleet of vehicles. Castle said its energy efficiency has lived up to expectations.

"We calculated the mileage since we have had it at 26 mpg," said Castle. "During the recreation season, ranger vehicles are driven slowly through the recreation areas, more than they are on the open road. Our other ranger vehicles average between 12 and 18 mpg."

Terry Escher, a park ranger at the reservoir, and the main driver of the vehicle, agrees with Castle in regard to the fuel efficiency, but said the vehicle has some cons as well.

"I like the fuel conservation, plus when the vehicle is in idle, it isn't putting out any exhaust fumes," said Escher. "However, the negative side I believe is that the vehicle has needed almost \$3,000 in repairs since we acquired it. That bothers me."

While the eco-car has required some repairs, the future of using the vehicle at Coralville Lake is optimistic.

"I drove the Escape around the project one day, going through each area and doing all the different types of driving the rangers routinely encounter, and I averaged 34 mpg, but I had already learned on my Prius," said Castle. "I am going to have a little training session before the recreation season next year and see if we can get better mileage."

With a positive outlook such as that, chances are good there will be additional eco-cars at the reservoir.

"I think we will probably be getting several more," said Castle. "We will still have a need for pickups and at least one larger Sport Utility Vehicle for towing, so we won't replace everything unless the technology spreads to larger

vehicles. But for vehicles just being driven for patrol purposes, they will work fine. One of the drawbacks is the premium GSA is charging. I hope it is just a short-term thing to see if there are more than average problems over the life of the vehicle. The purchase price is higher than a standard Escape, but not \$7,000. I think that when they get enough data, they will see that the increase in mileage offsets the higher purchase price. I would encourage others to consider the possibilities. If enough of us are ordering, maybe GSA can get better pricing." ■



Rare Sighting of Black-Tailed Gull Draws Attention at Reservoir

By Mark Kane

Smiling spectators glued to binoculars became a fixture at Saylorville Lake soon after the Nov. 16 spotting of the black-tailed gull near the reservoir in Tama County, Iowa.

Jeff Rose, the operations manager at Saylorville Lake, said seeing this gull in Iowa is a big deal.

"The black-tailed gull is easily Iowa's biggest find of the year," said Rose. "It probably ranks right up there in all-time finds within the state. This East Asia bird is an occasional vagrant to the Alaska coast and there just a very few recorded sightings in the lower 48. These sightings are really unique, because Iowa is



such an interior state."

The sighting was the first recorded Iowa sighting of the species.

"This is probably the biggest birding spectacle that Iowa has ever seen," said Steve Dinsmore, an Iowa State University bird expert, or ornithologist.

Said Doug Harr, Iowa's wildlife diversity coordinator, "They really are causing a stir."

No one can be sure how the bird ended up in Iowa, but they have been known to stray. Dinsmore estimates that more than 500 birders have visited Saylorville between the time it was first spotted until Dec. 3.

"We have had significant numbers of birders come to the reservoir this fall, especially when the wood stork and black vulture were located here in early October, but nothing of this magnitude," said Rose. "Lots of people came from adjacent states so they could see the gull, one person came from Ontario. So we have experienced some of our biggest bird excitement ever here."

Saylorville rangers reported seeing license plates from California, Missouri, Wisconsin, Colorado, Texas, the Dakotas, other Midwestern states and Ontario province in Canada.

Given the time of year and the lousy boating and swimming conditions, the betting line is the bird was the draw.

"The die-hard birders, they get to be fanatical almost," said Dinsmore.

Almost every year, someone sees one in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. A handful of sightings have been recorded in the northeastern United States, including Vermont. A couple of years ago, there was a sighting or two in Illinois and Wisconsin, Dinsmore said.

The Saylorville black-tailed gull has been seen at the dam, Sandpiper Beach and Cherry Glen recreation area. Rose said there were some accommodations made so people could see the bird.

"We opened some gates to lake access areas to allow people better vehicle access to parking and walking access to this bird who roams around a lot," said Rose. "The birders were appreciative, and I received thanks from several of the birders."

As of Dec. 3, the gull was still around the reservoir, but Rose wasn't optimistic about their extended stay.

"They're still here ... but I suspect the extreme temperatures of last night freezing a large portion of the lake may send this bird packing," said Rose.

No one knows for sure how the gull got here. However, ornithologists note that gulls just go where the water is. Dinsmore said the gull could have been caught in an unusual weather pattern before flying from lake to lake.

Natural Resource Specialist Scott Rolfes said Saylorville is considered tops in the state by birders as evidenced by references on Iowa Bird List (www.iowabirds.org).

"Beyond our ability to attract water birds; our forest cover, riparian zones, large grasslands attract bird species that are rare due to general lack of habitat in Iowa," said Rolfes. "This allows birders to explore multiple habitats in the Saylorville-Big Creek region in a single day and tally large numbers of species, especially during the spring and fall migrations. Coordinated management actions with the Corps, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, and Polk County Conservation on; recovering remnant prairies and Oak Savannas, small wetland habitat creation and restorations, managing pool levels and protection of existing habitat on all Corps lands have all worked together to improve the quality and diversify the habitat available."

Perry Beeman, Des Moines Register, contributed to this article.

More District Employees Converting to New Pay System in February

By Justine Barati, Corporate Communications

On Feb. 17, approximately 200 more employees will be converting from the General Schedule pay system to the National Security Personnel System. This is in addition to the more than 50 supervisors who converted in January. Employees who are converting to NSPS are non-bargaining unit GS employees.

The reason the Department of Defense has changed the system is to attract and retain top talent; to promote high performance; to improve employee, supervisor, and leadership accountability; and to provide the organization with the flexibility to respond to mission changes, to realign, reorganize, and reshape the workforce, to assign work, and to set pay.

Although NSPS provides us with a new way of rating and paying employees, there are many things about the personnel system that are not changing. The following items do not change: merit system principles, rules against prohibited personnel practices, whistleblower protection, veterans' preference rights, benefits, anti-discrimination laws, fundamental due process, overseas entitlements, training, leave and work schedules, other personnel systems in law, and the Fair Labor Standards Act.

"When employees convert to the new

system, they will not lose any pay or benefits," said Gretchen Leigh, Civilian Personnel Advisory Center.

Employees will be placed in new pay schedules and pay bands. To find out what career groups go with each pay schedule, employees need to consult page 11 of the "Blue Book," the NSPS Handbook provided at the mandatory NSPS training. They can also find out online by visiting the following site:

www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/conversion/index.html.

"The Blue Book is the key

source of data for employees converting to NSPS," said Leigh. "We made the handbook blue so that everyone would be able to find it on their desk and understand how important it is."

Under the new system, a level three rating is a good rating. That defines employees as valued performers. It is expected that most people will receive a level three, said Leigh. The rating scale is opposite of the Total Army Performance Evaluation System, with five being the best rating and one being the worst. Job objectives are also related to the strategic objectives of the organization and must be

measurable.

"One of the key differences is that salary increases and bonuses will now be provided through a pay pool," said Leigh. "Employees will receive a performance rating that will determine the number of shares they receive in the pay pool; they then will receive financial rewards based upon their number of shares."

"The new process is definitely some-



thing different for our employees, that is why everyone converting to NSPS must take a mandatory one-day training about the new system," said Leigh.

For more information on NSPS, please review the NSPS 101 training at www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/nsps101/nsps/index.htm and iSuccess at www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/iSuccess/.

Employees with additional questions can contact Leigh or Rachal Deahl, in the Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, or Justine Barati, the GS transition manager for NSPS and an employee in Corporate Communications. ■



On the 'Net

DoD NSPS: www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps

Army NSPS: www.cpol.army.mil/library/general/nsps/



American Bald Eagle Winter Season



Mississippi River Visitor Center Jan. 5 – Feb. 17 (Weekends Only)

- Combination eagle watches and Clock Tower tours.
- Hours are 9:30 a.m., 1 p.m. and 3 p.m.
- Reservations required. Group size is limited. Call (309) 794-5338

Dubuque Bald Eagle Days Jan. 19

- Outdoor viewing south of Lock and Dam 11 at A. Y. McDonald Park from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Live eagle programs by the World Bird Sanctuary at 9:30 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 3 p.m.
- Indoor exhibits from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Grand River Center - Port of Dubuque
- Trolley rides from the Grand River Center to the outdoor viewing area
- For more information call (563) 556-4372 or (563) 582-0881

Keokuk Bald Eagle Days Jan. 19-20

- Indoor programs and environmental fair at River City Mall in Keokuk, Iowa
- Live eagle programs on Jan. 19 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. and on Jan. 20 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.
- Outdoor viewing along the riverfront
- For more information call (800) 383-1219 or www.keokukiowatourism.org

LeClaire Bald Eagle Watch Jan. 26-27

- Outdoor viewing at Locks and Dam 14, Jan. 27 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Jan. 28 from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
- Indoor programs (at Mississippi Valley Welcome Center) Jan. 27 at 10 a.m., 11 a.m., and 12 p.m.; Jan. 28 at 1 p.m., 2 p.m., and 3 p.m.
- For more information call (563) 322-3911 x120

Quincy Bald Eagle Watch Jan. 27

- Outdoor viewing at Lock and Dam 21 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- For more information call (217) 228-0890



Eagle Watch 2008 Schedule



Illinois Waterway Visitor Center Bald Eagle Watch Weekend, Ottawa, Ill. Jan. 26-27

- Activities will take place between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. each day.
- There will be live eagles and raptors programs at noon, 2 p.m., and 4 p.m., presented by the Illinois Raptor Center.
- Rudy Vallejo, Kickapoo Eagle Dancer, will be presenting Native American dances honoring bald eagles both days
- Face painting is available from 10 a.m. to 4:40 p.m.
- Suet feeder making will be ongoing each day
- Illinois Audubon members will be on hand with their high-powered scopes to allow visitors to view the eagles feeding below the dam, flying across the face of the river bluffs, and perching in the trees of the Plum Island Eagle Sanctuary
- All the activities are free of charge, and food will be available both days
- For more information call (815) 667-4054

Bald Eagle Days

Pella Community Center & Lake Red Rock Feb. 9-10

- On Feb. 29, area school children are invited to attend the programs and on March 1, the programs, are open to the public
- Indoor presentations will include live eagles and other birds of prey. Programs will be given at Central College's Douwstra Auditorium and Graham Conference Center; the Douwstra Auditorium will host the live raptor programs presented by the Minnesota Raptor Center every hour from noon to 5 p.m., while the Graham Conference Center will be the site for an environmental fair from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m., which will include Wildlife Care Clinic programs, falconry programs, and S.O.A.R. (Save Our Avian Resources) from Iowa State University
- Various wildlife and environmental organizations will be on hand to educate, entertain and inform visitors on how they can be a responsible environmental steward and continue the successful comeback of the American bald eagle
- Admission is free – no reservations needed for the general public day
- Visitors are encouraged to use a free shuttle or drive to North Tailwater Recreation Area to view live bald eagles feeding below the Red Rock Dam. Event staff will be on hand from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to provide assistance with locating eagles using spotting scopes
- The Red Rock Visitor Center, located on the south end of the Red Rock Dam, will also be open to provide additional information about the programs and lake area
- The sponsors this year are the Corps, the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, the Marion County Conservation Board, Central College, the Pella Wildlife Company, Vermeer Manufacturing and the Red Rock Lake Association
- For more information call Junifer Kruse at (641) 828-7522 or (641) 628-8690

Saylorville Lake Bald Eagle Watch Feb. 25, 12 - 4 p.m.

- Begin at the Saylorville Lake visitor center for an eagle film, orientation, and to pick up your driving tour map and passport
- Follow the tour route to both indoor and outdoor viewing stops around Saylorville Lake filling your passport along the way
- Stops will include eagle viewing, through spotting scopes, along the Des Moines River and Saylorville Lake
- Attend a live eagle presentation at Jester Park Lodge at 1 p.m., 2 p.m., or 3 p.m
- Those who fill their passports will be entered into a drawing for eagle-watching prizes
- For more information call 515-276-4656, x6509





Larry Reever, lockmaster, Lock and Dam 20, puts a new pair of shoes on a child during a deployment in support of the Global War on Terrorism. Reever serves America as a civil servant in the Corps and as a Soldier in the Army Reserve. He served in theater from February 2003 through April 2004 with the reserves.

"We are a nation that has fought. Many have proven success in Iraq."

- Larry Reever, 1st Battalion commander, Military Police

Volunteering for GWOT Tours: Rewarding, Challenging, Enriching

By Ron Eschmann, Headquarters

Throughout U.S. history, Corps of Engineers civilians have had a proud tradition of stepping up to volunteer for worldwide deployment in support of military operations.

Continuing that tradition, many more have deployed overseas in support of the Global War on Terrorism. This critical mission is not over, and both the Afghanistan Engineer District and the Gulf Region Division are still seeking Corps civilians to fill a multitude of positions.

"At the present time, there are over 300 vacancy announcements that are listed on both the Army Civilian Personnel Online and USAJobs websites," said Helen Lenahan, chief, Headquarters deployment team. "Many of these announcements are listed as 'open continuous' because of the need to recruit talented, experienced people on an ongoing basis.

"Why volunteer?" said Lenahan. "Serving in Afghanistan, or Iraq, presents a unique opportunity for professional growth and personal enrichment. Many volunteer because they believe in the Corps' rebuilding mission in these countries, or they may volunteer out of sense of patriotic duty, or wanting to help people build a better life and future."

Additional volunteer benefits and incentives for federal employees may include temporary promotion opportunities; post differential, danger and overtime pay; and separate maintenance allowance among others.

Lt. Col. Kari Otto, AED deputy commander said, "No matter why you volunteer, it's very rewarding to be part of such a worthy cause. The projects are fast-paced in Afghanistan, and

it's not uncommon to see a major construction project completed during a six or 13-month deployment."

AED maintains its headquarters in Kabul, but there are area and resident offices located throughout the country to support the mission. Deployments in Afghanistan offer a wide range of experiences for volunteers to choose from, "and there's something for everyone," according to Bruce Huffman, AED Public Affairs officer. Corps employees based in Afghanistan might work out of Kandahar, Bagram, Gardez, Qalat.

GRD headquarters is located in Baghdad and has three district offices located in Tikrit, Tallil, and at Baghdad International Airport. Each district office has multiple locations that are co-located with coalition forces across Iraq.

While deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq, Corps employees will work with coalition partners, the State Department, and the host country to build health care clinics, schools, roads, power distribution facilities, and other infrastructure projects.

Col. Gary Pease, chief of staff, GRD, stated, "GRD is great personal and career experience. People assigned here have a level of responsibility and authority well beyond any job they have ever had before."

GRD employees work complex projects and interface with a wide variety of stakeholders, to include Iraqi contractors, Iraqi government officials, coalition partners, U.S. Department of State and US Agency for International Development employees.

"Most importantly," said Pease, "is that they leave Iraq feeling they have made a vital contribution in the birth of a free and

Another great starting place for those who are considering Corps duty in support of GWOT can be found at the Corps' site seen here and located at <http://cpolwapp.belvoir.army.mil/coe-gwot/>.

*major asset in the war
by civilian-acquired skills
to be instrumental in our
Iraq and Afghanistan."*

lockmaster, Lock and Dam 20, and
and sergeant major with the 327th
ice Battalion in the Army Reserve

democratic nation, which is essential to the future security of the United States. Additionally, they will grow personally and professionally, and return with a real feeling of satisfaction that comes from participating in such an important mission," he added.

"Our work here in Afghanistan is touching people's lives in a positive way, and you can see that everywhere you look," Otto said. "We are doing far more than building structures; we are creating a better future and quality of life for a country that has been at war for over 30 years."

The Corps is providing Afghans with things most people take for granted, such as roads, clean water and adequate health care, noted Otto.

"You really gain an appreciation for the possessions and opportunities you have as an American when you see someone drink clean water or get health care for the first time in their life," she said.

One question that is frequently asked is: What will my home away from home be like?

"Living conditions in GRD are excellent," said Pease. "All employees get their own room, which usually has a television, DVD player, and a bathroom. Also, food and transportation are free. Most GRD locations have gyms, libraries, movies, and other opportunities to rest and relax. Also, civilian employees are now authorized three home leaves during a one-year tour. Leave transportation is paid by the government. Additionally, communications with family and friends is "very easy and convenient," added Pease.

Similarly, Huffman with AED, responded, "Accommodations in Afghanistan are quite nice, with modern dining facilities, and

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers



Iraq Operations

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The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers needs your help in support of IRAQI reconstruction

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers continues to play a key role in defense operations as well as responding to natural disasters, both at home and abroad. Civilian employees have deployed in support of military operations throughout history. USACE civilians have been used in the past to support military operations, humanitarian relief, peace support operations, conflicts and war. USACE civilians will continue to be needed to support these types of operations in the future and must be prepared to provide support for these endeavors.

The Corps has an ongoing mission, one unprecedented in size and scope, to assist in rebuilding Iraq's infrastructure. There is also a similar, though smaller, mission in Afghanistan. Civilian employees are needed and are critical to the success of our missions. The Corps' objective is to ensure that qualified Army civilian employees are available in adequate numbers with skills to meet worldwide mission requirements during periods of national emergency, mobilization, war, military crisis or other contingencies.



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Create, Submit, and Check the Status of your Resume

nically equipped gyms, and living quarters, although some forward operating locations can be a bit more rustic." There are many opportunities for "rest and relaxation" leave and recreation while deployed, and most Corps employees in Afghanistan have phone and internet access in their individual rooms.

"This has been the most rewarding personal and professional experience I have ever had," said Curt Heckelman, Deputy for Programs and Project Management, Gulf Region North District. "You quickly realize that you are a part of something that is much, much larger than any individual effort you have done before now and for me, it has been a great honor. Heckelman said that every person works at a higher intensity and learns very quickly how to execute at a different level. "The pace is unrelenting, but it is also energizing. My most memorable experience is having the ability to teach, coach, and mentor individuals."

Currently, both AED and GRD are in need of area, resident, and project engineers. However, other mission support positions are also available for administrative support, budget analysts, contract specialists, program managers, public affairs specialists and many others. Applicants can self nominate through the Army Vacancy Announcement Board: <http://cpol.army.mil> or at USAJOBS.opm.gov.

USACE officials said that in the near future, AED (www.aed.usace.army.mil) and GRD (www.grd.usace.army.mil) will be producing videos that will be available online that highlight civilian employees living and work environments.

For first hand accounts of Corps member's tours, please visit: www.grd.usace.army.mil/news/postcards/index.asp.



HERCULES SUPPORTS WORK IN ST. LOUIS

The Illinois Waterway's heavy-lift crane, Hercules, arrives in a towing status, "boom down," with the mast lowered and boom secured for towing, to the St. Louis District.

The crane arrived on Jan. 10, to begin support to the district. The crane will be used to perform maintenance to bulkhead sections in the district's service yard until approximately Jan. 31.

After that, the Hercules' crew will take the crane to Lock and Dam 27 for continued maintenance and support to the St. Louis District.

Photo by George Stringham,
Public Affairs, St. Louis District. 📷

Civilian Corps Leader Development Portfolio

The Leader Development Portfolio is an on-line, on-demand, secure and anonymous leader self-development initiative designed to provide a forum for professionally guided leader self-reflection. This is a total Army leader self-development initiative, available to the entire Army--Active, Guard, Reserve, and DA Civilians, worldwide.

Leader development tools in the Leader Development Portfolio were designed by Army leaders to provide to-the-point, candid, useful information stored in a portfolio to give you a view of your leader development over time. The system is currently in use by more than 10,000 Army leaders. Leaders who have engaged the Leader Development Portfolio say the system is valuable, simple, and easy to use, even for busy supervisors and for those who

were on a deployment rotation.

There is no cost to use the system or to receive feedback. No one is tracking leader performance, compliance, or participation. It is important to understand that there are a number of safeguards built into the system that ensure that all responses and results are totally anonymous, confidential, and secure. No one can see the contents of a user's portfolio or even who has initiated a portfolio. Your portfolio exists solely for your leader self-development, and your participation is completely voluntary. It's available to the Army's Civilian leaders GS-11 and above.

For more information, please visit the Army Benchworks online at www.benchworks.army.mil. 📷



Investing In Our People

Around the District

District Commander's Award

Ann Marie Roarty, Logistics Management, received the November Commander's Award.

Roarty earned the award for taking on additional duties in support of the Corps' Logistics Activity, which included tracking and paying Visa International Merchant Purchase Authorization Card bills, follow-on accruals, and assisting in transportation matters.

Chuck Theiling, Programs and Project Management, received the October Commander's Award.

Theiling earned the award for successfully initiating and managing the completion of the first contract in the District using a Historically Black College/University (Southern University).

As a direct result of this contract, the District met its contracting goal for HBCU for the first time. The contract was for a pool-wide mussel survey of Pool 18 that was completed in October in support of the Navigation and Ecosystem Sustainability Program.

Charlene Carmack, Programs and Project Management, received the September Commander's Award.

Carmack earned the award for expeditiously completing the environmental assessment needed for the District's Finding of No Significant Impact required by September for interagency mussel coordination team implementation of the Higgins' Eye Pearly Mussel Relocation Plan.

Corps Part of Festival of Trees

By Justine Barati,
Corporate Communications

The Festival of Trees has been a tradition for years in the Quad Cities and, this last holiday season, the Corps of Engineers entered a tree in the miniature tree contest.

The Corps' tree received first place in the miniature non-traditional tree category.



The theme of the festival was "Where Treetops Glisten" and the Corps' tree highlighted its environmental program. It was called "The Environmental Corps." The tree was raffled off. The proceeds went to support the Quad City Arts.

Justine Barati, Corporate Communications, and Angie Freyermuth, Programs and Project Management, donated their own time and money to create the tree.

"I've wanted to make a Corps tree for the Festival of Trees for years, but I just didn't have the skill to create it. That's where Angie came in," said Barati.

"The Festival of Trees is a good opportunity for the Corps to educate the public about the important work we do to enhance the environment. I am really

excited to help promote this message as part of our outreach program," said Freyermuth.

The tree was on display throughout the festival, which ran from Nov. 16 to 25 at the River Center in Davenport, Iowa.

Lowest Lost-Time in Years



In Fiscal Year 2007, the Rock Island District achieved its lowest lost-time accident rate in at least eight years for civilian team members dating back to 1999

according to the Safety Office.

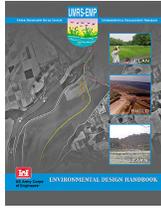
For contractor employee team members, the Safety Office reported that the District completed FY07 with zero contractor lost workdays.

Multi-District Effort Creates EMP Handbook

By Justine Barati,
Corporate Communications

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, botulism is a rare but serious paralytic illness caused by a nerve toxin that is produced by the bacterium *Clostridium botulinum*. Combating this disease was the challenge that faced the Corps and its partners after creating the Lake Chautauqua Habitat Rehabilitation and Enhancement Project. What they learned was that drying out the lake bottom during certain times of the year made the birds leave and avoid the

botulism toxins, a fact that was documented in the "Upper Mississippi River System Environmental Design Handbook." The handbook can be viewed online at:

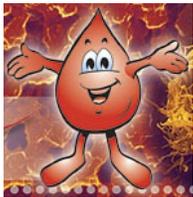


www.mvr.usace.army.mil/EMP/designhandbook.htm.

"The new handbook is the only place with design information for habitat projects," said Kara Mitvalsky from the Rock Island District of the Corps and one of the handbook's primary authors. "It is one stop shopping, and it should make us more efficient at habitat building. It ensures that we don't make the same mistakes again, and we build upon what we learn."

For more about the EMP Handbook go to the Tower Times Online.

District Meets Blood Donation Goal



District employees donated 30 units of blood and exceeded their goal of 25 units during a Mississippi Valley Regional Blood Center blood drive held at Navy Operational Support Center Rock Island, across from the Clock Tower Building.

JoAnn Wilgenbusch, Civilian Personnel Advisory Center, was the blood drive coordinator and thanked all those who donated during the Oct. 23rd blood drive.

The statistical breakout were as follows:

- Thirty units of blood collected (exceeded 25 unit goal)
- One deferral
- One no-show
- Ten walk-ins donated
- Six first time donors

Wilgenbusch stated in an e-mail that the Corps next semi-annual blood drive will be held June 5, in the Clock Tower Building in Conference Room A,B and C; and that the fall drive will be held at the same location on Oct. 23.

"Since we are bringing the drives back on site, I will be asking for volunteers to donate baked goods, such as: cookies, brownies, fudge, cupcakes, or whatever your heart desires so the donors can partake of homemade goodies," stated Wilgenbusch.

Congrats ...

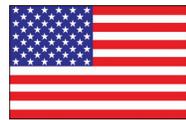


Congratulations to **Jon and Tara James**, Lock and Dam 16, on the birth of a baby boy, Grady Richard, Nov. 20. He was 8 pounds, 14 ounces, and 20½ inches long.

Retirements ...

James Luellen, civil engineering technician, Technical Support Branch, Operations Division, retired Dec. 22, after dedicating 20 years and five months to the federal government.

Sympathy ...



Jimmy Wyble, 61, Ankey, Iowa, died Dec. 13, at Iowa Methodist Medical Center, Ankeny.

Wyble worked 34 years for the federal government, which was split between the Soil Conservation Service and the Corps of Engineers.

He was a veteran and buried with military honors.



Carl Swiggett, 73, of Mazon, Ill., and formerly of Morris, Ill., died Dec. 1, at Edward Hospital in Naperville, Ill.

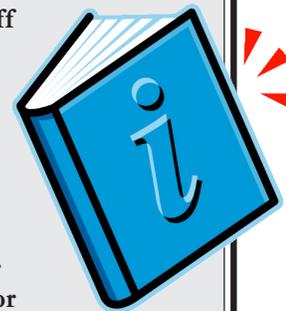
Swiggett retired from the District as a lock operator at Dresden Island Lock and Dam.

He served in the U.S. Army with the 82nd Airborne Division.

Need some help finding a book, an article or obscure report?

The USACE Technical Library, located on the lower level of the Clock Tower Building, has a trained library staff with a professional librarian available for your research.

The library staff conducts searches and obtains interlibrary loans of articles, reports and other pertinent material for your informational needs.



Their website - www.mvr.usace.army.mil/Library - offers an example to some of the many services provided. Call the District library at 309-794-5884 for more details.

NOTE

Please send achievements, births, and obituaries for this page to the editor at: mark.a.kane@usace.army.mil.

Your input enables us to inform the District about important happenings.

SUPPORT, SACRIFICE FOR CORPS

Thanks to our employees who are deployed or have completed duty in support of the Global War on Terrorism, as well as those who are deployed or have completed duty in support of Natural Disaster Relief Operations

Thank You For Serving!



A listing of all the current District employees who are, or have been, involved in supporting the Global War on Terrorism and Natural Disaster Relief Operations can be seen on the District's Internet at:



www.mvr.usace.army.mil/PublicAffairsOffice/TowerTimes/support-for-corps/support-for-corps.htm



Corps, WIU Sign Environmental Memorandum

Story and photo by Mark Kane

The Rock Island District and Western Illinois University signed a Memorandum of Understanding on Dec. 10 to build on the joint needs, capabilities, responsibilities, and interests of both agencies with the overall goal of understanding and protecting natural resources and enhancing environmental sustainability.

The ceremony, held at the WIU-Quad Cities campus on John Deere Road, Moline, Ill., included a welcome and explanation of the MOU by Roger Viadero, director of Western's Institute for Environmental Studies, and remarks from Col. Robert Sinkler, District Commander, and Western Illinois' President Al Goldfarb. Sinkler and Goldfarb then signed the MOU.

"Today we can produce things of much greater value for the American taxpayer by forming strong interagency teams and partnerships that include federal, state and local government organizations," said Sinkler. "Both the Corps and Western share a common vision for the Upper Mississippi River Valley."

"The Memorandum of Understanding between Western Illinois and the Corps is

a significant step for our University's presence and commitment in the Quad Cities," said WIU President Al Goldfarb. "This partnership enhances our strategic plan's value of social responsibility and our environmental planning and sustainability efforts, which are key features of the Quad Cities and Macomb-campus master plans."

"The MOU builds on significant prior work between Western and the Corps and seals the long-term commitment of both organizations to support regional missions of mutual interest," said Viadero. "Work conducted under this MOU will build on joint needs, capabilities, responsibilities and interests of both parties with the goals of understanding and protecting natural resources in support of environmental sustainability."

"The main objectives of the partnership are to promote environmental and socio-economic research, to increase knowledge related to the sustainable use and management of environmental resources and to promote the application of Geographic Information Systems for sustainable resource management," he said.



Col. Robert Sinkler, District Commander, signs the Corps/WIU Memorandum of Understanding at the WIU-Quad Cities campus with co-signer and Western Illinois' President Al Goldfarb.

"We are currently focusing our efforts on two things," said Sinkler. "The first is to achieve a greater balance between traditional water-resource demands and ecosystem objectives; and, the second is to restore the vitality of the environment from degradation caused by past development. In these efforts, we will rely heavily on Western Illinois University as a key member of our interagency team."

The Rock Island Argus/Moline Dispatch contributed to this article.

GENERAL SCHEDULE SALARY TABLE 2008

Incorporating the 2.5 percent General Schedule Increase and a Locality Payment of 13.18 percent
for the Locality Pay Area of Rest of U.S. Effective January 2008
(Net Increase: 2.99 percent)

Annual Rates by Grade and Step

Grade	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
1	\$ 19,293	\$ 19,937	\$ 20,578	\$ 21,217	\$ 21,858	\$ 22,235	\$ 22,869	\$ 23,509	\$ 23,534	\$ 24,135
2	21,691	22,207	22,925	23,534	23,796	24,496	25,195	25,894	26,594	27,293
3	23,667	24,456	25,245	26,034	26,823	27,611	28,400	29,189	29,978	30,767
4	26,569	27,455	28,341	29,228	30,114	31,000	31,886	32,772	33,659	34,545
5	29,726	30,716	31,706	32,697	33,687	34,677	35,668	36,658	37,648	38,639
6	33,135	34,239	35,344	36,448	37,553	38,658	39,762	40,867	41,972	43,076
7	36,822	38,049	39,276	40,503	41,729	42,956	44,183	45,410	46,637	47,864
8	40,779	42,138	43,497	44,857	46,216	47,575	48,935	50,294	51,653	53,012
9	45,040	46,542	48,044	49,546	51,048	52,549	54,051	55,553	57,055	58,557
10	49,600	51,254	52,907	54,561	56,214	57,868	59,521	61,175	62,828	64,482
11	54,494	56,310	58,127	59,944	61,760	63,577	65,393	67,210	69,026	70,843
12	65,315	67,493	69,670	71,848	74,025	76,203	78,381	80,558	82,736	84,913
13	77,670	80,259	82,849	85,438	88,028	90,618	93,207	95,797	98,386	100,976
14	91,781	94,840	97,900	100,959	104,018	107,077	110,137	113,196	116,255	119,314
15	107,962	111,562	115,161	118,760	122,359	125,958	129,557	133,156	136,755	140,355

Special salary rate tables for engineers and information technology career fields can be found on the Internet at <http://apps.opm.gov/ssr/tables/>.

National Security Personnel System pay tables are located at www.cpms.osd.mil/nsps/paytables.html.

The Wage Grade Salary Tables are not available at this date. These salary tables can be accessed from the Internet at www.cpms.osd.mil/wage, once they become available. From that page, choose Wage Schedules, then Current APF Wage Schedules. Most of the Rock Island District falls within area 53, which shows up under Iowa, otherwise pick your state and country.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
U.S. ARMY ENGINEER DISTRICT, ROCK ISLAND
CLOCK TOWER BLDG. - P.O. BOX 2004
ROCK ISLAND, IL 61204-2004

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