

The InterAct

March/April 2007

Professional Development, A Personal Choice

By Kristen Wilson P.E., PDC Chair

Many years ago, as a newly minted engineer, I stood up at a professional development conference "open mike" session and spoke words that still hold true today. "No matter who I work for, I am the one responsible for my life long learning." Since that fateful day, I have switched employers twice.

My employers have had different views on employer paid training. The company where I worked at the time of the conference did not feel the need to provide training opportunities to employees. I went to that conference as a local volunteer for a professional engineering society. The next employer informed me the first week on the job that I needed to attend a technical workshop and obtain my Certified Energy Manager status. I was also responsible for technical training of new staff. What a change from the previous situation. I am currently blessed with an employer who strongly believes in having well trained employees. This makes it much easier to get training opportunities paid for. My experience however has been that I can find learning opportunities regardless of who I work for.

There are always opportunities for anyone to obtain training to further their career opportunities. This training can be as simple as reading articles or books to as complicated as earning a college degree. Find out if there is a professional society that encompasses the type of work you do, or would like to do. If there is, consider joining, you'll likely be inundated with reading opportunities to develop your career. If you don't have a degree, consider going back to school. If you have a degree, consider a higher one. I

started my Master's degree while working for that first employer and finished it working for the second. It was well worth the money that I paid for the degree.

As a state employee, there are also several opportunities to obtain training through your agency, DOP or through ICSEW. This type of training is typically in the form of seminars and workshops that last anywhere from a half day to a few days in length. But there is also on-line training as well. The topics can range from first aid to beginning supervisory skills to computer application skills.

Look around and you may be surprised at the opportunity available to you. All you need to do is take the initiative. The first step is finding something that is of interest to you. Once you have identified something of interest to you, think through how this particular training will help you with your career path. This is important if you want your employer to pay for the training. Just remember it does not necessarily need to apply to your current position (although it helps), it could also apply to the career path that you have laid out for yourself.

Take the attitude that you own your career, and you will succeed.

Update From the Chair

By Dianna Gifford, ICSEW Chair

The mission of the ICSEW is "to advocate for issues faced by state employed women." I bring this up now because we have recently been working on being more active in the legislative process. We are also very interested in hearing from any state employee who is aware of a working condition or issue involving state employed women which they would like the ICSEW to address. Please feel free to contact me, any of our Board members, or any member of the ICSEW for information. Contact information for board members and myself are at: <http://www.icsew.wa.gov/members/default.htm>. Please tell us the situation and a proposed solution.

An example of one issue we are beginning to work on is working mothers who are breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is healthy for the mother and the baby, yet there are many nursing mothers who have difficulty finding a sanitary, private and safe place to use a breast pump while at work. It is my desire to help agencies identify at

least one location within each state employee occupied building that would meet the needs of nursing mothers. This place does not need to be elaborate or costly, but it should be somewhere other than a restroom toilet stall. Employers can accommodate breastfeeding mothers as simply as designating a room with shades on the windows and/or door.

The Department of Natural Resources has designated a small conference room that can be used for this purpose and is able to be reserved. This room has closeable shades on the glass door and window. I would encourage a similar type of facility be available in every building where employees work.

Don't Forget! March is Women's History Month

By Kelly Stowe, Communications Chair

March is Women's History Month and a great time to reflect on the women who have fought and struggled to gain the right to vote, pay equality between men and women and the freedoms that many of us take for granted.

It is also important to share with children the how far women have come and also how far we still have to go!

For more information of Women's History Month, please visit: www.history.com/minisites/womenhist

ICSEW Event Information

March 16, 2007 8:30 a.m. to noon- Beginning Self-Defense Location: Lacey Fire Station # 34 8407 Steilacoom Rd, Lacey, WA 98503

March 16, 2007, 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. - Intermediate Self-Defense Location: Lacey Fire Station # 34 8407 Steilacoom Rd, Lacey, WA 98503

March 19, 2007, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - Secrets to Grammar & Writing with Ms. Kathy Bote Location: Natural Resources Building, 1111 Washington Street SE, Rm #175 A & B, Olympia, WA 98504

April 17, 2007, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. - How to Conquer Stress and be a Powerful Communicator with Ms. Sandra Smith Location: Labor and Industries Auditorium 7273 Linderson Way SW, Tumwater, WA 98501

2007 Session Low Down

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Take Our Daughters and Sons to Work Day

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By Patricia Thronson, TOSDTW Chair

At the January Interagency Committee for State Employed Women's general membership meeting, Michelle Lucero, Education Committee Chair, presented the members with some great information on how the Legislature works. She shared information on how a bill becomes a law, how to contact your legislators, and just what activities would be happening during the 2007 Legislative Session.

If you are interested in any activities happening on the Capitol Campus, the Capitol Campus Events Calendar is <http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/campusactivities/>. Dairy Day is my favorite event day. The Washington Dairy Farmers give away icecream bars, Moo... magnets and all kinds of cow paraphernalia.

Want to sit in on a Committee hearing? Come on now, they can be very interesting. A recent Committee hearing on the proposed move of the Seattle Supersonics from Key Arena to an undetermined location on King County's Eastside

(Bellevue or Renton) caused quite a bit of interest. Former player and coach, Lenny Wilkins attended the hearing, testified in support of the move and signed quite a few autographs. You never know who is going to show-up to share their thoughts on a subject. Anyone can testify at a Public Hearing, even you. Check out the Committee Calendar at <http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/calendar/> and you are well on your way to a day of interesting activity.

Do you have a student in middle school? Would they like to be a page for the House of Representatives or Senate? It's not too late for your son or daughter to experience government at work through the page program offered by our State. Just contact <http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/StudentsPage/> and all of the information on the program is there for you.

With so many members interested in this information, I thought it might be helpful to let you know how to contact your Legislator. During your free time away from the workplace (never during working hours), you are welcome to call the Legislative Information Center's Legislative Hotline at 1-800-562-6000. This will connect you with one of many qualified operators who are glad to answer any question you might have about what is happening this Session. They can answer any question regarding pending legislation, bills that have passed, as well as direct you to many useful websites that will provide you with further information on any topic regarding state and federal government. They can even send a short message from you to your Legislators and the Governor.

A wonderful topical index to all Bills that are under consideration this Session can be found at <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/billsbytopic/Results.aspx?year=2007>. As you scan down the list of topics, you will see most everything that you can think of is before our lawmakers. Their task is quite daunting, yet they rely on your input to help make Washington a better place to live. Contact them with your point of view. They love to hear from their constituents.

Here are two bills on topics we have heard about in our General

Membership meetings.

Women's Suffrage

At the November 14, 2006 General Membership meeting, Shanna Stevenson, Director of the Women's History Consortium presented information on preparations being made for the 2010 Centennial Commemoration on Women's Suffrage in Washington State.

Senate Bill (SB) 5033 declares that the nineteenth day of July be recognized as women's suffrage day but shall not be considered a legal holiday for any purpose.

Washington Wellness Works

At the January meeting Mr. Scott Pritchard, Director from Washington Wellness Works, a division of the Health Care Authority, spoke to ICSEW members regarding the overall vision and direction of the Washington Wellness Works program. Here is the proposed legislation surrounding the Governor's vision for a healthier state through the program.

SB 5665 establishes the state employee health program and a state employee health demonstration project. This bill appropriates the sum of one million three hundred thousand dollars, or as much thereof as may be necessary, for the biennium ending June 30, 2009, from the general fund.

We will endeavor to keep you posted on the progress of these and other bills of interest as Session continues.

Speak Up Part IV

By Pam Johnson, Dept. of Licensing

This is the continuation of our series, "Speak Up" concerning issues in the workplace.

In the past three articles we have identified how to evaluate circumstances we encounter at work that may or may not constitute a problem. We've explored how to use our voice, use listening skills to assess the situation, and determine whether to let go completely or move forward. We also addressed available resources and our own attitudes that affect our issues and resolutions. In the last article we looked at possible next steps, endurance and cooperation elements. With these elements being addressed, now lets look at a series of actions.

1) Decision. First and foremost, decide if the issue warrants action or not. We must focus on real critical issues and not get petty. For example, if the issue was an unwelcome glance or an unusual look by a co-worker and it was a unique or temporary incident or similar circumstance, let it go! If the circumstance is not perpetual, why keep it alive? If the issue is an ongoing concern, then give it on-going attention. If you feel you need resources or to contact appropriate parties for intervention, then decide what is the best course of action and take it!

2) Prepare. Preparation is an important action. If you decide to use mediation or counsel, you need to present detailed information to relay your concerns effectively and identify your expectations that will resolve this matter permanently. List the facts including date, times, and persons present during direct conversations or included in emails or meetings. Keep assumptions, opinions and emotions out of it as much as possible. Using examples demonstrates the point more clearly and helps others understand your situation and see an overall clearer picture. Gather copies of the policies and statutes that are pertinent to the issues.

3) Action. If you prepared a plan

early on, review that plan to see how many actions you have taken to resolve the issues and if there are any actions undone on your list. Do you need help deciding your next course of action? You may seek advice from the Washington State Human Resources Department using the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), your agency Human Resource (HR) department, The Human Rights Commission (HRC), Department of Personnel (DOP) or other professional counsel such as an attorney to determine if a formal complaint is warranted. Seek advice only from qualified sources. This includes assistance from a shop steward or union representative who specializes in such matters, or is trained and experienced. Seeking advice does not compel you to file a grievance or complaint formally. Counsel in any form is an opportunity to gather information so you can make an informed decision so you feel comfortable. Action is information gathering, decision making, planning and motion.

4) Stand Firm: Do not be intimidated. This may be a trying time, but if you need to clear up a serious issue or make your workplace safe and productive again so you can do your best work, go forward. You are not alone in your pursuit. Most state employees have union representation that will assist them on workplace issues whether they are a union member or not. For example, If you do not feel comfortable attending a meeting with the opposing party or agency manager alone, bring along a supportive and knowledgeable person to the table. This supportive person should be qualified and experienced in conflict resolution, counseling or agency policies, your union contract and state statutes. "Stand for what you believe or you will fall for anything". That is sound advice from renowned scholars. Make a pact with yourself to stand for what's right, respect and adhere to your own values and hold on to your integrity. Do not be defensive or arrogant, but represent yourself with openness and honesty. Do not speculate or swap stories with co-

workers who may be adversely affected by hearing about your issues and feel the need to take sides or feel conflicted by disloyalty.

5) Have Faith: Do not use fear as your basis for silence. If you bury this deep down inside and let it continue to haunt you at work, it won't get any better on its own. You do not need to struggle with any feelings of guilt. Holding on to problems in the workplace affects your productivity and performance in subtle or very apparent ways. If your co-worker was not satisfied when resolving his issues easily or successfully, that does not mean you will not have a better experience. Consult with and have faith in managers and resources you trust and respect. Believe in your deepest beliefs without wavering.

6) Patience: This may be the hardest element to uphold. To remain firm in your beliefs and reach your objective, you must remain patient. Issues pertaining to administration of policies, procedures, statutes, contracts, and rules take time. For instance, if an agency supervisor or manager has been handling this matter with you, they may need to report this to upper management and await feedback. The agency may need time to research, order an investigation, query parties involved or discuss the complaint with the EAP or legal counsel. If you file a complaint or grievance with the Human Rights Commission (HRC), a Tort Claim against the state or other avenues available to state employees, involving your agency executive management, HR department, union or private counsel, don't be surprised if you do not receive prompt feedback. It may take one month or more for the complaint to get attention from impacted entities. That does not mean your complaint is not valid or important to the agency. It simply means they need time to process what happened when, where, why, etc. Be patient as others attempt to develop solutions or make suggestions. They may generate overall enhancements to the workplace that benefit your entire unit, so

keep your mind open to other ideas. There is more than one way to a positive outcome.

7) Care for yourself: When you pursue matters outside your normal activities and situations, it may cause more stress on your body and mind than you realize. Stress manifests itself in numerous ways physically and psychologically such as headaches, upset stomach or changes in hunger patterns, excessive fatigue, irritability or moodiness and sudden tearfulness or depression, just to name a few. Take extra good care of your body and mind with simple relaxation techniques and extra special attention to yourself such as warm baths, relaxing or aromatic decaf tea, or a piece of chocolate. Be sure to eat nutrient rich foods over and above your normal daily intake. Get extra rest. Avoid harmful or detrimental behaviors such as over indulgence in food, medications or alcohol. Limit caffeine and be sure to get as much exercise as you can. Don't let your mind linger all day on the complaint or negative thoughts. If you let yourself become consumed in the issue, you risk losing perspective and inhibit feeling peace and joy each day. Allow yourself 10-15 minutes per day to think about your issue, and then put it away until tomorrow. This a common tool used by professional counselors to help us minimize effects of stress on our bodies and mind. Stress can increase your risk of illness, so take extra good care of yourself or someone you know is under stress.

It's important to see the benefits of resolution in your work performance, environment of trust and respect in your unit, and protecting your health when you resolve issues you face at work.

These articles are intended as recommendations and not to be construed as guidance.

Agency in the Spotlight: DOC Goes Green and Sees Health Benefits

By Heidi Bale, DOC

When you think of the "Green" movement does the Pacific Northwest come to mind? I will bet that verdant forests, sparkling water, people hugging trees, and solar power dance through your thoughts. Now picture this; a "Green" Correctional Institution, Work Camp, or Pre Release facility. "No way!" you say? Way.

Experience has shown us that exposure to environmental toxins produces illness, birth defects, and learning deficits. Asthma, headaches, sick building syndrome, allergies, cancer, and hormone disruption are among the diagnoses that are surfacing in our children, family, friends, and co-workers. This exposure comes from everyday substances in our environments.

The motivation for Washington State to move towards a more sustainable, green state came from former governor Gary Locke. Executive Order 02-03 stated that all State agencies would strive for environmental sustainability. We set goals to: reduce dependence on non-renewable energy sources; reduce potable water use; reduce the use of toxic materials; increase the sustainability of our facilities; and reduce waste. Over the last three years the Washington State Department of Corrections has established baseline data, developed programs to address the goals, and implemented them throughout our prison system. These programs included increasing the post consumer recycled content of office paper, purchasing alternative fuel source vehicles for the fleet, and installing amalgam separators in our dental clinics.

The corrections environment did not lend itself easily to sustainability. Roadblocks included security concerns, possibly disrupting institutional routines, and staff buy in. Those first few months sustainability teams were struggling to find ways to transform current practices into greener ones. "Pick the low hanging fruit" was a motto advised by Coyote Ridge Correctional Center Superintendent Scott Frakes.

With that in mind, the facilities began to incorporate small changes to their environment. Turning off the lights, monitoring hot water use, examining the "facilities" (toilets, faucets, and showers heads) for low flow water volume. Changing to more efficient fluorescent lighting, printing on both

sides of copy paper, and collecting rain water became part of our daily routine. Institutions began to compost their grass and food waste, form partnerships with local and regional networks, and install Energy Star appliances. Correctional Industries at two facilities have found a less-toxic alternative to barium-based paint for their metal furniture. To date the Washington State Department of Corrections has the first LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certified correctional buildings in the country; a warehouse and a training center. Housing units are soon to follow, and the Washington State Department of Corrections headquarters is also in a LEED certified building.

I know what you're thinking. How does this make both staff and offenders healthier?

The physical environment, our habitat if you will, is the most important determinant of human health. By "greening" our habitat, whether it be home or work, we decrease the amount of toxins and pollutants that are ingested, absorbed, and inhaled into our bodies.

By improving ventilation we reduce mold and mildew growth, and improve air quality. There is a decrease in colds, allergies, asthma exacerbation, and respiratory illnesses. (Less use of sick days!) Skin irritation from exposure to Bio Diesel is less than a 4% soap and water solution. Sodium Chloride, in comparison to Bio Diesel, is nearly 10 times more toxic orally. This fuel, made from plant and animal oils, creates much less toxic exhausts, a bonus for those staff that works with machinery and vehicles during their shift. Push reel mowers used by offenders for mowing the grounds have no fuel or exhaust, provide great exercise, and have less risk for injury to the worker. Organic gardens produce fresh produce onsite for use in the facility kitchen, use no herbicides or pesticides, and provide offenders both emotional and social benefits from working with living plants and organisms. Green buildings incorporate maximized day-lighting and natural views. Studies have shown that patients and workers viewing green fields, trees, plants, and animals rather than a brick wall or courtyard are sick less often, have reduced need for pain and anxiety medication, have less depression, and decreased mortality

rate. Outside views also increase worker productivity, and less perceived stress. The overall health benefits to staff and offenders include decreased stress and agitation, which leads to a calmer institution and increased productivity for all involved. More offender jobs generated by recycling programs, gardening, composting, and grounds work build self esteem and instill marketable skills upon release.

How can you recruit staff to become involved? Limited staff time presents a constant challenge to implementing sustainability programs. The scope of the mandate is huge, staff is pulled in many directions, and sustainability is secondary to most people's jobs. Create Sustainability teams or committees. Place a bulletin board or display in a prominent area of public access and staff areas. Include "Green" articles in your facility newsletters and memos. Invite and involve your offenders, they live there!

In closing, I would like to offer some ideas in areas I think we can improve upon in the correctional healthcare arena. Health Care Units use equipment that contains mercury, (thermometers, sphygmomanometers) and other toxic chemicals. Their replacement and disposal should be carefully managed. Incinerating medical waste releases thousands of toxins into the air and water. Intravenous bags, catheters, tubing, instruments, and bio hazardous waste are incinerated by facilities daily. Please check with your removal service to determine if they practice environmentally safe means of disposing of your waste. What happens to all those prescription medications that are thrown away or "wasted" in the sink or trash? There are State and Federal regulations regarding the disposal of pharmaceuticals, and your department pharmacy staff can help you develop the proper method. Those extracted teeth with fillings cannot be disposed of in the usual "hot trash." The amalgams are considered hazardous waste. By installing amalgam separators the mer-

cury is prevented from entering the wastewater. Do you know where your x ray chemicals are going? The disposal and management of these chemicals leads to a good argument for digital films.

I will leave you with this quote by Joanna Macy; "If the world is to be healed...it will be by people who can open to the web of life that called us into being..."

Heidi Bale is a Registered Nurse based at headquarters, for the Washington State Department of Corrections. She can be reached at hhbale@doc1.wa.gov.

ICSEW Cell Phone Drive

Put Your Old Cell Phones to Good Use to Help Save Lives

The ICSEW conducts an ongoing "recycle your cell phone with rechargeable battery and cords drive." Donated cell phones are delivered to Verizon Hopeline, which supports non-profit organizations committed to combating domestic violence, providing emergency relief, and supporting health and education initiatives.

In 2006, ICSEW members collected 675 cell phones!

Verizon donates airtime and distributes phones nationally to domestic violence programs, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and local government and law enforcement agencies for domestic violence victims.

Send your old phones to Pam Johnson at the Department of Licensing. Mail to Mailstop 48201, or deliver to 2424 Bristol Court Drive, Olympia (near the Thurston County Courthouse.)

The InterAct is published by the Communications Subcommittee of the Interagency Committee of State Employed Women (ICSEW). Photocopying, distributing, or posting of this publication is strongly encouraged. This publication is available in alternate formats. Views stated in re-printed articles are informational and do not necessarily reflect the views of the ICSEW. All persons interested in submitting articles or ideas for this publication should contact their agency's ICSEW representative or:
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