



## Holiday Spirit in Allen County



*This sparkling 10-foot tree in the City-County Building lobby was designed and decorated by Sidonie Inman, Administrative Assistant, Building Maintenance Dept.*

### *Caring and Sharing*

The staff of the Small Claims Division of the Clerk's Office celebrates the holidays by sharing their good cheer with the less fortunate members of our community. The tradition began last year when they decided to "adopt" a family of three and provide gifts and food to make their Christmas a special one.

This year, the 14-member staff adopted a family of five through the Salvation Army. They pooled their cash contributions, then volunteers shopped for clothing, toys and other items on the family's wish list. All the items were delivered, unwrapped, to the Salvation Army by December 15 along with gift bags, boxes and wrapping paper and a gift certificate for groceries.

If your department is considering a similar project next year, Andera Griffin will be happy to share the details of their experience. Call her at 449-7362.

### *Just for the Fun of It*

The Treasurer's Office has celebrated the December holiday in a number of notable, perhaps infamous, ways. We have each brought a favorite holiday treat for one day. We usually have lunch together in a nice restaurant, such as Park Place Grill, give the Treasurer and Chief Deputy Treasurer their special gifts, such as Indianapolis Colts sweatshirts.

During one week we draw names and exchange gifts each day according to a predetermined category. Categories have been snowy (someone received Sno Bowl one year), used (a very brief bikini) or useless (a picture of an ex-spouse). These are all wrapped in plain brown paper, put under the tree at the beginning of the week, and ceremoniously unwrapped on each day according to the category. Lots of laughs!

One of our most successful holiday games was for everyone to write down the Christmas gift he/she always wanted but never got and put the papers in a basket. Everyone drew one out of the basket and read it aloud. Then everyone voted for who they thought wanted that gift. We kept score and awarded a prize to whomever got the most right. It's a good way to vent those deep-seated resentments that we've nursed for years! And have fun doing it. -- *By Sally Snider*

## HERE'S TO GOOD HEALTH

# Stress, Depression and the Holidays

For some people, the holidays bring unwelcome guests—stress and depression. In an effort to provide a perfect Hallmark holiday, you might find yourself facing a dizzying array of demands—work, parties, shopping, baking, cleaning, caring for elderly parents or kids on school break, and scores of other chores. So much for peace and joy!

Actually, with some practical tips, you can minimize the stress and depression that often accompany the holiday, and you may even end up enjoying the holidays more than you thought you would. Remember, one key to minimizing holiday stress and depression is knowing that the holidays often trigger these feelings.

### 12 Tips to Prevent Holiday Stress and Depression (from Mayo Clinic)

1. **Acknowledge your feelings.** If you recently had a death or other loss in the family, it's normal to feel sadness or grief. It's OK to take time to cry or express your feelings.
2. **Seek support.** Seek out family members or friends if you feel isolated or down. They can provide support and companionship. Enlist support for organizing holiday gatherings. You don't have to do it all alone.
3. **Be realistic.** As families change and grow, traditions and rituals often change as well. Hang on to those you can, but accept that you may have to let go of others.
4. **Set differences aside.** Try to accept family members and friends as they are. Practice forgiveness and set aside grievances until a more appropriate time. Be understanding if others get upset or distressed, as they are probably feeling the effects of holiday stress also.
5. **Stick to a budget.** Before you go shopping, decide how much you can afford to spend on gifts and other items. Then, stick to your budget. Don't try to buy happiness with expensive gifts.

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## Real Trees Require Special Care

By Ricky D. Kemery

*Purdue Horticulture Extension Educator*

Over 33 million Americans will purchase "real" Christmas trees this season. The tradition of using live trees for Christmas began long ago in Germany. Legend is that Martin Luther came up with the idea when noticing how lovely stars were when they were framed by an evergreen tree – hence the early use of candles to light trees. Christmas tree "lots" also began in Germany, when older women would sell trees in lots on the outskirts of towns. In America the first "trees" were actually small trees (often made of wood) that were used as table decorations in Pennsylvania Dutch households. Gradually the idea caught on, and "live" trees began to be used in the home. Each year, over 750,000 Hoosiers purchase cut trees. Over 25% of the trees are imported from other states. So it is important to keep the tree as fresh as possible after purchasing to reduce the risk of fire.

Many folks bang the trees on the ground or shake the trees to see if the needles fall off before they actually purchase a tree. Don't be shy about doing this. It is a good way to tell if the tree is fresh. Look for fresh sap at the base cut, and have the folks at the lot cut the tree base again (one inch above the original cut) before you take the tree home. If you don't set the tree up immediately, then store the tree in a cool garage or outbuilding. Place the tree in a bucket of water after cutting the stem before you bring it inside.

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## IDEAS FOR HOLIDAY GIFT GIVING

For the nature enthusiasts on your gift list, a trip to the Gift Shop at Fox Island or Metea county parks might be just the ticket to wrapping up your holiday shopping in a jiffy.

- Audubon series plush birds with authentic recorded bird calls.
- Plush versions of native animals such as raccoon, fox and skunk.
- Handmade bluebird and wren houses.
- A variety of nature books for adults and children including: butterflies, wildflowers, trees, astronomy, geology, mammals and reptiles.
- Compasses and handmade walking sticks.
- Science-related toys, stationery and park sweatshirts.

A great accompaniment to any of these gifts would be an Annual Pass for Allen County Parks. Annual Pass holders enjoy free entry to the parks, free fishing and mushroom hunting (Fox Island only.) Cost is \$15 for individuals and \$25 for families. Annual passes are valid for one full year from the date of purchase.

Park gift shops are located in the Fox Island and Metea Nature Centers. Hours are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Allen County Parks are open every day except Thanksgiving and Christmas.



# Recognized for Excellence

## **Therese Brown**

Allen County Clerk of the Circuit and Superior Courts Therese Brown was elected to the position of Treasurer of the Association of Indiana Counties (AIC) Board of Directors during the AIC's Annual Conference in October. She will continue as the AIC Northeast District Vice President until the AIC Spring District Meetings in April 2008.

Brown has worked in Allen County Government for nearly 29 years, serving as Auditor from 1995 through 2002 and Clerk of Courts from 2003 to the present. Brown has a wide knowledge base of local government issues through her service on various boards and committees throughout the years, including: Indiana State Clerks Associate-Legislative Committee, State Supreme Court Protection Order Committee, State Supreme Court Public Records Management Committee, and Indiana State Auditors Association-Northeast District Vice-President, 2002 Legislative Co-Chairman.

## **Bob Lee**

Allen County Treasurer Bob Lee has been elected President of the Indiana County Treasurers Association for 2008. As President, Lee will be the main contact for state legislators and county treasurers throughout the state. The association provides training and support for newly-elected treasurers, helping them to get off to a good start in their new positions. The organization also works closely with state legislators, carefully monitoring the financial impact of proposed legislation on taxpayers and local government bodies.

Lee has worked in Allen County Government for 17 years, serving as Financial Systems Analyst and Budget Analyst in the Auditor's Office and GIS Coordinator in the Planning Department before becoming Treasurer. He is currently serving his ninth year as Allen County Treasurer.

## **Lisa Blosser**

Allen County Auditor Lisa Blosser was named "Outstanding Auditor of the Year" last month at the Indiana Association of County Commissioners' fall conference in Indianapolis. She is serving her fifth year as Auditor, following eight years as Clerk of Courts and a total of 21 years in county government.

During Blosser's tenure, Allen County received its first ever perfect audit report from the Department of Local Government Finance. That report, coupled with a rainy day fund and a significant general fund reserve, led to an increase in the county's bond rating, which translates into lower interest costs to the county.

## **Vickie Hadley**

Vickie J. Hadley, CFCS, Allen County Extension Office Consumer and Family Science Educator, received the State Mid-Career Award from Epsilon Sigma Phi Cooperative Extension Professional Organization. The award recognizes outstanding performance during her 13 years of service to the Purdue Cooperative Extension Service in Allen County.

## **Bob Dispenza**

Bob Dispenza, Park and Education Director at Metea County Park, received the National Association for Interpretation (NAI) Master Front-Line Interpreter Award for 2007. The award was presented at NAI's national workshop in mid-November in Wichita, KS.

NAI Executive Director, Dr. Tim Merriman, said: "Bob has developed himself into an outstanding well-rounded interpreter of both natural and cultural history. He is equally adept at addressing a community's fears about the invasion of West Nile Virus-laden mosquitoes as getting into a costume to convincingly portray a Civil War Naval Officer. His dedication to NAI is exemplary. Bob truly exemplifies the skill and technique to be one of this year's Master Front-line Interpreter award recipients."

## **County Achievement Award**

Allen County Government has been recognized by the Association of Indiana Counties for its innovative and cost-effective approach to managing employee health care benefits. The "2007 County Achievement Award" was presented during the AIC fall conference in Indianapolis.

To be eligible for the award, the county's elected officials must have demonstrated substantial leadership and perseverance in finding creative solutions for a difficult problem and accomplished the task in cooperation with other county departments and offices. The project must be one that could be pursued by other counties and should result in a cost savings or increased efficiency and effectiveness of county government.

Diligent management of its self-funded health care resources by the Board of Commissioners, along with the recent addition of Health Savings Accounts, early retirement plans and the on-site Employee Health Clinic, has allowed Allen County to provide attractive medical benefits at a reasonable cost to employees while saving taxpayers' dollars.

## Holiday Stress continued

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6. **Plan ahead.** Set aside specific days for shopping, baking, visiting friends and other activities. Plan your menus and make one big food-shopping trip, which will prevent a last-minute scramble to buy forgotten items.
7. **Learn to say no.** Believe it or not, people will understand if you can't do certain projects or activities. If you say yes to only what you really want and can do, you'll avoid feeling resentful, bitter and overwhelmed.
8. **Don't abandon healthy habits.** Don't let the holidays become a dietary free-for-all. Some indulgence is fine, but overindulgence only adds to your feelings of stress and guilt. Have a healthy snack before attending a holiday party, so you won't go overboard on sweets. Get plenty of sleep and physical activity.
9. **Take a breather.** Make time for yourself, even if it's only 15 minutes, alone and without distractions. Steal away to a quiet place (maybe the bathtub), take a walk, listen to soothing music, or meditate.
10. **Rethink resolutions.** Resolutions can set you up for failure if they're unrealistic. Don't resolve to change your whole life. Instead, try to return to basic, healthy lifestyle routines within a reasonable time frame.
11. **Forget about perfection.** Holiday TV specials are filled with happy endings,



but in real life, problems/issues often come up that need to be addressed. Accept imperfections in yourself and others.

12. **Seek professional help if you need it.** Despite your best efforts, you may find yourself feeling persistently sad or anxious, plagued by physical complaints, unable to sleep, irritable and hopeless, or unable to face routine chores. If these feeling last for several weeks, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional.

*The staff of the  
County Employee Health Clinic  
wishes each of you a  
happy and healthy holiday season!*

## Real Trees continued

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The reason why one goes to all this trouble is to keep the tubes of the tree that are responsible for water uptake clear. If one waits too long before putting the tree into the well, then the tree will clog up the tubes with pitch to reduce its water loss. This is bad - the tree will be unable to transport water up into the tree – causing it to dry out quickly.

Clear, fresh water is fine to add to the tree well. Several household ingredients also may be added to the tree well to help keep the tree “fresh. The main idea here is to acidify the water to help keep the water-conducting “pipes” of the tree clear. Mix one 12 oz can of soda (or pop, as some folks call it) that contains sugar and citric acid with 12 oz. can of water and ¼ teaspoon of household bleach. Some folks will also add an aspirin (not Tylenol) to the mixture. Add enough of the mixture to fill the tree well. Keep pets and children away from the mix. I have known many an animal who thinks the tree well is a place for a free drink. This could be bad for the animal.

It is important to keep the tree fresh to reduce fire hazards. No “hard” research exists that proves the value of water “additives” to keep a tree fresh; though recent research by the USDA does support aspirin as a growth enhancer for trees. Once the holiday season is over, then make a resolution to recycle the tree in some manner to be an environmentally-responsible citizen.

## MILESTONES

### Recognizing years of County service:

#### 5 years

Jose Chacon, Highway  
Jim Mullett, Coliseum  
Jason Schuerman, Coliseum  
Patti Scharpenbert, Coliseum  
Dave Aldrich, Coliseum  
Nate Shaheen, Coliseum  
Gene Trabel, Coliseum  
Lois Cichocki, Coliseum  
Steven Hewes, Coliseum  
Ralph Ray, Coliseum  
Robert Shugert, Coliseum  
Connie Stahlhut, Coliseum

#### 10 years

David Albers, Highway  
Lara Dorsett, Highway  
Fred Kemnitz, Highway  
Lesli Kerfoot, Highway  
Bill Reuille, Highway  
Hal Williams, Highway  
Brad Riehle, Coliseum  
Vern Doehrman, Coliseum  
Maria Friesner, Coliseum  
Jim Millhouse, Coliseum  
Ken Symonds, Coliseum  
Doug Guillaume, Coliseum  
Denise McLaughlin, Coliseum  
Dan Newport, Coliseum

#### 15 years

Michele Remenschneider, Coliseum  
Webster Daniels, Coliseum  
Dick Gardner, Coliseum  
Bill McCleary, Coliseum  
Nancy McCleary, Coliseum  
Vern Ratcliff, Coliseum  
Ed Reader, Coliseum  
George Cook, Coliseum  
Colleen Brugh, Coliseum  
Richard Steinbacher, Coliseum

#### 20 years

Joel Hoffman, Highway  
Lori Mayers, Homeland Security  
Jeff Alcox, Coliseum

#### 25 years

Don Bobay, Coliseum  
Henry Harmeyer, Coliseum

#### 30 years

Judy Heck, Commissioners' Office  
Greg Bobay, Coliseum

# Employee News

## **New Employees**

- **Brent Wilson** and **Michelle Beard**, records deputy III, Clerk's Small Claims Division.

## **Transfers**

- **Marianne Stocks** has transferred from the Highway Department to records deputy III, Clerk's Small Claims Division.

## **Retirements**

- **Gary Ludban**, engineer, Highway Department, retired after 12 years of service with the County.
- **Dave Syndram**, field supervisor, Highway Department, retired after 43 years of service with the County.
- **Ron Vinson**, Highway South Garage, retired after 24 years of service with the County.

## **Babies**

- **Bill Royce**, property tax manager, Auditor's Office, has a new granddaughter, Elia Doust, born October 16.
- **Brenda Wright**, Purchasing Department, has a new granddaughter, Emma Marie Swygart, born September 20.
- **Frankie Gagnon**, special assessments deputy, Treasurer's Office, has a new granddaughter Liberty Paige Gasper, born in July.
- **Peggy Maines**, assistant finance deputy, Treasurer's Office, welcomed two new grandchildren this year - Oberon Constantine, born in September and Paige Gloria, born in October.
- **Sally Snider**, administrative secretary, Treasurer's Office, welcomed her first grandchild in May - Emmet David Anderson.

- **Jason Schuerman**, Memorial coliseum Operations Department, has a new daughter, Harmony, born September 27.
- **C J Steigmeyer**, Manager of Finance and Administration, Memorial Coliseum, has a new daughter, Anna Marie, born October 8.
- **Kathy Alcox**, bookkeeper, Memorial Coliseum, has a new grandson, Evan Patrick, born August 20. Evan's great-grandmother is **Patricia Easterday**, Department of Health.
- **Commissioner Linda Bloom** has a new grandson, Henry Walter, born September 29.

## **Weddings**

- **Katrina "Katie" Rorick**, secretary, Office of Homeland Security, married Brandon Scherer on Oct. 20.

## **Congratulations**

- **Michael Quirk**, St. Joe Township Assessor's Office, has achieved certification as a Level II Indiana Assessor-Appraiser.
- **Nancy Chapman**, Aboite Township Chief Deputy Assessor, has achieved certification as a Level II Indiana Assessor-Appraiser.
- **Dave Meyers**, Aboite Township Assessor's Office, has been appointed to the Property Tax Assessment Board of Appeals (PTABOA) and serves as the body's Vice President.
- **Dick Alfeld**, Chief Investigator, Coroner's Office, has been reappointed to the Indiana State Coroners Association Board of Directors for the 14th year.

## **Employee Appreciation Night**

**Mad Ants  
vs.  
Los Angeles  
Defenders**



**Sunday  
January 20  
1 p.m.**

The Fort Wayne Mad Ants professional basketball team will sponsor an Employee Appreciation Event for County and City employees with discounted tickets and special activities for kids. The game is Sunday, Jan. 20, 2008, at 1 p.m. The Mad Ants will face the Los Angeles Defenders in the Memorial Coliseum Arena.

Children of employees who purchase the first tickets will be part of the High-Five Tunnels for the game. Up to 110 kids may participate.

Ticket order forms will be distributed to departments soon via interoffice mail. Tickets must be purchased before January 14.

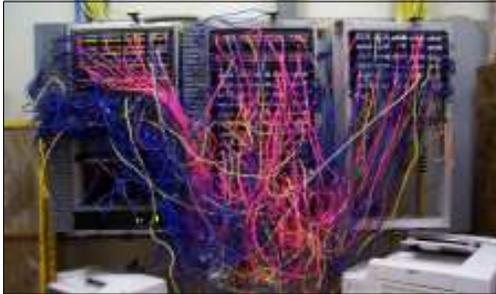
# Photo Gallery



A little Halloween fun in the City-County Building provided a peek at the alter-egos of some mild-mannered public servants.

**Left:** Human Resources Director Brian Dumford models appropriate office attire.

**Below:** Wayne Township Trustee Bev Zuber and staff represent the epitome of diversity in the workplace.



**Top left:** Everyone has an occasional bad hair day, but the situation with this technology control panel was clearly out of control.



**Left:** A little TLC from the IT folks, and now the area is neat, tidy and safe.



**Below:** Seventeen Allen County employees showed up in work clothes on a Saturday morning in September to help the residents of Riverhaven clean up their neighborhood. Before the work began, Commissioners Nelson Peters and Bill Brown posed with Grant Administrator Lin Wilson, who helped organize the project. The volunteers and residents filled five 40-yard dumpsters and collected over 200 tires.

## BENEFITS CORNER

# Special Enrollments for Health Insurance

Now that the 2008 open enrollment period is behind us, so are changes to our health care plan, right? Well, not exactly. There are two times you can make changes to your insurance plan: during the open enrollment period and when you experience a special enrollment event.

A special enrollment event includes:

- Change in legal marital status, including marriage, death of spouse, divorce, legal separation or annulment.
- Birth a baby, adoption or placement for adoption, or death of dependent.
- Gain or loss of other health coverage.
- Loss of eligibility of unmarried dependents including changes due to attainment of age or student status.

When a special event occurs you have a special window of opportunity to make changes to your plan within 30 days of the event. Notify the County Insurance Department and complete a new benefit election form within 30 days of your status change in order to make approved changes to your coverage. If you do not make the changes within the 30 day period, your next opportunity to make a change will be during open enrollment and effective on January 1st of the year that follows.

Be sure to contact the Insurance Department at 449-7689 within 30 days if you experience a change in status and we will assist you with making the appropriate changes to your coverage.

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**HRA Drawing** -- The winner of the first prize drawing for county employees who have completed the Health Risk Assessment process is Steve Doster, Allen County Juvenile Center. He received a \$250 gift certificate from Glenbrook Square. The next drawing will be in February. Contact the County Employee Health Clinic at 449-8660 to learn more about the HRA process.

## *Trying to eat healthy?*

# Check out the City County Cafeteria

So, you're striving for a heart-healthy lifestyle -- You've participated in the Health Risk Assessment offered by the County Employee Health Clinic. You walk during your breaks to increase your "step count." You eat less fat in general. And trans fats, no thank you!

Think you'll have to leave the CCB and pay a premium price for a low-fat restaurant meal? Think again.

Pam and Ken Arthur, operators of the City County Cafeteria since 1982, have recently implemented new cooking processes that remove up to seven additional grams of fat from their popular third- and quarter-pounder hamburger sandwiches. Ground beef used as an ingredient in other dishes is first boiled, then rinsed, to remove as much fat as possible.

A variety of deli-style sandwiches have been added to the menu, allowing patrons to choose from a selection of trans-fat-free buns and gourmet natural cheeses.

Ninety-nine percent of the Cafeteria's menu offerings - soups, salads, sandwiches, entrees and breakfast fare - are prepared from scratch, using fresh (not processed) ingredients.

The Cafeteria is located on the Basement Level of the City-County Building. Hours are 7:30 a.m. until 1:30 p.m.

## RECIPE EXCHANGE

### Doris Wims' Salsa

- 1 - 15oz can whole kernel corn
- 2 - 15oz cans diced tomatoes (I use Red Gold)
- 1 - 15oz can black beans
- 1 - bunch green onions
- 2 - Tbsp jalapeno peppers
- ¼ - Tsp garlic powder
- 1 - bunch cilantro (to taste)
- Lemon juice
- Cumin (to taste)
- 2 - Tbsp red onion

Drain beans and corn in colander.

In large container, add diced tomatoes, drained beans and corn. Add garlic, cumin and a squirt of lemon juice. Cut green onions into sauce. Add chopped red onion and put into salsa.

Refrigerate overnight so spices will blend. The longer salsa sits, the better it gets.

Serve with your favorite chips and enjoy!



### The ACE

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