

SNOWburst:

A Horizon Newsletter

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Horizon's Newest Members:

Chicago, IL

Julie Ambrose
Michael Krueger
Timothy Moran
Michael Rodrigues
Kristin Wheeler

Detroit Service Center

Nicole Randolph

Ft. Snelling Service Center

Della Ljungkull



Above: High-tech carolers Julie Ambrose and Mike McMahon (standing) regale the Property Management Service Center luncheon, where attendees including Toranda Roberson, Deborah Durkins, and Felicia Tuck (foreground), warmed up for the ensuing holiday party.

Let's face it: winter tests the patience of even the hardest Midwesterners. The barrage of snow in the Great Lakes Region can make ordinarily hard-working trainees drift off, flake out, and even slump in ways that *aren't* terrible, snow-based puns.

Luckily, PBS and Horizon were visited by three spirits to pull us out of the doldrums. The spirit of camaraderie turned up in force at the region's office parties (Pages 2-3). The spirit of competition powered the Trainee team to win #1 in the 2011 Trainee-Mentor Cup season (Page 4). And the spirit of charity animated trainees to donate time and money to the less fortunate (Page 2, Page 6).



Right: Jenny Johannsen shows off the duds that, um, "won" the Chicago Ugly Sweater Bar Crawl on December 11. (It was for charity. Honest.)

Coordinator's Corner

In the new year, resolve to renew your dedication

Happy New Year! Now is the time to renew and rejuvenate your passion for service. I'm sure many of you have made New Year's resolutions to improve your life, health, and relationships—but what about your career? What do you plan to do better in the new year to help your team, your division, or your service center?

I encourage each of you to take a step back and look at the work you do every day. Think about how it impacts your team

and, ultimately, PBS. If you don't know the reason behind what you're doing, ask someone. Everyone is contributing to the overall goal of the organization, but sometimes it's easy to lose sight of that because we get so overwhelmed with the day-to-day business. I believe once you know the purpose behind your job, it's easier to become, and stay, engaged.

The trainee group had a great year in 2010, and all of you ac-

complished a lot—individually and collectively. You worked hard, had fun, and built lasting relationships. I challenge you to make 2011 even better.

Set goals for yourself at work. Go outside your comfort zone and volunteer for a project you may not know much about, or introduce yourself to someone new every day until you've built a solid network. Let's make it a fantastic year!

-Teneshia Miller



Santa's trainee helpers delivery holiday joy

For the ninth year in a row, dozens of GSA employees took time to spread holiday cheer to nearly 190 children through the Letters To Santa program.

The Chicago *Sun-Times* collected letters written to "Santa" from children who are most in need of assistance throughout the Chicago area. These letters were then distributed to participating organizations, including GSA, whose members merily granted the wishes. For some children, this gift may be the only one received for Christmas.

Coordinated by Horizon's Service Committee, GSA employees

generously answered multiple letters and provided extra gifts for kids who may have been missed.

On December 7, Santa's Helpers, with cars filled to capacity, delivered gifts to the H.B. Stowe Fine and Performing Arts Academy on Chicago's West Side. The smiles and squeals from the children when they saw Santa's Helpers carrying the gifts was all the thanks needed. Thank you to everyone who helped make the holidays better for Chicago's kids.

-Abigail Graybill



A few trainees moonlighting for a slightly more jolly employer. From left to right: Marc Zitzer, Rebecca Olson, Julie Ambrose, Abigail Graybill, Ashley Tracy, Edgar Delgado, Mike McMahon

December brings cheer in many shapes, sizes, and garishly-patterned sweaters. Whether decking the halls in Milwaukee, hitting the town in the Twin Cities, or joining in the Wii reindeer games in Chicago, Great Lakes employees spread that cheer aplenty at their annual winter celebrations.

Seasons



Above: Liz Madison, Adam Hall, and Kristin Wheeler in bright spirits at the Chicago Holiday Party.

Left: The Minnesota/Wisconsin Service Center enjoyed a holiday repast at Lucky 13 Pub in Mendota Heights, MN on December 16. From left to right: Joe Perrizo, Dan Utes, Breanna Ackley, Cha You, Nate Asma, John Matthews, Scott Christensen, Joe Curtis, Jennifer Dens, Justin Weingartz, Meghan Coleman, Rosie Buchalski, Della Ljungkull.



Right: Caleb Hansen and Jenny Johannsen chose the Chicago Holiday Party to announce the launch of their intrepid crime-fighting/mystery-solving partnership. "Hansen & Johannsen" debuts this spring on CBS!



For reasons totally unknown, the award-winning Trainee Choir was not invited to reprise last year's captivating recital. All the more disappointing, as the group had composed an original ditty for the occasion. In lieu of its performance, Sunburst is proud to present the debut of what is destined to become a Yuletide classic, sung to the tune of "Frosty the Snowman".

Kenny the director was a trainee tormentor

With a Blackberry and a bottle of schnapps

And a curly head of hair

Billy the director is a customer guy they say

He worked for John but he had to move on

So Santa sent'em on his way

There must have been some magic in those

Trainees that they found

For when they started working hard

All those projects turned around

Ohhhhhhhhhhhh J. David

Was as happy as he could be

When the trainees said the goals were met

And we beat everybody

Thumpetty-thump-thump

Thumpetty-thump-thump

Look at Kenny go

Thumpetty-thump-thump

Thumpetty-thump-thump

Over the regions we go!

Left: Property Management's Stacia Davis (right), representing the trainee contingent in Milwaukee, has friends in high places—like Judge Margaret McGarity (left), taking in the holiday party at the Milwaukee Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse on December 8.



Greetings

Right: A merry band of carolers from Property Management: Justin Simmer and trainees Tom Monaweck, Josh Westhouse, Eric Firestone, and Alex Putnam prepare to go a-wassailing at Chicago's Holiday Party on December 16 at the Ralph H. Metcalfe Federal Building.





Trainees strike first in 2011 season

The Trainees hit the ground running—literally—in the first event of the FY 2010-11 Trainee-Mentor Cup Series on November 4. In what could only be described as true football conditions—icy temperatures, heavy hail, and strong winds—the squad shut out the Mentors 12-0 in flag football, a new addition to the five-event calendar this season.



The kick-off to the 2010-2011 Cup season is celebrated by trainees, mentors, and possibly a Yeti in there somewhere, for all we know.

Front row: An unidentifiable mass of people, most of whom, we presume, work for GSA. Middle row: See above. Back row: More of the same.

Both touchdowns were rushed in by quarterback Bill Winczner of PMSC, proving that there is indeed a spot for both him and Michael Vick in the NFL.

The Mentors were never able to get their offense clicking, being forced to punt twice and tossing away a game-high four interceptions (and no, DeAngelo Hall was not playing for the Trainees). Winczner, Mike Rodrigues (PMSC), Kyle Van Someren (D&C), and Ryan Beard (PMSC) each pulled in pick on defense. Beard's came on the Mentors' final futile drive, sealing the victory.

After losing the FY 2009-10 Cup by a series tally of 3-1-1, winning the first event this year gave the Trainees a measure of vengeance along with the early momentum.

Event #2, bowling, is sure to provide another invigorating match-up on February 3. The Mentors dominated on the lanes last year, but can they repeat that performance and tie the series? We will have to wait and see if that curly-haired man who looked eerily similar to Ken Kunesh will show up to lead his team once again.

-Ryan Beard & Andrew Daglas



Kalayil shares advice for fellow new kids

On January 10, the Great Lakes Region welcomed Ann Kalayil as its new Regional Administrator. She brings over 18 years of experience overseeing the IT infrastructure and programs at the University of Chicago, as well as an extensive background in local advocacy and public policy organizations.

Although clearly no newbie, she's just as new to GSA as any trainee, which is why we're happy to dub Ms. Kalayil an honorary Horizon member. Recently, she shared with *Sunburst* some of her thoughts on the challenges and opportunities faced by new employees. Below is an edited transcript of those interviews.

Here in Region 5 we have Horizon, a group for new employees.

What lessons can you share with your fellow "new kids" about starting in a new organization? How will you apply those lessons at GSA?

I think it's important making sure, first that you have all your IT stuff in order. I was really impressed that when I came here I had a box that had all my supplies in there, everything that I needed, which is really good. I don't think I've seen that anywhere else, and it's a very efficient way to do that.

And then, just starting to meet people. I don't plan to be cooped up in this office—as great as the view is, it can also be very distracting. Get to know the people you're going to be working with, get to know what their functions are. Because



regardless of what job you're doing, you're going to be working together with a group of people. It's impor-

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tant to know who those people are and what those resources are that can help you do the job.

Trainees are encouraged to do rotations in different divisions throughout the agency. Your own background includes many diverse disciplines. What are the benefits and challenges of that professional diversity?

To be able to be good at your job, you need to understand the entire business. Rotations throughout the agency allow you this opportunity to gain a broad understanding of how you are going to contribute to the success of the organization. If you keep this in mind when going through rotations, then it will be so helpful.

Basically, you can go through these rotations and look for the linkages between each line of operations. By following this paradigm, you will see that rotations can be fun, informative, and beneficial. I have found that there is a common thread that runs through all fields.

The trainee program provides new employees with coaches, to teach day-to-day duties, and mentors, to offer broader career assistance. Has anyone served as your coach or mentor at some point in your career?

I have not gone through any formalized coaching program. However, I have been fortunate to have some good friends, civic leaders, and of course family, who have all served at some point in time as mentors, role models, and just people you go to to sound things out. If the opportunity does exist for people to have a coach or a mentor, then this is really a wonderful thing to do. One can learn so much from someone who has experience. Throughout my career, I've learned so much from listening to people who have this experience and are willing to share this knowledge.

What advice would you give to young employees aspiring to leadership positions?

It's very important to dream. It's very important to have those aspirations, and have a clear plan to get to those goals. Take advantage of any kind of training. Take advantage of any kind of resources that are available. If there are mentorship opportunities, take advantage of those. You can learn so much from the people around you. Sometimes you may not have clear-cut goals, and these mentors can actually help you. If there isn't a formal mentorship program, then ask for someone that can be your mentor, and develop a plan and stay to it. It's good to explore.

There are so many resources here in GSA. Take advantage of those, because in the long run it will help you become a better person, a better leader.

-Andrew Daglas & Adam Hall

Horizon of Excellence

In every edition of the *Sunburst*, we like to shine the spotlight on a few top-performing trainees in **Horizon of Excellence**. In this edition, Amanda Ayers and Michael Rodrigues tackle difficult questions posed by *Sunburst* writer and fellow trainee Abigail Graybill.

Amanda Ayers

Program Analyst, Springfield, IL

What is your educational background?

Received a Bachelor of Business Administration in 2006 and a Masters of Business Administration in 2008, both from the University of Illinois-Springfield.

Who are your favorite sports teams?

I don't watch sports.

What do you enjoy doing outside of the office?

Hanging out with friends and family, exercising, Zumba Fitness, shopping, and doing karaoke.

If you knew that today was your last day on Earth, how would you spend it?

I'd spend it surrounded by my closest family and friends, and would also be spending a lot of time in prayer.

Three words your friends use to describe you?

Loyal, faithful, sarcastic.

What is your favorite movie?

Pretty In Pink.

What did you do before working at GSA?

After I received my master's degree, I moved to St. Louis as an assistant marketing manager for a publishing firm. Six weeks after I started, the company was sold and all of our jobs were lost. I was then hired by a business appraisal firm to do business valuations. A year after I started, the economy tanked and I was laid off. I was unemployed for eight months before GSA saved my life!

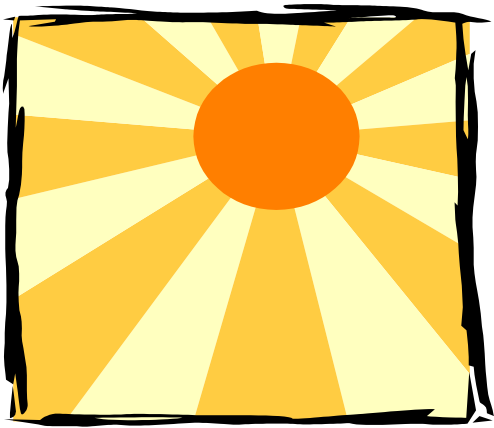
If you could have lunch with anyone, alive or deceased, who would it be and why?

Jesus. I would like to see for myself if he is really the amazing man the Bible describes him to be.

What is a random fact about yourself only a few people know about?

I can name all of the states in the United States in alphabetical order!





HORIZON
U.S. General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service

We hope you enjoyed this issue of Sunburst: A Horizon Newsletter! If you have any ideas for articles, or would like to submit your own, please send an email to andrew.daglas@gsa.gov. If you are interested in assisting Andrew with the Sunburst newsletter, please contact him.

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Horizon of Excellence

Michael Rodrigues

Contract Specialist, Chicago, IL

What is your educational background?

Graduated from Pennsylvania State University in 2006 with a major in economics.

Who are your favorite sports teams?

Da Bears, Cubs, Chicago Fire, Bulls, Blackhawks—all Chicago teams minus the Sox.

What do you enjoy doing outside of the office?

Sports: running, swimming, cycling (triathlons, half-marathons), and Capoeira (Brazilian martial art); dancing—Latin, club, anything that makes the body move; chilling with friends

If you knew that today was your last day on Earth, how would you spend it? Really?

Three words your friends use to describe you?

Kind, helpful, athletic.

What is your favorite movie? *Saving Private Ryan.*

What did you do before working at GSA?

U.S. Peace Corps volunteer.

If you could have lunch with anyone, alive or deceased, who would it be and why?

Too many to choose from....Gandhi.

What is a random fact about yourself only a few people know about?

I've swam with colonies of stingrays plenty of times.



Trainees raise money, glasses for CFC drive

This year, GSA raised \$140,333 to help charities throughout the world through the Combined Federal Campaign, exceeding the goal of \$134,325. Within Region 5, trainees were instrumental to that success.

Six of the 11 donation collectors from PBS were trainees. Amanda Zansitis, Kathryn Weissman, Jenny Johannsen, Yaniv Arazy, and Dana Wisheart took time to encourage co-workers to pledge. They also assisted in the Penny Wars game, which raised \$495.77, by totaling the jars every evening and explaining the rules to their floors.

Jenny, co-chair of Horizon's Social Committee, along with fellow Horizon chairs Edgar Delgado, Abigail



The shining faces of community service. Front: Caleb Hansen. Middle (l-r): Mike McMahon, Edgar Delgado, Rachel Bichsel, Carly Thompson, Jenny Johannsen, Stephanie Zajewski. Back: Will Chapman.

Graybill, Caleb Hansen, and Mike McMahon, even raised a few dollars in an ugly sweater contest/bar crawl. A \$5 entry fee, with proceeds going to

CFC, let trainees spread holiday cheer in their holiday worst!

After donning their hideous apparel, the trainees toured several local watering holes throughout the South Loop, including Jimmy Greens, Bar Louie, and Kasey's. It goes without saying that all in attendance were sure to maintain only the highest image of professionalism at all times.

The honor (if you can call it that) of Ugliest Sweater went to Jenny. Controversy rages over whether it was actually her Santa sweater or her red and green tights that sealed the victory, but a win's a win!

-Jenny Johannsen & Stephanie Zajewski