pRIde

FEBRUARY/MARCH 1997

THE NEWSLETTER BY AND FOR RHODE ISLAND STATE EMPLOYEES

WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN THE LIFE OF A CHILD? CONSIDER FOSTER CARE

By Sharon Schwartz-Vanderhoff

The Department of Children, Youth and Families is looking for people interested in becoming licensed as foster parents. There are children of all ages, from infancy through adolescence, who are in need of loving, nurturing foster homes.

Foster parents are licensed by DCYF to care for children who must temporarily leave their parents' homes. Many of these children have been abused and neglected, and are removed from their homes for their protection. Other children need alternative care because their families are experiencing a crisis, or because their special needs can not be met within the home. In most cases, DCYF will be working with the parents to help them resolve their problems so their children can be returned home as soon as it is safely possible.

Foster parents are DCYF's primary resource for children who need to be placed outside of their homes. A child's stay with a foster family may be short term and last for several days, or it may be long term and last for one or two years. DCYF is looking for foster parents who possess the special qualities needed to make a firm commitment to nurture a child for as long as that child needs a home.

The quality of care children receive while they are away from their homes is crucial. In addition to experiencing the problems which led to their entering foster care, all children suffer from the trauma of being separated from their families. Each child is assigned a social worker who assists the foster parents in coordinating the medical, educational, and supportive services the child needs to adjust.

The children in need of foster homes are of all ages and ethnic backgrounds and range from drug exposed infants to teen mothers. Some children have developmental disabilities or medical problems that require special attention. Other children may exhibit emotional or behavioral problems. Foster parents are asked to specify what type of child they are interested in caring for, and DCYF makes an effort to match children with foster families who can best meet their needs. There is presently a great need for African American and Latino foster parents and for foster families able to care for sibling groups. Prospective foster parents are given as much information as possible so that they can decide if their family is a good choice for a particular child.

Prospective foster parents must meet the following qualifications: be at least 21 years old; physically able to care for a child; have no history of substantiated child abuse and neglect charges or serious criminal convictions; and live in a home that meets fire codes. There are no minimum income requirements and no maximum age limit. Foster parents may be married or single; with or without children; own or rent their homes; and may be working parents. What all foster parents share in common is a love for children, a commitment to helping others, satisfaction in watching a child grow and develop, and the ability to love and let go.

In order to be licensed as foster parents, it is necessary to complete an application, have clearances done through DCYF and the Attorney General's Office, have a home study and fire inspection done, and attend a six week foster parent pre-service training program.

Foster parents receive board payments to assist in meeting the child's needs. Additionally, DCYF covers all of the child's medical expenses; pays the foster child's day care costs for working foster parents, and provides clothing allowances. Ongoing training and support services for foster parents are offered.

Foster care is temporary care, but the rewards and satisfaction can last a lifetime. If you would like to find out more about becoming a foster parent, please call **Robin Perez**, DCYF Foster Parent Recruiter at **277-4742** or **1-800-922-3737** (TDD 457-5336).

Rhode Island's children are everyone's responsibility.

The staff of the Department of Children, Youth and Families wishes to express heartfelt appreciation and thanks to all of the state agencies and employees who contributed so generously towards the Gifts for Teens Campaign during the holiday season.

The December/January issue of pRIde carried a front page appeal for contributions to the campaign, and DCYF received an outpouring of gifts and donations from offices, families, businesses, civic groups, churches, and individuals. Many donations were made in the name or memory of loved ones.

As a result of your overwhelming generosity, all teens received holiday gifts that were specific to their age group. Once again, Rhode Islanders rallied and opened up their hearts to ensure that all children had a memorable holiday.

The Department of DCYF extends its appreciation and thanks for your generosity. Your spirit of giving exemplified the true meaning of the holiday.

FROM THE GOVERNOR'S OFFICE

Executive Orders

96-16 11-18-96 State of Health and Sanitation Disaster emergency declared due to water main break.

96-16.1 12-02-96 Termination of State of Health and Sanitation Disaster emergency due to water main break.

97-1 1-9-97 Year 2000 Technology Correction Initiative.

For more information or copies of Executive Orders, call the **Office of the Executive Counsel, 277-2080, Ext. 258.**

NOTES FROM THE GENERAL TREASURER'S OFFICE

General Treasurer Nancy Mayer has made State financial information easier to obtain than ever before. Now available on the Treasury Departments Internet homepage are more than a dozen major public policy reports issued by her office as well as detailed information about retirement for Rhode Island State workers, teachers, and municipal members of the State retirement system. Mayer said, "I am committed to providing Rhode Islanders with access to public information.- The Treasury's webpage is intended to bring as much useful information to the public as possible."

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The General Treasurer has announced another cyber-first for the Rhode Island Treasury. The recent "Request for Proposals" ("RFP") to administer a tax-deferred saving program for more than 12,000 State workers is now on the Treasury's World Wide Web homepage. The Internet address for the Treasury homepage is: **http://uuv.state.-ri.us/treas/treas.htm**.

Mayer believes it is the first time that any Rhode Island State agency has issued such an RFP over the Internet. Mayer and the Rhode Island State Investment Commission solicited proposals from qualified firms to act as an administrator and provide mutual fund offerings to the State's Section 457 Deferred Compensation Employees Savings Plan. The Plan enables Rhode Island State employees to voluntarily save for their retirement on a tax-deferred basis. Mayer hopes the new plan, which will offer a selection of mutual funds, will increase participation. Currently, only about 2,500 State employees of an eligible 12,000 participate.

* * *

Yearly, Treasury employees "adopt" families identified by a local social service agency. This year, they teamed-up with the Genesis Center and the South Providence Neighborhood Ministries to make the holidays better for inner-city families in Providence. Thanksgiving food baskets were donated to the Genesis Center, a small non-profit agency that provides educational classes and day-care for individuals and families who come to the United States and who speak little or no English.

At Christmas, Treasury employees again opened their hearts and "adopted" two families through the South Providence Neighborhood Ministries. Scores of gifts were collected for the five children ranging in age from 5 months to 8 years. The Neighborhood Ministries is an ecumenical ministry that provides emergency services, after-school day care, educational classes, and business advisory services to inner city residents.

pRIde, the state employees' newsletter, is published bi-monthly by the Division of Human Resources, Department of Administration, William E. Powers Building, One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI 02908-5860. 277-2200

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Deadline for contributions to the April/May issue is March 10, 1997.

The State of Rhode Island is an equal opportunity employer and reasonable accommodations will be provided. For assistance, call EEO Office at 277-3990. (TDD 277-6144).

Office of Training and Development

Winter Courses

February	Fee
10 Speedwriting (ABC Shorthand)	$150
13 Supervisory and Mngmt Skills	110
14 Intro to Windows 3.1	20
19 Mental Health Law	20
25 Financial Planning - Start Now	20
27 Workers' Comp. Law and Practice	80
28 Intro to Personal Computers	40
March	
3 Intro to Windows 95	85
4 The Merger Process, What Happens to People	40
5 Building Positive Work Relationships	$80
5 Basic Spanish	80
6 Intro to Microsoft EXCEL for Windows	110
10 Intro to Word Perfect for Windows	110

March (continued)	Fee
11 Intro to Window's File Mngr	20
18 Intro to Personal Computers	40
20 Managing Employee Performance	110
25 Perceptions of People: How different are we?	50*
27 Labor Relations Issues for Supervisors	40

*Sponsored by the Office of Training and Development in cooperation with URI, the Minority Recruitment Office, and the Office of Refugee Resettlement/IHS.

For more information call the Office of Training and Development (OTD) at **277-2877**. For hearing impaired **TDD 277-6144**.

pRIde in PERFORMANCE

l-r: Barbara Welch, **GROW** *field worker; Omer Benoit; Warren Seese, also of* **GROW***; and Dan Thompson of the Division of Integrated Mental Health Services.*

Omer Benoit, a psychiatric social worker at MHRH, was recently honored with the **GROW** in America's "You've Made a World of Difference" award, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to community mental health.

Benoit is a **GROW** program sponsor at the Eleanor Slater Hospital on-site day program. The 12-step self-help/mutual-help program encourages personal growth and recovery for participants, through group problem-solving, education, and the establishment of a community network of friends and supports.

GROW sponsors must be thoughtful organizers who bring together participants, encouraging the emergence of a leader from among the group.

The award was announced at **GROW**'s 25th year Celebration in Illinois last fall, and was presented to Benoit at a recent **GROW** meeting.

In announcing the award, **Lorraine Keck**, President of **GROW** in America noted that Benoit's long-term commitment to GROW sponsorship at the hospital has been outstanding and has made a significant difference to **GROW**ers in the group.

In a letter to Benoit, Keck said, ". . . those in attendance from Rhode Island and others from Illinois who know you and your involvement with **GROW**, felt a deep sense of pride and enthusiasm as your name was mentioned as the recipient of this award."

A sentiment equally shared by **pRIde**.

Corrine Calise Russo (1), Director of the Salvatore Mancini Center on Aging in North Providence and **Kathleen McKeon** of Cranston, chief of home and community service for the state Department of Elderly Affairs (DEA), presented a lecture on elder care coordination and case management to participants at the American Society on Aging's International Conference held in early December in San Diego, California.

The presentation detailed results of a two-year elder care demonstration project which was conducted in Rhode Island. Over 900 persons attended the conference representing aging network agencies from the United States, Canada, Mexico, New Zealand, and nearly 100 other countries.

Calise-Russo is a North Providence resident and has served as the director of the Mancini Center for 20 years. Mckeon has worked with DEA for 22 years.

* * *

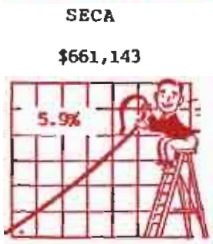
Congratulations to the Rhode Island Department of Health's **Office of Food Protection** for gaining national recognition in a recent survey of Food Regulatory Agencies.

The Center for Science in the Public Interest (CSPI) has singled-out the Office of Food Protection for having the best food safety requirements among the 45 states, cities and counties surveyed. The Office of Food Protection met 11 of the 12 key U.S. Food & Drug Administration (FDA) standards reviewed.

The CSPI study, Dine at Your Own Risk, released in November 1996, revealed that thousands of restaurants are not required by law to follow basic food safety standards such as cooking and refrigeration temperatures. Most states and localities, it was found, do not meet the restaurant food safety standards set by the FDA.

The Office of Food Protection's high marks are attributed to the recent adoption of the Rhode Island Food Code and the mandatory requirement for the Certification of Managers in Food Safety.

SECA CAMPAIGN A SUCCESS!



The season for saying **"thank you"** is always with us. In 1996, the State Employee Charitable Appeal raised a record amount — $661,143 — for community agencies and services. SECA's success is really the community's success!

The **5.9%** increase in the campaign can be attributed to the support of campaign chairperson, **Dr. Patricia Nolan** of the Department of Health, and that of campaign coordinators, loaned executives, volunteers, donors and staff. The following state departments had an increase of 20% or more in total dollars raised: Department of Administration, Department of Environmental Management, Department of Health, and the Narragansett Bay Commission. Congratulations to them; as a result, more people will be helped this year than in any other! A special closing ceremony will be held in February to highlight the top campaigns and volunteers during the campaign. Details will be sent to coordinators soon.

All too often, state employees hear negative stories in the media about the work they do. The SECA campaign is something positive they can and should be proud of. Thanks to everyone who participated!

25 THINGS TO BE HAPPY ABOUT...

1. Suddenly realizing you're over the flu
2. Receiving a handwritten letter in the mail
3. A pair of hand-knit woolen stockings
4. Hot soup on a cold winter day
5. Old-timers relating childhood memories
6. Eating brownies before they cool off
7. New England hitting 55 degrees in mid-winter
8. When your street finally gets plowed
9. Sleeping in on a snowy morning
10. A beautiful sunset
11. Three-day weekends
12. Home made donuts
13. Wondering who will be first to say, "I love you"
14. Enough reading material to last the weekend
15. Flying a kite at Sand Hill Cove
16. Strawberry shortcake for dessert on a wintry Sunday
17. A ride home from the car service department
18. Home made baked beans on a Saturday night
19. Time alone after the children are asleep
20. Receiving an unexpected check in the mail
21. A mug of hot chocolate after shoveling snow
22. An open fire on a stormy winter evening
23. Your dog's soft muzzle against your hand
24. Hot cinnamon rolls made from scratch
25. Days getting longer

—DJB.

VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

By Joseph V. Cardillo, Jr., Chair, Department of Administration Health and Safety Committee — Statewide Health and Safety Task Force.

Cardillo

Violence may occur in the workplace in one of three forms: harassment, a direct threat or a physical attack.

Harassment usually occurs when a hostile environment is created by physical contact, words that are not welcomed, or actions that are uncalled for. Harassment does not usually result in physical harm.

A **direct threat** is an expression of a sincere **intent** to cause an individual physical harm.

A **physical attack** is outward provocative aggression that results in assault and bodily injury with or without the use of weaponry.

Violence can mask itself in many forms: inappropriate sexual comments; the use of profane language; or a consistently argumentative behavior. Other symptoms of violence may include refusal to obey procedures, policies and protocol,— or loss of control altogether.

Incidents of workplace violence can be reduced by a thorough pre-employment screening of individuals, before they enter the workforce. A second suggested preventive action is the training of supervisors in early conflict intervention procedures or conflict resolution skills. Immediate intervention procedures must be applied in dealing with every reported incident.

Every department, division, agency and commission of state government should have a Health and Safety Committee. These committees, in concert with the Office of Training and Development, can then develop training courses for both management and employees. These courses should address stress management, conflict resolution and role playing, sexual harassment, basic safety procedures and violence prevention. In addition, each state facility should designate a crisis management team, a head safety officer or a crisis prevention officer. With these in place, the administration can then develop an Incident Response Plan that agencies can follow in resolving incidents of violence in the workplace.

A single violent incident can change our lives forever. Even a single occurrence is one too many. There are positive preventive steps that can be taken to defuse violence in the workplace.

DET's TELE-SERVE: A NEW BENEFIT TO CLIENTS

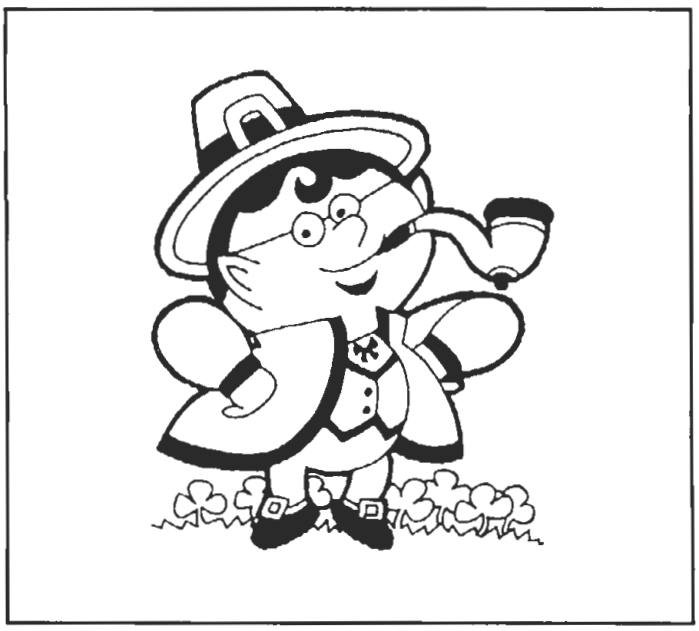
By Nancy L. Piffard

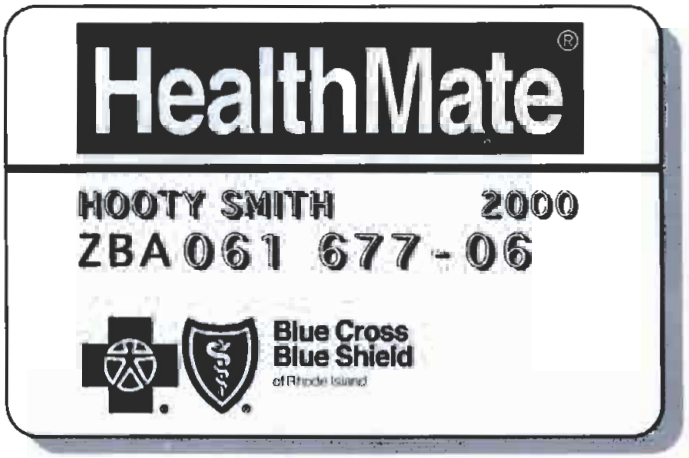
Since last May, unemployed workers in Rhode Island have had the option of using a touch tone telephone to certify their weekly eligibility to collect unemployment insurance (UI) benefits. Today, this easy to use automated payment service called **Tele-Serve** has reached an overwhelming usage rate of 80 percent!

"People like the fact that, after filing their initial claim, they no longer have to go into a local office," said DET Director **Lawrence G. Fitch**. "There are no forms to fill out and mail. A person can call at their convenience and be certain that a check will arrive within a day or two".

Before DET personnel arrive at work on Monday, the automated payment service has already processed over 65 percent of UI checks to be mailed out for the week. When the agency is closed for a holiday, the automated system continues to process payments.

This technology frees staff of the tedious paperwork process, allowing more time for other client services, such as helping people with career assessment, re-training opportunities and job placement.





No paperwork. No claim forms. But at least you have your health.

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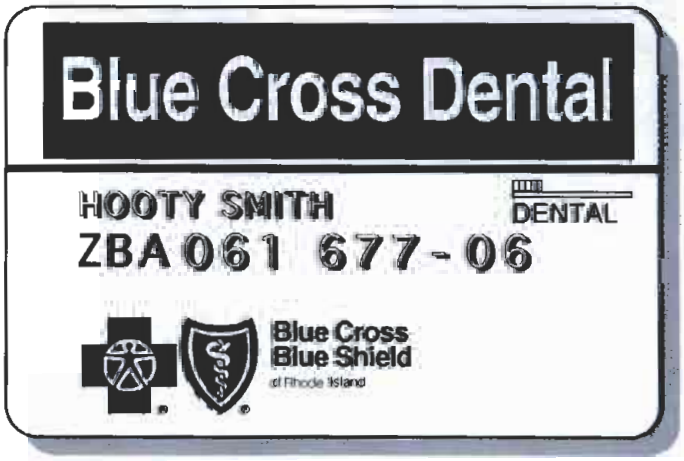

Enamel. Gold caps. Your lips. None of them cover your teeth more completely than Blue Cross Dental.

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