**NEWS FLASH**

3rd Annual Ornament Exchange  
December 6, 2000  
G. Rollie White Visitors Center  
Bring a wrapped ornament  
Price limit $5  
Lunch provided

**CHANGES**

**Judy Williams Eaton** is now located in the Administrative Offices all day.

**Michelle Hoelscher** recently joined the Transportation Operations Group along with the Mobile Systems Program (formerly known as AVTI and ALERT). She will mainly be providing support for the Mobile Systems Program and the Center for Professional Development.

**Linda Chatham** has joined the Safety & Structural Systems Division as a staff assistant.

**Carol Mendez** has moved to the Human Factors program of the Safety & Structural Systems Division as a Technical Assistant II.

**Carol Waddell,** Arlington office, married Jerry Court in August.

**APPLAUSE, APPLAUSE!!!!**

With only one week left in the State Employee Charitable Campaign, TTI has raised $13,758.00 or 106% of our goal.

47 TTI employees have donated, 33 by payroll deduction (which does not start until January 2001), and 14 gave a one-time gift.

The average gift is $292.72. 60% of those that donated gave more than $100.00.

Since TTI met your goal, everyone who has donated to this year’s campaign will receive tickets to an Aggie Athletic Event -- more details to come in mid-November.

A very sincere thanks to all TTI from Becca and Leah for a great two years. Becca and Leah also thank Jody Kollman for all her help in coordinating the donations from the Gilchrist Building this year.

ATTENTION, ATTENTION -- **Dennie Manry** has already agreed to be next year’s SECC Chair -- Go Dennie!!

**ALSO**

A hearty thanks to Becca Simons and Leah Smith for a job well done over the past two years. You make us proud!

Shanna

Becca Simons

**THIS ISSUE**

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The following suggestions are taken from a hand-out **Sheila Fields** brought back from a recent International Association of Administrative Professionals (IAAP) meeting. IAAP is an organization that strives to provide up-to-date and comprehensive professional development and networking opportunities. Monthly programs are designed to be educational and informative, with time for some fun. The local IAAP chapter meets the third Tuesday of each month. Contact Sheila for more information.

**E-Mail Etiquette**

- Don’t be a novelist. Keep messages concise and to the point.
- Don’t get caught up in too much punctuation. Reflect the importance of your message in your text, not your punctuation.
- Use plain text. HTML, colored and fancy fonts can cause gibberish and even worse, crashing on the other end.
- Initially address a person as you would in any other situation – Mr./Mrs./Ms. if you would call them by that title in a business situation. Bypass standard formalities in non-business situations.
- Always remember-THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A PRIVATE E-MAIL. Don’t send anything by e-mail that you would not want posted on the bulletin board. If you find yourself debating whether or not to send something personal by e-mail, either deliver it by hand or send it by snail mail.

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**WORD “EXPERTS” ??? …from Jessica Franklin**

In May, 2000 TTI Division Heads and Center Directors appointed members of their support staff to receive Word training and become TTI Word Experts! This core group of support staff will be able to assist other support staff and researchers with problems they may encounter when using Word.

Meetings of the support staff were held to determine how in-depth the training should be. From these meetings, numerous topics were identified as “musts”. Once the topics were determined, a search went out to various companies to provide the committee with the training we sought. Knowledge Alliance was selected and provided the training for the committee. The instructor was very knowledgeable and helpful in finding solutions to problems many of us encounter when using Word.

The instructor touched on the basics of “how to”. It is still trying to be determined if additional classes are going to be needed for this group to be classified as “experts”. However, they should be able to assist you with basic problems you might encounter. The committee includes:

- Jessica Franklin, Chair, Rail Research
- Beth Neilson, Transportation Operations
- Gary Sinton, NIS
- Michelle Hoelscher, AVT
- Cynthia Lowery, Environmental Mgmt.
- Maria Medrano, Traffic Analysis
- Cathy Bryan, Materials
- Marla Richardson, NIS
- Pam Rowe, Mobility Analysis
- Becca Simons, Admin
- Shanna Yates, Admin
- Rhonda Brinkman, ITEC
- Barbara Butler, Safety

Please feel free to contact anyone on this list and they will try to assist you with the problem. Many of us are still fighting the change from Word Perfect and find it so much easier to revert to Word Perfect when we are in a hurry to get that letter out, but the key to learning the program is use and repetition. The more you do something, the more you learn it and the easier it becomes.
Hear the word “Aggies” and not too far behind comes the word “traditions”. Another word often paired with the word “traditions” is “holidays”. One Aggie holiday tradition in many families, including my own, is always making sure Thanksgiving dinner is scheduled so as not to interfere with watching the A&M football game.

The origin of the word for tradition means “to hand over, deliver, entrust.” Traditions pass thoughts and behaviors from generation to generation. Especially important during the holidays, traditions offer a sense of security, stability, belonging, connectedness, and pride in family.

Several members of the support staff have shared traditions that their families observe.

About 15 years ago Adele (Bonnie’s mother-in-law) came up the idea of exchanging homemade ornaments with each other. The idea is that at some point our trees will all be decorated entirely with homemade ornaments. The group extends to Adele’s brothers and sisters so we usually have to make 10 or so to have enough to go around and we exchange them on Christmas Eve. Over the years some of us haven’t actually made the ornaments every year (ask Michelle Wright, (Bonnie’s sister-in-law) about me and the glue gun), but it’s okay if you find some really neat ones at craft shows or whatever."

Bonnie Duke

Because I’m such a pushy mother, my family has “enjoyed” several traditions at Christmas time. On Christmas Eve, we often eat tamales. Also, everyone goes out at the last minute to find a “dollar” present. They are wrapped without names. Everyone sits in a circle with his or her gift while someone, usually a grandfather, reads “The Night Before Christmas.” Each time the word “the” is said, presents are passed to the left. Each time the word “and” is read, presents pass to the right. At the end of the book, everyone keeps whatever package they end up holding. The more outlandish and “cheesy” the presents, the more fun. Grown-ups end up with crayons and kids can end up with weird salt and pepper shakers, but it is ok because the fun is finding the dumbest gift possible and the chaos of the passing of the presents.

Another Christmas Eve tradition which has long been inflicted on my family is that of a talent show. Everyone participates from grandparents to the youngest cousin. Even guests are required to perform. We have had serious readings, piano solos, trumpet solos, French horn solos, a nose harp solo (not a pretty sight), original poetry, original “rap”, complete with costumes, and many more displays of “talent”. One year the cousins worked all day on homemade costumes complete with reindeer horns for the youngest and a pillow case “beard” which kept falling off for their acting out of “The Night Before Christmas”. Of course, it is all recorded. It is so much fun to see the kids as they have grown and to relive the good memories by video.

Shanna Yates

Grandmothers baking holiday cookies with the grandchildren.

Lisa Patke
I like to make things though, so I am making each of our grandkids (3 of them) a stocking, each with a biblical theme, and every year after this, I will make them an ornament.

Personally, my most treasured Christmas tradition is to have the whole family go to Christmas Eve Church services together. My Dad used to read my kids the Christmas Story on Christmas Eve when they were small, which is a precious memory.

My girls' (18 and 21) favorite tradition is decorating the tree while we listen to Christmas music or watch the animated TV specials, eat homemade Christmas cookies and drink hot chocolate (even if its 70 degrees or more outside). When they were little, we would go out, pick and cut down a real tree. After we put it up and I got the lights on it, they would help put the ornaments on. Missy and her older sister, Angie, each had their favorite ornaments to hang, usually all on a few chosen, if overladen branches. The end result, while not quite symmetrical to the trained eye, was Christmas Tree perfection in the shining eyes of those two excited little girls. Afterward they would lie in the floor with all the other lights off, admiring the shimmering lights and sparkling ornaments, and excitedly anticipate the gifts that would soon start appearing under the tree.

When they were growing up, I did something special with my girls a few times that I wish we had done more often. We took gifts to people in the local nursing homes. I would call a few weeks before Christmas and ask for the names of some of the patients who didn't have any family to bring them gifts, and what, if any special needs they had, like dietary restrictions, paralysis, blindness, etc. We would fix them each a gift basket or a stocking. We would fill them with things like candies (sugar free if they were diabetic...), lotion, warm slippers or socks, a small toy (like a doll, stuffed animal or matchbox car), a pretty scarf or sachet for the ladies and maybe handkerchiefs or gloves for the men, if they could write, note cards, or just whatever we could find that might bring them some pleasure. We delivered them either on Christmas Eve, or whenever they had their Christmas party (depending on the staff's preference). We would dress up in Santa hats and introduce ourselves to the people and, if they were able and wanted to, we would visit with them a little. I felt it was important for my kids to see and know these precious people and not be afraid of them. I also wanted the girls to understand how much they had--and how important it was to share it. Not just the material things, but sharing God's love, the best Christmas gift of all. I wanted them to understand that if you want to really "keep" such a gift of the spirit, you have to pass it along to others. I believe that was one of the most rewarding things I ever did with my children, at Christmas, or any other time. I hope it is something they will do with their children too someday.

Carol Waddell

When (we) were young, we would always buy the Christmas tree before my brother's birthday. Then we would all decorate it with our Mommy's help. Once it was finished Mommy would play "Oh Christmas Tree" on this old record player, and we would all hold hands and dance around the tree singing with the record. 

Cindy Busa

"Traditions are the always in life, the rituals and customs that build common memories for children, families, and friends, offer comfort and stability in good times and in bad, and create a sense of family and community identity." Nurture the traditions you cherish. Entrust them to your family and friends. 

Shanna Yates