It is our belief that every person should have fair and equal access to opportunities for success and prosperity. We realized that ODOT might not be doing everything it could to provide access to opportunities and so we looked at ways to strengthen the department’s approach to diversity and to expand access to opportunities to Ohio’s small, minority and disadvantaged businesses. Toward that end, ODOT hired a team of consultants to conduct a disparity study to determine whether Ohio’s small, minority and disadvantaged businesses were receiving their fair share of ODOT contracts. The study’s final report, which focused on ODOT contracting dollars received by African American-owned firms, was released in April 2016. The study showed that there was a disparity of utilization identified in the study. One of the ways that ODOT intends to do this is by seeking a waiver from the Federal Highway Administration to allow ODOT to implement race-conscious goals on its projects. ODOT submitted its waiver request on April 15, 2016 and is awaiting a response from FHWA.

While ODOT awaits a response from FHWA, the department will continue to pursue the aggressive and innovative range of efforts through the work of the Division of Opportunity, Diversity & Inclusion.

For more information about the Disparity Study, visit transportation.ohio.gov/disparity.

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**‘Friend to Everyone’**

Monday, May 9, ODOT lost one of its finest team members. Joyce Miller, public information officer with District 3, passed away following an automobile accident. She was 33 years old.

Joyce began her career at ODOT in District 4 when she was first hired as a summer student for two seasons in 2001. She later served as an intern with District 3’s Public Information Office and received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Ashland University in 2004. She was hired as a public information specialist with District 3 and assumed her role as district PIO in 2015.

Known for her outgoing and always-pleasant personality, Joyce was a friend to everyone in the district and all of those she worked with.

“It isn’t hard to express how I felt about Joyce,” said Judy Plato, who worked with Joyce every day in the District 3 Deputy Director’s Office. “I loved everything about her. She was a true joy to be with.”

Always one to propose a fun, new idea regarding how we could better highlight ODOT employees and their work, she was a blessing to all of her colleagues. Her eye for detail and creative touch made the district’s internal and external communications efforts a great success.

“Joyce was an amazing mentor and friend with an infectious laugh that always filled the office,” explained Haley Donofrio, District 3 public information officer.

“With a team dominated by systematic thinking engineers, Joyce added an element of creativity and non-traditional problem solving,” added Tim Farley, the District 3 highway management administrator. “She was the creative side of the District 3 team.”

“Joyce knew no stranger, and you could not help but want to get to know her and to be her friend,” said Jacqui Visintine, District 3 labor relations officer.

“I think one thing everyone loved about Joyce was the fact she wasn’t afraid to have fun at work,” said Matt Miller, District 3 business and human resources administrator. “Even though on any given day she was fully prepared to field a reporter’s question regarding any of our many construction projects with charm and finesse—knowing more about the project than possibly anyone else in our district—she was also the one who was ready to lead the effort to toilet-paper someone’s office for their 50th birthday! She is survived by her husband, Galen, and their two children, Jillian and Mark.

“Those who spent any amount of time with Joyce soon learned that her faith and her family were the two great loves of her life. Not only was she successful here at ODOT, but she truly lived a life of significance,” said District 3 Deputy Director Howard Huebner. “We will miss her.”

Contributions may be sent to: ‘In Memory of Joyce R. Miller’ New Pointe Community Church 1741 Oak Hill Rd. Wooster, OH 44691
LITTER VOLUNTEERS ‘KICK BUTT’

District 6 – ‘Kick Butt’ Cbus

Each year, ODOT District 6 partners with the city’s Keep Columbus Beautiful Program to “kick butt” or clean up litter and cigarette butts on highway ramps. In March, a total of 432 volunteers cleaned 11 tons of litter and approximately 300,000 cigarette butts from Columbus freeway exit and entrance ramps this year. Laid end-to-end, the discarded butts picked up in one day would stretch for 4.5 miles. It’s a dirty job, but someone had to do it.

Photo courtesy of City of Columbus Department of Public Service

District 7

Adopt-A-Highway groups in District 7 cleaned up their designated stretches of roadway during the weekend of June 4th, to coincide with the CLEANUpCleveland event in Cleveland. District 7 groups earned two clean up credits for volunteering that weekend. Adopt-A-Highway groups are required to pick up a minimum of four times per year.

Photo by Joyce Wolfe, District 7

District 8

Hamilton County Manager Justin Kemp preps volunteers in District 8 to embark on the 2016 State Roadway Cleanup in Cincinnati. A total of 1,045 bags of trash were collected in Hamilton County.

Photo by Liz Lyons, District 8

One truck, many uses

Picture this: a Ford 550 truck equipped with four different truck beds for different jobs. The flat bed for hauling equipment and debris, the chipper box for wood mulch during tree trimming operations, and the dump bed to haul smaller loads of materials. A plow and salt hopper can also be added for winter operations. Best of all, these changes can be made in five minutes.

This new piece of equipment, the first of its kind, is being used in Portage County. A partnership between the district garage and the county mechanics help to make the various bed configurations possible. Portage presents some unique service challenges to its highway technicians: plowing two rest areas, the local Ohio State Patrol office, service calls to interstate turnarounds and a park and ride. These are all areas where a smaller, multi-use vehicle would be more useful than a large tandem or single axle truck. And it has been working.

“We used this truck during a snow storm in March for the first time and it worked well,” said Portage County Manager Mark Griffiths. “This truck will save money by helping to keep our fleet of trucks at the proper number while still being versatile in the jobs we can complete.”

New bed frames can be purchased for any future needs. A culvert bed or container is currently being explored, which could be dropped off at a job site with everything needed to complete a project, negating multiple trips with tools and supplies, or having to leave a truck parked at the job site. Instead the swap loader could move on to another job.
**Operation ‘Put a Lid on It’**

Case #00025678-23, Official Mission Debriefing
Case Officer: Matt Bruning, Central Office

**THE SITUATION:** The state of Ohio has 4,207 miles of bike routes and trails, including the Ohio to Erie Trail, which connects Cincinnati and Cleveland. Since 2008, ODOT has invested $60 million into the “Safe Routes to School” program, which builds sidewalks and improves street crossings and encourages children to walk or bike to school safely.

**THE PROBLEM:** Each year, nearly 50,000 people nationally suffer bicycle-related injuries that could have been prevented.

**THE NEED:** Getting riders, especially younger ones, to use bicycle helmets. “The purpose of the bike helmet is to prevent those really serious brain injuries and even death. We know that 75 percent of pediatric bicycle-related fatalities would have been prevented if the child was wearing a bike helmet,” said Dr. Sarah Denny with Nationwide Children’s Hospital in Columbus.

**THE OPERATION:** The “Put a Lid on It” campaign: a partnership between ODOT and the Ohio Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics is formed with the goal to hand out free bicycle helmets to children during Bike Helmet Safety Awareness Week held in May.

**THE RESULT:** A record number of free bicycle helmets - more than 10,000 items—were handed out to law enforcement, schools, and other civic organizations for distribution. These groups later gave them to children in need later in the month.

**THE FINAL WORD:** “Summer is here and children are getting out to enjoy the great outdoors on their bikes; we want them to be as safe as possible by having the right equipment,” said ODOT Director Jerry Wray. “We’re happy to be a partner in this effort to get helmets to children who may not otherwise have easy access to them.”

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**Saving ‘ODOT’**

Theresa Polllick, District 2

It’s not the kind of thing you usually find on your way to work— or anywhere else. ODOT Mechanic Buddy Malone was making his way to work one late March morning when he noticed a large, undamaged aquarium along the side of the road. Backing up his car, he discovered, to his surprise, a seven-foot long boa constrictor laying nearby.

Temperatures were below freezing that morning, and the snake was not moving: “Its skin color was dull and Malone assumed it was in shock. In spite of not being a fan of snakes, he decided to help.

“I took my foot and slid him back in the aquarium, put him in my trunk and came to work with him,” explained Malone.

He also did what all employees should do if they come upon a strange roadside find: he contacted his supervisor.

Malone and his coworkers secured the top of the aquarium with a piece of plywood and placed a shop light near it to provide warmth. A call to Wood County Sheriff lead to a contact at the Bowling Green State University (BGSU). Within an hour, the BGSU associate professor of biological sciences was at the garage to see the roadside find. She praised the use of the shop light to aid the boa.

“The guys acted great,” said Dr. Eileen Underwood, Director of the BGSU Herpetarium. Underwood took the snake to the university, where it’s now thriving and healthy. The students there named it “ODOT.” It will stay at BGSU at least through the summer, and as long as it continues to exhibit friendly behavior, the boa may just have a new career as a presentation animal.

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**Quality Wins**

Kathleen Fuller, District 9

It comes as no surprise when one—or two—of the projects done by a team in District 9’s construction office are recognized for outstanding performance and operational excellence. For these industrious ODOT members, craftsmanship is always a priority.

Alongside the Shell Company, the construction office team received two National Asphalt Pavement Association (NAPA) 2015 Quality in Construction Awards for resurfacing and bridge rehabilitation projects. The NAPA awards recognize excellence and continuous improvement in asphalt paving by measuring against industry standards and best practices.

During last year’s construction season, crews from the Shell Company completed asphalt overlay resurfacing projects on State route 125, between the Brown County line and SR 41 in West Union, and on SR 139, beginning at the Portsmouth corporation limit in Scioto County and continuing to the Jackson County line.

Leading the 8.5-mile resurfacing project on SR 125 were District 9’s own John Denniston, Brent Davis and Chad Mitten. Eric McLaughlin, Phyllis Harris, Aaron Montgomery and now-retired Victor Picciano led the district’s construction team for the 17.5-mile project on SR 139.

“We have an outstanding team of engineers, inspectors and workers who do an amazing job working throughout the district,” said Deputy Director Vaughn Wilson, “and I congratulate our crews and the crews from the Shell Company for their efforts to deliver successful projects that not only preserve our transportation network, but also serve the traveling public well.”

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Rhonda Pees, District 1

The Paulding County maintenance garage was built in 1978. The Hicksville outpost in Defiance County in 1949. Both had been good ships. Both had to go.

ODOT recently demolished both older facilities in favor of much-needed upgrades, currently under construction. A ground breaking for both was held April 18.

The full-service Paulding garage will provide more truck storage, an upgraded above-ground fuel system as well as a decanting station which will be installed to meet federal guidelines for disposal of catch basin waste. The plans also include an expanded mechanic’s area, a new two-truck wash bay, a salt dome and pole barn and equipment storage buildings.

The new outpost in Hicksville will feature five truck bays, a 2,000-ton salt storage facility with 50 percent more storage than before, a truck wash bay and a decanting station. The facility will primarily serve the winter operations of both the Defiance and Paulding county maintenance crews.

Estimated cost of construction is $10 million for both facilities. Construction on both facilities is under way and will be completed spring of 2017.