DEFENSE
Office of Employee Health & Safety offers DRIVING COURSE

‘START TALKING’ TO PREVENT DRUG USE

A DAY IN THE LIFE...
Nequinne Chielo

Columbus Crossroads BRIDGE FEATURES FIRST-EVER CULTURAL MURAL
**ODOT offers defensive driving course**

**Joel Hunt, Central Office**

Every year, thousands of people die in traffic crashes which could have been prevented. Although the causes of these crashes are many, nine of the top 10 involve driver behavior. The department does not want state employees who drive while at work to be a part of this statistic.

ODOT’s Office of Employee Health and Safety currently offers the Smith System Defensive Driving class to employees who use state vehicles as part of their job. The eight-hour, half classroom, half hands-on class is designed to produce safer drivers by focusing on five keys to safety: 1) Aim high in steering; 2) Get the big picture; 3) Keep your eyes moving; 4) Leave yourself an out, and; 5) Make sure they see you.

Since its rollout last October, more than 200 ODOT employees have gone through the training. “We all get complacent with our driving, and this is a good refresher,” said Marcia Disinger, safety program manager in the Office of Employee Health and Safety. “The class increases our awareness and decreases the frequency and severity of crashes.”

ODOT is the only agency in the state offering the Smith System class, which has been around since 1952. According to Disinger, some private insurance companies offer discounts to policyholders who have completed defensive driving classes.

To sign up for the class, contact your training coordinator.

PHOTOS BY JOEL HUNT, CENTRAL OFFICE
**Local News**

**District 12 honored for pedestrian tunnel rehab work**

*Amanda McFarland, District 12*

The Detroit Shoreway Community Development Organization selected ODOT District 12 to receive a 2013 Neighborhood Improvement Award for significant investments in the West 76th Street Pedestrian Tunnel.

The rehabilitation project was completed in July 2013 and is part of the Lakefront West Project to connect Cleveland’s west side neighborhoods with the lakefront by creating multi-modal connections along the West Shoreway between West Boulevard and the Main Avenue Bridge. The Lakefront West Project will increase access to Lake Erie, improve green space, biking and pedestrian facilities, increase development potential and simplify connections along the now limited-access freeway.

**Under the new ‘perpetual’ asphalt pavement designs, the product will last for decades as long as the pavement base remains intact.**

**ODOT pavement receives national pavement award**

*Pieter Wykoff, Central Office*

The Asphalt Pavement Alliance has named a 4.5-mile stretch of Interstate 275 near Cincinnati as one of eight winners of its Perpetual Pavement Awards for 2013. The award is given to state DOTs and local governments who have asphalt pavements that are at least 35 years old and have never had a structural failure. The winning pavements must have been resurfaced no less than every twelve years, and are expected to exemplify characteristics of long-life pavements, including excellence in design and quality construction. The winning projects were evaluated by pavement engineers at the National Center for Asphalt Technology at Auburn University.

This particular section of asphalt pavement on I-275 in Clermont County was constructed in 1972, receiving an asphalt overlay in 1985 and again in 2000. According to ODOT Deputy Director for Engineering James Young, the department spends hundreds of millions of dollars each year on pavement. As the work continues with industry partners in the consulting and contracting industry, ODOT’s product will continue to improve every year.

“The quality of pavement has been improving over time. We have moved from a ten-year cycle of overlays to a twelve-year cycle. Our goal is to keep increasing the average time between overlays. The result is that we can do more roads each year for the same amount of money,” said Young.

Young says under the new “perpetual” asphalt pavement designs, the product will last for decades as long as the pavement base remains intact. The result is a better value for ODOT and a better value for the public.
Healing an old wound
Nancy Burton, District 6

A couple of decades ago, ODOT built an interstate right through Columbus. Interstates 70 and 71 were cutting-edge advancements in travel for the downtown worker and urban dweller. But for the people in the downtown neighborhoods? Not so much. Their major complaint: the new, high-speed, multi-lane roadway literally severed them from downtown. This wound would leave a scar for years.

Fast forward to 2011—September 18 to be exact—when construction started on the I-71/I-670 Columbus Crossroads project. The neighborhoods rejoiced because the Long Street Bridge, one of the 22 such structures being built, would have something on it; something that would start to heal that old wound: Public Art!

Not a sculpture or painting, but a mural on the south side of the bridge over I-71. Though it could not be seen by drivers below, the art mural would be displayed on 4-by-8 feet panels stretching 240 feet. It would be dimly lit at night.

ODOT has never built a bridge like this before, and so they asked the community to help select the artist or artists to create the piece. This same group of community volunteers also determined what would be depicted on the wall.

In the end, two artists who agreed to design the mural together were unanimously selected by the community. Larry Winston Collins, a graduate of Columbus College of Art and Design and current art professor at Miami University in Oxford, and Kojo Kamau, an internationally recognized Columbus photographer, worked for more than a year selecting photographs for the final product.

The mural will feature artists, athletes, teachers, preachers, writers, musicians, churches and businesses. Every single image has a connection, past or present to the Near East Side where the Long Street Bridge is located.

Kamau and Winston-Collins, who look more like father and son, had never created such a massive art project before. The artists had to worry about how to secure the artwork to the panels, and work with the designer and the manufacturer to make sure the panels would be secured safely for the public.

Kamau joked during one of their many Thursday afternoon working sessions that he would just be thrilled to have one of his photographs on a city bus. That his work would be on the side of a bridge for decades is almost unfathomable.

ODOT is hoping to celebrate with the community the opening of the Long Street Bridge and cultural wall when it is completed in June of this year. ☻
Ask the Director

This winter, I saw local and county trucks taking salt from ODOT’s barns. Why did we give our own salt away when there is a salt shortage?

A “Part of our mission is to be a leader in the transportation industry in Ohio, which means that at times we need to be a resource to support and assist local governments. Our intention is to do things right and to do the right things. We should be aware of the overall transportation system in Ohio. While we’re responsible for the state system, people can’t get to the state system unless the local system is also taken care of.

This was the most difficult winter in anyone’s memory. ODOT alone used over a million tons of salt and almost 1.3 million labor hours to get the job done. The department spent nearly $120 million this winter to make sure our highways were safe for the motoring public. The professionals at ODOT were able to take care of our state highway system while still offering assistance and support to loan salt to our local government partners, which will be repaid. We should all be extremely proud of our performance and professionalism. In the winter of 2013/2014 the people of ODOT were amazing!”

— Director Jerry Wray

To prevent drug use, just ‘Start Talking!’
Ron Poole, Central Office

Drug abuse is a public health epidemic across the nation, and Ohio is not immune: In 2011, drug overdoses were the leading cause of accidental deaths in the state, with one Ohioan dying from a drug overdose every five hours.

Governor John and First Lady Karen Kasich have made fighting the drug problem a priority in Ohio. This January, they launched the “Start Talking!” statewide youth drug prevention initiative. The aim of the program is to help reduce the likelihood of youth drug use before it starts by encouraging parents and guardians to have conversations with their children on the subject of avoiding substance abuse. Research indicates that children who talk with their parents and other responsible adults on this subject are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who do not.

Whether it is on the athletic field, in the classroom, at the doctor’s office or around the kitchen table, “Start Talking!” is all about reaching children through specific programs. Parents360 Rx makes informational toolkits available to assist parents and school leaders in hosting prevention discussions locally. The “Five Minutes for Life” program is led by the Ohio Highway Patrol and the Ohio National Guard to encourage student athletes to lead peer conversations that promote healthy living. “Youth Resiliency” programs build good behavioral health in young people and their ability to resist substance abuse and addiction. In addition, First Lady Karen Kasich is getting ready to announce a series of grants obtained in partnership with other state agencies to assist local communities to help youth resist substance use.

Overall, this initiative will give communities and schools the tools to develop students’ resiliency, giving them the courage to push back against peer pressure. To offer further support, law enforcement has ramped up interdiction efforts on highways and in communities; Treatment options and recovery supports have been expanded to help those struggling with addiction to regain control of their lives.

For more information on the ‘Start Talking’ initiative, visit www.StartTalking.ohio.gov.

“Ask the Director” is a Transcript feature for employees to submit ODOT work life questions to Director Jerry Wray. Questions on ODOT policy and procedures, future infrastructure projects, snow and ice control, and a variety of other issues that are on the minds of the men and women of ODOT will be considered.

Submit questions to Alex Buerger in the Division of Communications by email (Alexandra.Buerger@dot.state.oh.us), interoffice mail (Mail Stop 1420), or by phone at (614) 387-6225.

Director Wray chooses which question(s) to respond to in Transcript each month. Your name will be kept confidential if requested.
A Day in the Life

Dedication, determination, all part of transportation manager’s day
Amanda McFarland, District 12

It was earlier this year— the start of a winter morning commute—and Nequinne Chielo, transportation manager at the Cleveland garage, was preparing to stop for a cup of coffee when she noticed drivers ahead of her honking and swerving around a slow-moving car.

Chielo could have done the same. But instead, she put her truck into four-wheel drive and pulled up next to the vehicle, where she found that the driver appeared to be having a seizure.

“I opened her door and went to put my foot on the brake,” Chielo recalled, “but I couldn’t get hers out of the way. I had to put my foot on top of hers to get the car in park.”

Once in park, she turned the car off, took the keys out of the ignition and called 911. The ambulance arrived and quickly took the motorist to a nearby hospital. While other drivers angrily drove right by the distressed woman, Chielo made an unselfish decision which most certainly helped save a life.

Those who know her were not surprised by her actions. Chielo began her career with District 12 as a seasonal employee in 2004. She began scheduling classes at Cleveland State University around her work shifts, and in 2009 received her Bachelor of Arts in Public Management, with a concentration in safety and a minor in environmental studies. She joined the ranks of the transportation managers in 2010 after six years as a highway technician.

Her daily duties vary depending on the season. They usually include reviewing the Trouble Ticket System, creating assignments for maintenance crews, making sure crews have what they need to complete work for the day, talking with the mechanics about the fleet, reviewing the daily tailgate talk, riding Cuyahoga County routes to check for deficiencies, and so on.

“Each day is different,” she said. “That’s what I enjoy the most along with the great people here at ODOT.”

Chielo believes in the importance of prioritization, organization, teamwork and responsibility. She enjoys being a manager and has served in this capacity at nearly every garage in Cuyahoga County.

She leads by example and always keeps safety at the forefront of her daily activities. Chielo is a focused and dedicated employee who is quick to greet people with a smile and prefers to stay out of the spotlight. “It’s important to remember where you came from,” she said. “We all learn from our experiences and will continue to learn each and every day.”

When not at ODOT, Chielo enjoys home cooked meals with her family, being outdoors and spending time with her nieces and nephews.

Nequinne Chielo, left, visits Cuyahoga County maintenance crews performing pavement repairs on I-71.
Each year Ohio roads experience a natural phenomenon: the dreaded freeze-thaw cycle. Water enters the pavement in liquid form where it expands as it freezes, cracking and damaging the roadway. Given this year’s exhaustive and harsh winter, much of the pavement took a beating, literally. And although ODOT maintenance forces worked their tails off patching potholes, the repeated freeze-thaw and constant plowing left specific sections of roadway nearly defenseless.

Case in point: the two-lane section of U.S. Route 50 between McArthur and Athens. With a traffic volume of up to 12,000 vehicles per day, the roadway began deteriorating by late January.

“I’ve never seen anything like it before,” said Vinton County Transportation Administrator David Molihan.

It wasn’t long before the public noticed it as well. “We would receive up to a dozen calls per day about the road,” said Molihan. “Even though we kept patching, the snow kept falling.”

Whenever possible, three pothole patching crews would work daily. In fact, Vinton County used more than 75 tons of winter mix patching this particular section of roadway. But winter didn’t stop, and the natural freeze-thaw cycle kept creating more potholes. Although a contract paving project was already scheduled for later this construction season, something needed to be done, and fast.

“We knew we had to move quickly, so we advanced the contract award date to early spring,” said District 10 Deputy Director T. Steve Williams. “When the road kept deteriorating, we decided to mobilize a multi-county drag patching operation. The only problem was the weather.”

As luck would have it, southeastern Ohio was forecast to receive weather warm enough to perform the drag patching. But work crews would only have two days to pave 10 miles. Thankfully, a nearby asphalt plant was going to be open and supply crews with the right surface mix.

On March 10, crews from Vinton, Athens, Gallia, Meigs and Hocking counties converged on U.S. 50 and began drag patching - a method of paving in which a thin layer of asphalt is smoothed out by a grader and then compacted using a roller to fill in potholes and other pavement deficiencies. In just two days, two paving crews used nearly 1,100 tons of material.

“To have five counties step up to help at such short notice was incredible,” said District 10 Highway Management Administrator Jamie Hendershot. “It’s amazing what can be accomplished when we breakdown county lines and work together as one team, one ODOT.”

Since the paving began, the majority of the calls from the public have been very positive. Even comments on the District 10 Facebook page have been well received. Said one commenter, “I don’t drive out that way but heard people on Facebook talking about how bad it was so I want to say a BIG THANK YOU TO ODOT.”

Although the roadway is safer and has a smoother ride, the contract paving project scheduled this spring is a full depth pavement repair job and will ensure the pavement lasts for several years to come.
A risk worth taking

Theresa Pollick, District 2

Though he calls District 2 home now, Transportation Engineer Imad Bdeiri never imagined his life and future would lie in this country. Years ago he was growing up in the small town of Sidon, Lebanon, then he enrolled at the Lebanese University in Beirut just out of high school. But when Lebanon was invaded by Israel in the early eighties, Bdeiri suddenly found his life and education disrupted by the unpredictability of war.

“In the midst of the conflict, there were no timelines. Exams were postponed for months; there was no school year,” explained Bdeiri.

A relative returning to Lebanon from the United States knew America could provide a better opportunity, and encouraged him to pursue his education there. Bdeiri was hesitant to leave his family, and was concerned about not knowing how to speak English. But his parents supported his decision to move, and off he went.

Bdeiri learned English at the University of Houston, and then transferred to Texas A&M, graduating in 1986 with a bachelor’s degree in civil engineering. He moved to Ohio after being accepted into the University of Toledo master’s program.

He worked for the Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments, then came to ODOT District 2 when a job became available in the planning department.

“The things that interest me the most at ODOT are my interactions with the various local planning agencies, challenges to maintain expenditures within our budget and meet the critical success factors,” according to Bdeiri.

Bdeiri currently lives in Toledo with his wife and three children. As often as he can, he travels back to Lebanon to reconnect with his family and show his children their heritage.

“My children think it must have been really hard to leave my native country and be all by myself with different cultures and customs,” said Bdeiri. “My children also think that I had made the right decision to stay and live in this county.”