



Transcript

November 2003

Through the Eyes of a Child

Jennifer Richmond
District 4

KIDS SEEM TO HAVE AN UNCANNY knack of taking complex issues and making them simple to understand. Using crayons, markers and finger paints, local kids helped ODOT's District 4 office communicate a simple message to motorists – keep Ohio's construction zones safe.

Seventh-grade students from 15 northeast Ohio schools participated in a district-sponsored poster contest. Their task was to creatively depict the dangers lurking in work zones through words and pictures. District employees chose a grand-prize winner and 12 other selections to be featured in a special 2004 work zone safety calendar.

"Some of the messages were humorous, some serious, some artistic and some were simple but really hit home," said

M o h a m e d Darwish, District 4 deputy director. "We hope the contest generates awareness among motorists while educating kids about the importance of safe driving."

Grand-prize winner Brad Mast drew a picture of the state of Ohio and a construction cone belted together safely with a seat belt.

"I chose to draw those things in my poster because they represented safety in our construction zones," Mast said. "I also drew it for all of the workers that have died in construction zones."

The winning posters are also being used for promotional purposes in the district's "Survive the Drive" advertising campaign.

Through the statewide Safety and Congestion Initiative, public education and advertising opportunities were identified that could help reduce accident rates at specific locations.

Earlier this year each district completed an evaluation of all state routes, interstates and U.S. routes identified as a safety and/or congestion location. District work plans included a variety of fixes

ranging from short-term, low-cost improvements such as brush trimming to long-term more expensive projects where an interchange may require complete reconstruction.

Darwish added, education through advertising was one option to help improve safety that could be accomplished quickly and at a relatively low cost.

Through the Safety and Congestion Initiative, the calendars and the individual posters are used to promote safe driving practices. The calendars will be distributed statewide to elected officials, community groups, schools, libraries and other agencies. The posters will be featured on billboards along Interstate 77 through the city of Canton as part of a first-time advertising campaign being implemented by the district. The billboards will be complimented with radio advertisements.

One billboard located across from Canton Central Catholic high school, features the slogan "Don't be a Clown, Slow

(see POSTER on page 8)



Grand-Prize Winning Poster by Brad Mast,
James A. Garfield Middle School, Portage County



Chris Achkar,
St. Barnabas School, Summit County

Environmental Process Nationally Recognized

John Hackley
Central Office

THE ODOT OFFICE OF ENVIRONMENTAL Services recently received national recognition for its innovative process to protect the environment during highway construction.

The new streamlined approach has improved ODOT's project development by reducing paperwork and eliminating repetitive tasks.

The award, presented by the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO), acknowledged ODOT's coordination with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Ohio State Historic Preservation Office to streamline federally required environmental reviews for construction projects – saving up to six months in project development.

“When sound transportation projects become mired in environmental requirements, we have to streamline the process,” said ODOT Office of Environ-

mental Services Administrator Tim Hill. “While we are speeding up the process, it will not diminish our efforts to protect historic architecture and endangered plants and animals.”

ODOT has been granted the latitude to revamp the process through unique agreements with FHWA. These agreements allow the department to assume greater responsibility to oversee federal laws regulating government actions impacting the environment. ODOT's strong track record for adhering to these regulations made the agreements possible.

The department's recent work with FHWA to allow projects with minimal impacts to the environment to be processed without requiring the preparation of complicated documents is among the most successful of these efforts. The new process pays closer attention to analyzing the specific environmental impacts of each project rather than processing projects under a standard document format – as it has been done in the past.

ODOT also has an agreement with FHWA enabling the department to approve required environmental documentation for transportation projects involving public parks, recreation areas, wildlife refuges, or historic sites without federal oversight.

“We have worked hard to improve our environmental activities,” said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. “This award is a tribute to our pioneering efforts to protect the environment without creating excessive delays to needed highway

projects.”

Hill added, “During the past five years, we have earned a reputation as a leader in implementing complex federal environmental regulations. We have one of the most effective environmental streamlining programs in the nation, and are very proud our process often goes beyond what is required. It can be difficult to navigate federal environmental regulations and our new method has been helpful to local governments and other state transportation departments in complying with them.”

AASHTO's Francis B. Francois Award for Innovation is presented annually to states for the implementation of innovative programs. As part of the award, AASHTO bestowed a \$10,000 graduate fellowship to be conferred by ODOT.

Transforming the Transcript

J. Brian Cunningham
Central Office

THE TRANSCRIPT HAS CHANGED DURING the past several years, evolving and progressing in every capacity – from the written material to the look of the newsletter.

Beginning in January, we will again change our format to include more concise and to-the-point highlights of departmental trends, accomplishments and basic core business activities. We will continue to have feature stories, but will also provide short reports on the work occurring in our divisions, offices, and districts that may not have been regularly reported on in the past. The new format will also enable us to include regular updates involving quality initiatives, project delivery, legislative activities and the Operational Performance Index.

As we continue to refine the content and layout of the newsletter, I would love to hear your comments – both positive and negative. Please feel free to e-mail me with your suggestions on how we can continue to make our newsletter interesting and informative.



Environmental Streamlining Team Receiving National Recognition:

Back Row: Susan Gasbarro, ODOT; Franco Ruffini, OHSP0; Mark Epstein, OHSP0; Paul Graham, ODOT; Tim Hill, ODOT; Mary Anne Reeves, ODOT; Joan Randall, ODOT; Mac Vance, ODOT; Tashia Clemons, FHWA

Front Row: Debbie Brown, ODOT; Andrea Stevenson, ODOT; Mary Smith, OHSP0; Roberta Dunlap, ODOT

Not Pictured: Scott McGuire and Dave Snyder of FHWA; and Thomas Groomes of OHSP0

District Forges Safety Improvement Plan

Ron Poole
Central Office

PREVENTING WORK PLACE ACCIDENTS and eliminating the pain and suffering caused by these situations was the focus of District 10's second annual safety conference held in September.

More than 30 district participants were involved in expanding current efforts and creating new areas to improve employee safety while on the job. To help reduce potential injury situations the district will offer interactive training, such as correct equipment handling or proper work-zone set-up, during safety meetings regularly held in county garages. Another change includes increasing the number of work units involved with the district's Safety Jackpot program, which recognizes safe behavior among members of the highway

management group.

The district is also establishing "Tailgate Talks" between work crews and supervisors to foster discussions on safety issues prior to crews going into the field. These informal talks will encourage employees to discuss various safety-related areas, including "near misses" they have encountered and what can be done to prevent these situations in the future.

"This was a great opportunity for our

"This was a great opportunity for our work force to spend an entire day concentrating 100 percent on improving safety in our district."

Ben Kunze, ODOT District 10 personnel and fiscal officer

work force to spend an entire day concentrating 100 percent on improving safety in our district," said Ben Kunze, District 10's personnel and fiscal officer. "You just get more done with input from a variety of people."

George Harman, a highway worker in

Morgan County, and first-time meeting attendant, was enthusiastic about the gathering.

"I thought it was terrific – just super," said Harman. "Those of us in the field could talk about what equipment we needed, and managers could help us determine how to get it."

Progress in accomplishing the safety goals developed at the conference will be tracked monthly by the district's Office of Safety. The success in achieving these goals and improving safety will be examined at the conference next year.

ODOT had 599 work-related injuries in 2002.

Through September this year, there were 409 injuries reported at a cost of nearly \$800,000. This has resulted in the loss of more than 12,500 days of work. During recuperation when an employee is off of work, workers compensation provides about two-thirds of a workers salary.

Cinema Advertising Captivates Audience

Brenda Bradds
District 8

ODOT HAS MADE ITS WAY TO THE "Silver Screen" in southwest Ohio. While not the subject of a feature film, District 8's on-screen ads warn thousands of movie goers of consequences that result from reckless driving.

"The movie ads give us a great opportunity to expand our approach in reaching a captive audience with important safety messages," said District Deputy Director Mike Flynn.

District 8 and Cinema Advertising, a company specializing in movie ads, developed color slides addressing transportation safety issues. The ODOT messages will be mixed in among the various advertisements and trivia facts that run prior to the start of a movie. Organi-

zations across the country have found these advertisements to be beneficial. According to Cinema Advertising statistics, nearly 83 percent of the theater goers recalled the movie ads a day after viewing them, compared to 23 percent remembering similar ads on television.

"Our primary focus was to demonstrate how reckless behavior while driving can be deadly," said ODOT Public Information Specialist Liz Lyons. "We wanted to draw attention to these potentially hazardous situations to prevent them from happening."

One ad shows workers in a construction zone and includes the message "Slow Down! For your safety and theirs. Pay attention in construction work zones!"

Another ad uses an image of

a cell phone and the phrases, "One last call...caused two families to lose it all. Pay Attention in Construction Work Zones. Drive Safely!"

"The words and images chosen for the ODOT slides are dramatic," said Lyons. "The messages contain strong statements we want people to remember."



Hobby Shoppe



ODOT Central Office employees, (l-r) Bill Milbaugh, Eric Thomas and Dean Focke, conquered the historic Grand Canyon during a four-day trek in mid-September.

Adventure Seekers Traverse Grand Canyon

Ron Poole
Central Office

A DETERMINED TRIO OF ODOT employees recently hiked the formidable walls of the Grand Canyon. For Videographer Bill Milbaugh, Standards Engineer Dean Focke, and Transportation Technician Eric Thomas – all from Central Office – the trip was just the latest challenge in their ongoing adventures as outdoor hikers.

“Pictures simply do not do it justice,” said Thomas. “The true grandeur of the place draws you in, and forces you to hike through it. Sometimes, I intentionally trailed behind Bill and Dean just so I could take in the beauty around me without distraction.”

They began their 52-mile hike from the south rim of the canyon in mid-September. The four-day trip in the canyon

took them down 6,000 feet – the equivalent of five Empire State Buildings – to the Colorado River and up the other side to the north rim. After spending the night at the North Rim Lodge, the group reversed their path, ending up at their original starting point.

Each day, the hikers got up before dawn for breakfast and hit the trail by 6 a.m., averaging between six to seven hours of travel daily. In addition to facing the canyon’s rugged terrain, the group had to cope with dramatically changing tempera-

tures along the trek. The hikers might start their day in a 40 degree climate, and encounter 110 degree heat by noon. As a result the group had to make certain they packed enough water and arrived at each



The view from the canyon's North Rim changes with every hour of daylight.

day's destination before the rising heat became intolerable.

"The sights are spectacular," said Milbaugh. "Walking down the North Kaibab trail takes you through a forest of white and Douglas firs, pine and aspen trees. Further along, you can find natural springs, limestone formations and the desert of the inner canyon. I loved the patterns of the canyon walls, and just off the trail is a cool and refreshing waterfall called Ribbon Falls. It's like each step takes you back thousands of years in geological history."

The hikers all had different histories with the canyon trek. Focke was the first to visit the canyon, when he made a trip five years ago from the south rim to the river and back in 12 hours. Milbaugh has been to the canyon the most times, having gone on two previous solo trips in 2001 and 2002. Thomas, however, had never been to the famous landmark until

this venture.

The ODOT group spent months preparing for the climb by simulating the actual conditions as much as possible. The trio hiked the southern Ohio hills with heavy packs and gear once or twice a week to build their endurance. Being in shape was important, as the National Park Service will not offer assistance to any hiker in the canyon unless that person is injured.

"Only a few visitors to the Grand Canyon attempt rim-to-rim hikes," said Focke. "Many people who hike down into the canyon without training themselves find it extremely difficult to hike



Eric Thomas poses by Ribbon Falls, a popular Grand Canyon attraction.

back out again. People have lost their lives attempting this challenge. You make this trip at your own risk."

The group is considering future trips to explore some of the lesser-used, wild trails within the park.

The Pursuit of Good Government

Rhonda Pees, *District 1 and*
Melissa Cook, *Central Office*

ODOT'S DISTRICT 1 OFFICE WAS RECENTLY recognized by the state's top quality award for its commitment to organizational improvement with a focus on customer service.

"I am proud of the district's efforts to improve their operations," said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. "They have worked diligently to increase their effectiveness."

The Commitment to Excellence Award from the Ohio Award for Excellence (OAE) is given annually to applicants from business, education, health care, government and non-profit organizations. It is modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award, established by Congress, recognizing companies achievements in quality and best practices.

Organizations applying for OAE certification are evaluated in a variety of areas such as planning, customer service

and leadership. At the conclusion of the evaluation, organizations are provided feedback reports outlining strengths, weaknesses and improvement opportunities and receive a rating level between one and four.

"The feedback reports cause organizations to objectively look at their business practices and ask, is there a better way to get better results?" said Office of

**"Many other state agencies are involved with the Ohio Award for Excellence (OAE), but ODOT is the clear leader."
Steve Wall, Office of Quality and Organizational Development
deputy director**

Quality and Organizational Development Deputy Director, Steve Wall.

The OAE feedback report for District 1 noted the district had developed several quality systems as enhancements to existing statewide ODOT systems. The district received praise for its effective use of the statewide Operational Performance Index to improve highway conditions within the district.

"We shared several examples with the examination team on how we developed systems that tie in statewide and used them to our benefit," said ODOT District 1 Deputy Director Redick. "We feel that was a major factor in our positive evaluation."

The highest OAE award level given to a government entity has been a level two – recipients include ODOT districts 2 and 12 and The Ohio Department of Natural Resources. ODOT District 12 is currently awaiting their level three application results and District 2 is expected to apply for a

level three award next year. This year District 11 received a level 1 award. By next year each of ODOT's 12 districts will have applied for an OAE review.

"Many other state agencies are involved with the OAE, but ODOT is the clear leader," said Wall.

This year's recipients were recognized at the state's 2003 Quest for Success Conference in September.

Students learn proper grouting techniques during southeast Ohio's 2003 Construction Career Days held September.



Students Explore Construction Industry

ing students with different backgrounds to the benefits of pursuing a construction-related career will help the industry continue to grow and improve. Of the students attending this year's event, minority attendance was up 12 percent from last year, and the amount of women attending increased 8 percent.

"Today's high school students represent the construction industry's future work force," said Slusher. "The event's exhibits, displays and demonstrations provided students valuable insights into the construction industry."

The Construction Career Day concept was the creation of four Texas businessmen in late 1997 who recognized a severe shortage of skilled workers in their state's highway construction industry. They determined their state's poor work quality and lack of competition was a direct result of the shortage and developed a construction job fair to help address the problem.

Elizabeth Lyons
District 8

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS FROM Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio were greeted by earth movers, drilling machines and bull dozers as they perused the exhibits at Southwest Ohio's second annual Construction Career Days.

ODOT employees from Central Office and districts 7 and 8 participated in the late September event to promote the construction industry as a viable career option to students.

"We have a large presence at this event, so it can put students, who otherwise might not have been aware of the opportunity, on the path to a career with ODOT," said District 8 Training Coordinator Julie Slusher.

In addition to full time employment, participating organizations made summer jobs, internships, on-the-job training and cooperative education available to

students.

"The event this year introduced students to representatives from government and the construction industry to get a first-hand look at what jobs in the construction field have to offer," said Tonya Beesley, a volunteer coordinator with Baker Concrete Construction.

The focus of the event is not simply to expand the attendees understanding of construction career options, but to increase the diversity of the construction industry's work force. Introduc-

The Southwest Ohio Construction Career Day is one of many held in more than 20 states throughout the country. There were more than 60 Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio companies and 84 exhibits at the event.



Volunteers provided hands-on instruction to students attending the career days.

Patriotic Gateway Created

Rhonda Pees

District 1

A STATE ROUTE 12 bridge just out side of Findlay received a patriotic make over this fall when District 1 crews attached four giant United States flag medallions to it.

The medallions, representing Findlay's Flag City U.S.A. theme, are part of the department's statewide aesthetic enhancement initiative to make highways more appealing.

"We're excited about having the opportunity to do something special with the bridge and to create an exceptional gateway for Findlay," said Norman R. Redick District 1 deputy director. "The city of Findlay will especially benefit from the

aesthetic enhancement initiative because of the upcoming need to replace aging structures on Interstate 75 in the area."

Across the state ODOT districts have been working with cities and towns to include decorative imprints, vibrant colors and other design enhancements to improve the appearance of the highway network.

In Dayton, the Interstate 70 and I-75 interchange reconstruction project incorporates aviation images promoting the city's theme of "where innovation takes flight." Along I-75, noise walls near the cities of Troy and Tipp City will include city-theme logos. In Canton, images of area features are included on Interstate 77 noise walls. And in Columbus, decorative bridge fences were included to projects on Spring Street and Long Street



This 9,000-pound medallion, reflecting Findlay's Flag City U.S.A. theme, is one of four that was attached to the State Route 12 bridge over Interstate 75 as part of ODOT's design aesthetic initiative to improve the appearance of the state's highways.

bridges over Interstate 71.

District 1's SR 12 project is its second to include aesthetic elements. The first project to include design elements used a creative texture to enhance bridge abutment walls on a new bridge over I-75 north of Findlay.

Two additional bridges over I-75 will feature themes relative to the Findlay area. A U.S. Route 224 bridge on the west side of Findlay will carry the historical Fort Findlay theme, while a Sandusky Street bridge west of the city will include a design commemorating the city's oil and gas heritage.

The SR 12 bridge medallions each weighed approximately 9,000 pounds and measured 10-foot by 12-foot. There were five concrete medallions made for the SR 12 project, although only four

were secured to the bridge.

"It was fortunate that we made an extra medallion because we had one break," said Redick. "It would have been a big problem without the backup, but everything went great."

ODOT Project Engineer Charlie Schroeder said a template of each medallion was made and then used to create the space on the bridge where it was to be installed so the fit could be exact.

A crane lifted each medallion into place. "The first one took about an hour to jockey into place," said Bruce Merry, district construction engineer. "But the installation of the rest of the medallions went more smoothly."

The SR 12 interchange reconstruction project is expected to be completed in mid-November.

Ohio Engineering Conference Top In Country

Joel Hunt
Central Office

A RECORD-BREAKING CROWD OF 2,000 transportation engineers, researchers, students, and government officials met in Columbus early this month for the annual Ohio Transportation Engineering Conference.

The conference offered more than 50 technical sessions and 135 exhibitors. State Representative Steven Buehrer, sponsor of the recently passed 6-cent gas tax bill, opened the conference. Ken

Schmidt, former director of communications at Harley-Davidson Motor Company, whose grand entrance involved driving onto stage on an iron horse was the conference's closing speaker.

"OTEC is one of the nation's largest transportation conferences because of its reputation of outdoing itself each year," said ODOT Director Gordon Proctor. "I'm proud of the work of Terri Barnhart, the conference administrator, the steering and program committees, and all the people at ODOT who make OTEC a success."

Students from nine Ohio colleges and universities participated in the Student Sponsorship Program. During the conference, students shadow representatives of sponsoring transportation organizations to learn about their roles and contributions in the industry. Students attend OTEC sessions with their sponsors, as well as visit the exhibit displays to circulate their resumes.

OTEC 2004 is scheduled for October 26-27. Be sure to mark your calendars.



Attendees listen to 2003 OTEC opening presentations.

POSTER (from page 1)

"Your Car Down" taken from St. Barnabas student Carolyn Reville's winning poster. The message on the billboard is directed at teenaged drivers. Statistics demonstrate the location had a high number of accidents which often occur during the hours when students were leaving school for the day. Nearly 500 accidents were recorded at this location between 1999 and 2001 including 230 rear-end crashes.



Timothy Beck,
Holy Family School, Mahoning County



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