

AUDITORS

Recently, there has been an addition to the Commercial Personal Property Department. Claire Gunn has joined our office and has been training with Rebecca Estes to become our field auditor. Claire will be visiting with businesses, providing information, and answering questions. She will be making sure that all businesses have assessed and are assessing accurately. Rebecca will be in the office providing technical support. She will be using technology to map business locations. We are very excited to expand our Commercial Personal Property Department and will keep you updated on our progress.

BY: MISTI KINNEY

FAMILIAR FACE

Dorothy Farmer has worked for the assessor's office for almost five years. She is a key counter person and is called "the problem solver" because of her tenacity and attention to detail. She is involved in training new employees, and is one of the few who can correct previous year assessments. Her all-around general knowledge of personal property, friendly attitude, and willingness to go the extra mile makes her an asset to our office. Her complete explanation of the assessing process is very helpful to new employees and many customers.



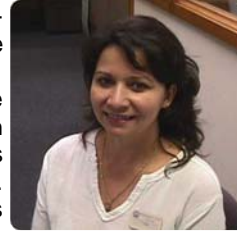
Dorothy moved from Oklahoma to Fayetteville in 1969, when her father, a manager for Woolworth was transferred here. She has a very close-knit family; she lives with her brother, and her mother lives only a couple of houses down the road. Her sister works down the hall from her, in the Collector's Office. Dorothy has a daughter, Monica; and a son-in-law, Josh. She is Nana to their beautiful daughter, Kendyl, who will be two in March. Dorothy spends as much time with them as she can.

Leisure activity includes: floral arrangements, playing power ball, (winning that 310 million dollars), watching black and white movies, and watching *Lost*, as she is a die hard fan.

BY: MARY CHANDLER

NEW FACE

When you first enter the Washington County Assessor's Office, the first person you'll notice sitting at the front desk of the Real Estate Department is the smiling face of Lelia Palaez.



Please welcome one of the Washington County Assessor's Office's newest faces: Lelia Palaez. Lelia has been with us since April 2005. During her time with us, she has helped to raise the standard of customer service. Lelia is always ready to help with your most difficult questions and is equipped with a smile. Not only is she able to help locate an obscure piece of land on one of our GIS maps; she is also able to assess your personal property.

Being proficient in both English and Spanish, she is sometimes "borrowed" from the real estate department by other departments in the courthouse to help with translating. Lelia can sometimes be seen walking through the Courthouse hallways speaking in Spanish about Courthouse proceedings.

Lelia originally comes from Columbia. Later, she would move to Miami, and then to New York. Eventually, she would move to her home of the past twelve years, Arkansas. Lelia has three children. Steven, 21, is a Deputy Sheriff who also works in the Court House; Angelica, 18, is an honor student at the University of Arkansas majoring in law; and Kathleen, 16, is an honor student at Farmington High School.

In her spare time, Lelia enjoys knitting, cooking, and gardening. She also enjoys spending time with her boyfriend of four years, Mark, and their "baby", Coco, a three-year-old white and yellow cockatoo.

Whether diligently working with customers or visiting us during her time off, she is a very welcome addition to the Washington County Assessor's Office.

BY: SITA NANTHAVONG

"Thanks for all the assistance in putting this newsletter together. Particularly: William Stephenson's editing, Lisa VanVliet's editing assistance, Dan Cypert's photography, and Cindy Jester for the layout."



Washington County Assessor's Office

"Our mission is to serve Washington County taxpayers by fairly assessing property values, maintaining equity, providing information, and assisting our customers in every capacity within the law."

ASSESSMENT NEWS

QUARTERLY EDITION

March 1, 2006



FROM THE ASSESSOR

Lee Ann Kizgar

You'll notice that there are two articles in this issue about education. I believe that education is a very important part of the operation of the Assessor's Office. There's just no way to ever know it all, so everyone from the newest staff member to those who've been here the longest gets an opportunity to take classes to improve themselves.

Of course, with the University of Arkansas just a few blocks away, we are able to take advantage of low cost basic GIS training. Several staff members have been able to attend those training sessions and expand their capabilities. Four staff members went to an international GIS conference to bring back new ideas.

Even with as many meetings as I have to attend, I still manage to squeeze in some education time. I was fortunate to get to take a Tax Policy class, recently. It taught me how decisions that are made about property taxes in Washington County affect our entire economy.

I hope that everyone has the chance to take advantage of an educational opportunity in their future.

GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION NEWS

Integration...This is a key word in the assessment world these days. Recently, four employees in our office attended the "10th Annual Integrating GIS and CAMA Conference" in Orlando, Florida. We were able to see firsthand demonstrations and numerous presentations describing integration techniques for assessment purposes. Merging geographic information systems (GIS) and computer automated mass appraisal systems (CAMA) is a very efficient way to manage assessment data. This integration requires specific knowledge of assessment functions, including mapping legal descriptions and property appraisal. Just putting the data from these two functions together will increase the efficiency and accuracy of one of the most important and commonplace tasks in the Assessor's Office, but it is possible to integrate numerous databases.



With a single keystroke it is possible to display: property ownership, acreage, property values, ownership and sales history, legal description boundaries and virtually any other assessment data at the same time.

Integration technology will make our information more accessible and will greatly enhance our ability to fulfill our customer's needs. Continued education and participation in advancements in assessment practices and technologies equip us with the skills to keep up with the growth in our county.

BY: WILLIAM STEPHENSON

NEW VALUATION METHOD

The Arkansas Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) has been trying to reduce the number of invalid vehicle identification numbers (VIN) to help expedite the license tagging system. This would mean that if a vehicle owner has assessed the car or truck in question for the current year, if the property taxes are cur-

rent, and they have insurance on the vehicle that is being tagged, the DFA would be able to pick up this information in their system.

Starting in 2006, all Assessors' Offices in Arkansas are now using Primedia as a valuation guide in conjunction with the DFA. Primedia data allows us to validate the VIN's at the time of assessment for automobiles, trucks, boats, camping and recreational vehicles. This valuation guide will also check and allow us to correct listing errors as to the year, style or model for vehicles from the years 1981 to present.

Primedia Price Digests have been around since their first valuation guide for cars in 1911 and continued with the first electronically decodable VIN system in 1982. They now have a search engine that allows for the identification and valuation of 40% more passenger cars than any other source. There are now over 189,000 choices for boats and 38,000 choices for boat trailers. The Arkansas Assessment Coordination Department will continue to supply the values for utility trailers, and farm and heavy equipment.

This process will help us reach our goal of having fair and accurate valuation for the benefit of our customers.

BY: LEA ROCHESTER

ENHANCEMENTS

If you've been in the Assessor's Office lately, you've probably noticed some changes in the Real Estate Department. Four large cubicles have replaced the four small desks in the front portion of our office. The public terminals also have new desks and computers. Along with these changes, our abstractors have just acquired two new computer screens each. If you're wondering why they need two computer screens, abstractors use multiple programs to do their work. Two screens allow them to look at multiple programs at once without having to switch back and forth from program to program. For instance, they can look at their GIS (Geographic Information System) map on one screen and have their data entry system program open on the other screen. At first they thought the two screens were very overwhelming, but after just a couple of hours they quickly realized how much more convenient and efficient it actually is. These changes make it possible to serve our customers more efficiently and make our working environment more pleasant.

BY: STEPHANIE CRUM

ACD COURSES

Dan Cypert and William Stephenson recently taught the three basic courses, (ACD A, ACD B, and ACD C) that are required by the Assessment Coordination Department (ACD) to start obtaining Assessment Certification. About thirty employees came from Boone, Benton, Washington, Madison, and Sebastian Counties. Dan and William are the only employees in Washington County that are certified to teach these classes. When there was no one in the area certified to teach any of the ACD courses, the people that needed to complete a course had to go to Little Rock, and the county they were coming from was required to pay for all traveling expenses.

William taught ACD class "A" for the first two days. This went over basic real estate information including duties of the assessor's office, mapping legal descriptions, and various methods of keeping track of data. The next three days Dan educated us on valuation, appraisal methods, data collection, and ratio studies in the ACD class "B." This gave us each the opportunity to learn how to do the many calculations that are involved with valuation through interactive problems. Dan and William made sure that everyone understood the large amounts of information that we were obtaining and gave examples for concepts that we would be using at our everyday workplaces. Dan and William co-taught the ACD class "C" which dealt with personal property matters ranging from classifying, valuing, and appraising personal property. William focused on teaching the theory portion of the session while Dan concentrated on demonstrating the problems. The class was a great success and was given a high evaluation by all who took it. The positive feedback will result in future classes taught here at Washington County by Dan and William.

BY: LISA VANVLIET

GENERAL REMINDER

- Remember to assess all of your personal property by May 31st
- If you own your home, and live in it, make sure you are signed up for amendment 79 to receive tax benefits.