



Program helps contracting customers

by Raini Wright
LRDispatch Staff

The US Army Corps of Engineers has adopted a new contract program designed to help our customers and provide new contracting opportunities for 8(a) contractors. The 8(a) program is managed by the Small Business Administration and provides minority owned and disadvantaged businesses a greater opportunity to bid on work for government agencies.

Five contractors have been selected for contract award: Doyne-Nabholz JV from North Little Rock, Ark.; Government Technical Services, LLC from Huntsville, Ala.; Mack, Inc. from Topeka, Kan.; Pangea, Inc. from Chesterfield, Mo.; and Project Resources, Inc./Del-Jen, Inc. Joint Venture from San Diego, Calif. Contractors will receive a contract award with execution of their first task order.

The Multiple Award Task Order

Contract was also created in an attempt to minimize end of the year budget concerns. "Year-end funding always presents challenges. There is never enough time to advertise contracts, but we must make the best use of the expiring funds," said Janet Holmes, contract specialist in Contracting Division.

"Contracting needed a tool to quickly award contracts and get project money allocated."

Using MATOC, a project can be competed among five contractors, and projects no longer have to be individually advertised. The contracts allow for a base period of 36 months and one optional period of 24 months. They have an indefinite delivery time and an indefinite quantity. Several other districts are using similar contracts.

"My primary interest was in giving our small businesses enough opportunities to bid on our contracts," said Shirley Bruce,

deputy for small business. "The development of the MATOC was a combined effort of Contracting Division, Programs and Project Management Division and Small Business Administration to meet our customers' needs, and small business requirements."

Customers benefiting from MATOC include: Little Rock Air Force Base, Pine Bluff Arsenal, 90th Regional Support Command, Department of Energy-Office of Secure Transportation, SWL Operation & Maintenance, and Contracting for other Corps Districts and Divisions.

MATOC was introduced at the Acquisition Roadshow held Dec. 9-10 in west Little Rock. The contract was advertised in late January, and Feb. 27 was the deadline for receipt of proposals.

"The Small Business Administration is pleased with the effort shown by the Corps and its commitment to small businesses." Bruce said.



A Star Is Born!

At Tar Camp Park in Pine Bluff, Park Ranger Sylvester Jackson has his moment in front of the camera May 18 when a camera crew filmed a Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program video for the Arkansas Emergency Management Office.

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Read the LRDispatch online at home or work:
www.swl.usace.army.mil/thewire

April showers bring May changes?

Rain, rain, and more rain. It is that time of year, lots of rain. The last weekend of April, across northern Arkansas and southern Missouri we received over five inches in most places and up to 10 inches in some areas. This was cause for concern.

We were ready for the rain. At Beaver we used about 90 percent of our storage. At Table Rock, where we are finishing our Auxiliary Spillway, the water rose higher than we had hoped and filled the forebay earlier than we had expected, at a rate faster than we had planned, in the middle of the night. But we had our engineers on site to observe, and everything went well. At Clearwater, the dam with the 10-foot diameter sinkhole in it, the rains were less projected. We were prepared to provide extra vigilance if required. It was not necessary.

In thinking about the rain and the concerns we had over the weekend, I realized, more than ever, how rain, water, and storms affect our lives.

Rain provides the water we need to sustain life. It also provides a great destructive power that wrecks dreams and terminates life. Without rain our plants would not grow, flowers would not bloom, and animals will go elsewhere. With too much rain, the beautiful plants and wildlife are washed away. The rain clears the air of the pollens that many of us suffer from, and rain for too long causes mold which likewise inflicts suffering on those with allergies. Rain is good, but too much is bad.

This water from the atmosphere comes to us in different ways. Sometimes it comes as a gentle shower, wetting the ground and soaking into the earth, producing little runoff, but recharging our ground with water and providing the basis of life. Other times it comes frozen. As snow, it blankets the earth with a beautiful white coat that insulates and moisturizes our earth. As hail, it rips leaves and beats down tender plants. When the precipitation is from a thunderstorm, lightning can strike and kill, or tornadoes can form and create great havoc. Rain is associated with great pleasure, and also immense pain, suffering and death.

Because of the effect rain has on our lives, we like to predict when it will rain, and how much it will rain. We plan for rain, and shelter ourselves from it. We try to harness the power of the rain by damming the rivers to prevent floods and produce electricity. Often, as in this latest storm, we are successful. However, we must remember that success is not guaranteed.

Because we know the rain is coming, we prepare. We route the water where it will do the most good. We make contingencies of what to do when the rain comes too fast and when it does not come at all. We form teams to help when the rains do not come as we hope they will. We communicate with others to find out what they know about the weather and see what we can do to learn from them

From where I sit



by Col. Benjamin Butler
District Engineer

and their experiences. While we cannot control the weather, we can control how we react to it and, through proper planning, make the best of the rain.

Change in life is a lot like the rain. We know it is coming, and we know we must plan for it. Change can be good. Change can be not so good. But if we prepare for it properly, we can weather it well.

Change is coming to Little Rock District, and we must be prepared. Like the weather, I am not sure exactly what the amount of change will be, but we cannot let ourselves be surprised. We are taking steps to be ready. I am offering VSIP/VERA to selected grades and series to prepare for what we believe is ahead in 2005. This is an opportunity for us to shape our workforce to be in the best position for what lies ahead. In this manner, we will be prepared when we find out what our final budget will be.

The change in the budget is predicted, but we often have changes that are not predicted. Change in one's health is one of those things we often cannot predict and may not be ready for. Whether the change is due to illness or injury, we must do our best to prepared. If we eat right and exercise regularly, when either illness or injury comes, our bodies are better able to cope and correct any problems. "Be healthy" is more than one of LTG Flower's expectations, it is good for you. But eating right and exercising is not enough. You must be safe, at the office, at home, on vacation! And, when you have done everything correctly and still get sick, you need to have as much sick leave banked as possible. One never knows when they will need it. Conserve your sick leave as much as possible.

Regardless of what we do, rains will come. Some rains will be very good. Some rains will be harder to handle. However, if we plan well and prepare properly, the rains are just another part of life.

Regardless of what we do, change will come. Some changes are very good. Some are less desirable. However, if we plan well and prepare properly, the changes are just another part of life that makes life so interesting.

Have a great month.

LRDispatch

Col. Benjamin Butler *District Engineer*
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Valerie Buckingham . . . *Command Information Officer*
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Questions about sleeping problems answered

The last time we visited, our discussion concerned inadequate sleep and how it can affect you. The discussion included a list of 10 statements. You were asked to answer either *True* or *False* for each one. Now, here is the latest, general information concerning each of those statements.

1. Sleep is a time when your body and brain shut down for rest and relaxation. **FALSE**

Although it is a time when your body rests and restores its energy levels, sleep is an active state that affects both your physical and mental well-being. Adequate restful sleep, like diet and exercise, is critical to good health. Insufficient restful sleep can result in mental and physical health problems.

2. If you regularly doze off unintentionally during the day, you may need more than just a good night's sleep. **TRUE**

Many people doze off unintentionally during the day despite getting their usual night of sleep. This could be a sign of a sleep disorder. Approximately 40 million Americans suffer from sleep disorders. These include sleep apnea, insomnia, narcolepsy, and restless legs syndrome. An untreated sleep disorder can reduce your daytime productivity, increase your risk of accidents, and put you at risk for illness.

3. If you snore loudly and persistently at night and are sleepy during the day, you may have a sleep disorder. **TRUE**

Persistent loud snoring at night and daytime sleepiness are the main symptoms of a common and serious sleep disorder, sleep apnea. Another symptom is frequent long pauses in breathing during sleep, followed by choking and gasping for breath. People with sleep apnea don't get enough restful sleep. Daytime performance is often seriously affected. Sleep apnea may also lead to hypertension, heart disease, heart attack, and stroke. It can be treated so the patient can live a normal life.

4. Opening the car window or turning the radio up will keep the drowsy driver awake. **FALSE**

Opening the car window or turning the radio up may arouse a drowsy driver briefly. This won't keep you alert behind the wheel! Even mild drowsiness is enough to reduce concentration and reaction time. (Remember your defensive driving course.) A sleep-deprived driver may nod off for a couple of seconds at a time without even knowing it -- enough time to kill yourself or someone else. (At 70 mph, how far will you travel in 2 seconds?) It has been estimated that drowsy driving may account for an average of 56,000 reported accidents each year -- claiming over 1,500 lives.

5. Narcolepsy is a sleep disorder marked by "sleep attacks." **TRUE**

People with narcolepsy fall asleep uncontrollably -- at any time of the day, in all types of situations -- regardless of the amount or quality of sleep they've had the night before. Narcolepsy is characterized by these 'sleep attacks.' Other symptoms include daytime

sleepiness, episodes of muscle weakness or paralysis, and disrupted nighttime sleep. There is no known cure. Medications and behavioral treatments can control symptoms. People with narcolepsy can live normal lives.

6. The primary cause of insomnia is worry. **FALSE**

Insomnia has many different causes, including physical and mental conditions, and stress. Insomnia is the perception that you don't get enough sleep because you can't fall asleep or stay asleep or get back to sleep once you've awakened during the night. It affects people of all ages, usually for just an occasional night or two. Sometimes insomnia affects people for weeks, months or even years. Insomnia can become a chronic problem. It is important to get it diagnosed and treated if it persists for more than a month.

7. One cause of not getting enough sleep is restless legs syndrome. **TRUE**

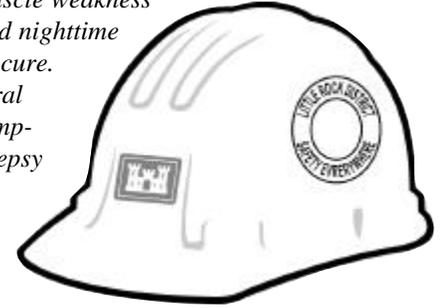
Didn't think there really was such a condition, did you? Restless legs syndrome (RLS) is a medical condition distinguished by tingling sensations in the legs -- and sometimes in the arms. These symptoms occur while you are sitting or lying still, especially at bedtime. People with RLS need to constantly stretch or move their legs to try to relieve these uncomfortable or painful symptoms. As a result, you may have difficulty falling asleep or staying asleep. You may feel extremely sleepy and unable to function fully during the day. Good sleep habits and medication can help.

8. The body has a natural ability to adjust to different sleep schedules such as working different shifts or traveling through multiple time zones quickly. **FALSE**

Your body's biological clock programs you to feel sleepy during the nighttime hours and to be active during the daylight hours. People who work the night shift and try to sleep during the day are constantly fighting their biological clocks. This puts you at risk of error and accident at work and of disturbed sleep. The same is true for people who travel through multiple time zones quickly. They get 'jet lag' because they cannot maintain a regular sleep-awake schedule. Sleeping during the day in a dark, quiet bedroom and getting exposure to sufficient bright light at the right time can help improve alertness.

9. People need less sleep as they grow older. **FALSE**

As we grow older, we don't need less sleep, but we often get less sleep. Our ability to sleep for long periods of time and to get into the deep restful stages of sleep decreases with age. Older people



Safety Everywhere by Peggy Paulsen

Family News

Births

Taylor Wayne Ellis was born March 16. He is the grandson of **Jim and Shelia Ellis**. Jim is a former employee of the Communications Section and Shelia works in the Navigation and Maintenance Section.

Deaths

Susan Moran Himstedt died April 19. She is the mother of **Henry Himstedt**, chief of Hydrology and Hydraulics Section, Engineering and Construction Division.

Neoma H. Dukes died April 11. She is the mother of **Carroll Osburn**, construction representative at Table Rock Dam Safety Office.

Lois Cox died April 28. She is the mother of **Spencer Cox**, construction representative at Table Rock Dam Safety Office.

New Faces

Gary Hill, Bob Henderson, Malcolm Fortson, and David Ries returned to Table Rock Lake Project Office as Summer Rangers.

Melissa Bettes and Robert Gosnell started May 17 as student workers at Table Rock Lake.

Speakers Bureau

As part of National Engineers Week, **Exa Hartman and Roderick Gaines**, both of Design Branch, participated in the National Association of Black Engineers Arkansas Alumni Extension Chapter's Starting Block Seminar conducted at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Little Rock District Office employees **Sandra Easter, Robin Mahomes, Randall Becker and Scott Walker**, were among more than 30 speakers at Southwest Middle School's Career Day, 18 May.

Lake Dardanelle Park Ranger **Allison Smedley** gave two Arkansas Wildflower presentations to Dardanelle Gardening and XYZ Club members March 17 and gave a water safety presentation to third grade students at St. John's Elementary School in Russellville April 2.

Smedley also conducted five water safety programs April 15-16 which reached more than 680 people. The programs were given at Cargill Pork, Oakland Heights Elementary, Center Valley, Crawford and Dwight Elementary Schools.

Congratulations

Vicki Lipsey and Anson Nix were married April 15 at Cadron Creek Settlement. Vicki is an administrative assistant in Construction Branch.

Chuck Sontag and Janette Coppock were married April 20 in a private ceremony at Asbury Methodist Church. Chuck works in the Contracting Division.

Lisa King and Don Thompson were married May 26 in Little Rock. Lisa works in the Executive Office.

LaTisha Sanders, a cartographic technician in Real Estate Division, graduated from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Mechanical Engineering Technology. She has accepted a position with General Motors in the Metal Fabrication and Tool & Die Engineering Division. She will relocate to Michigan in June.

Kathy Fletcher, a student and Lock and Dam operator at Norrell Lock and Dam, graduated May 14 from Phillips Community College. She earned an Associate of Applied Science degree in Industrial Technology.

Abby Tibbett graduated May 14 from the University of Arkansas at Monticello with a Bachelor of Business Administration Degree in Marketing. She is the daughter of **Dan Tibbett**, lock operator at Norrell Lock and Dam.

Table Rock Lake, in partnership with the Missouri State Water Patrol, received a regional award from the National Water Safety Congress April 21 at the International Water Safety Summit in Panama City, FL for its "Partners for Water Safety on Table Rock Lake." The program emphasized the importance of children wearing personal floatation devices and had a regional impact on many out of state boaters.

Rachelle Logan graduated from DeWitt High School. She received the East Lab Scholarship and will attend the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. Rachelle is the daughter of **Donald Logan**, lock operator at Lock 2 and Wilbur D. Mills Dam.

Robert Millard, power plant trainee III at Table Rock Lake Powerhouse, graduated from Ozark Technical College, Springfield, MO with an Associate Degree in Industrial Maintenance.

Retiree **Carl Garner** received the first-ever Lifetime Achievement Award from the National Water Safety Congress April 21 at the International Water Safety Summit in Panama City, FL. Garner was a member of the NWSA from 1967-2002.

(See "Family News" on page 7)

Library houses new periodicals for summer

Stress Advice for Workers

The new video "Arrest that Stress; How to Depressurize Your Work Life" (HF 5548.85 .A77 2003) provides insight into the major causes of job stress and techniques to deal with them. The 20 minute program demonstrates ways to prevent stress from ruining ones work life.

Don't Forget the World Almanac

"The World Almanac and Book of Facts 2004" (REF AY67 .W7 2004) contains a myriad of useful general facts as well as special interest sections. This year focuses on the 2004 presidential race and the baby boom generation.

Federal Employee Almanac

"2004 Federal Employee Almanac" (JK671 .F385 2004), the ever popular work on federal employees benefits is now available for checkout. The work covers topics such as pay, health and life

insurance, Thrift Savings Plan, divorce, travel and many more.

New Safety Videos

More safety videow have arrived. "It's Up to Me! (T55 .I87 2003) uses injury scenarios meshed with stanzas from a powerful poem, the video demonstrates the right and wrong way to respond to unsafe situations.

"I Chose to Look the Other Way: (Y55.I23 2002) utilized a poem to emphasize that speaking up about unsafe acts can save lives and develop a positive safety attitude.

"Emergency Actions Plans" demonstrates evacuation plans from the workplace in response to various disasters.

Team Building Tips

"Creating Effective Teams: a Guide for Members and Leaders" (HD66 .W485 1999) explores the various stages of team development. The work emphasizes the

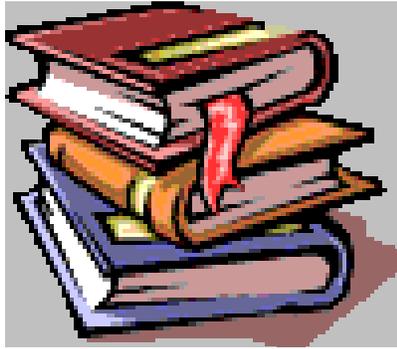
importance of organizational support for teams and tips to sustain high performance.

Learning Organizations

Produced by the Army Corps of Engineers, "Learning Organization Doctrine: Roadmap for Transformation" (HD58.9 .C3 F54 2003) discusses the Corps strategy for becoming a learning organization. The work addresses definition of the concept, leadership for transformation, and creating the learning organization. The book uses a 7S model of systems as a tool for understanding and planning and as a means to implement the change.

Hearing Audiotape

"Sound Hearing, or Hearing What You Miss" (RF 291.35.C64 1989) explains the tones in the human hearing range as well as degrees and frequency of hearing loss.



Library Shelf by Judy Bullwinkle

Sleep

Continued from page 3

have more fragile sleep and are more easily disturbed by light, noise, and pain. They may also have medical conditions that contribute to sleep problems. Going to bed at the same time every night and getting up at the same time every morning; getting exposure to natural outdoor light during the day; and sleeping in a cool, dark, quiet place at night may help.

10. More people doze off at the wheel of a car in the early morning or mid-afternoon than in the evening. **TRUE**

Our bodies are programmed by our biological clock to experience two natural periods of sleepiness during the 24-hour day. This is true regardless of the amount of sleep we've had in the previous 24 hours. The primary period is between about midnight and 7:00 a.m. A second period of less intense sleepiness is in the mid-afternoon, between about 1:00 p.m. and 3:00 p.m.

This means that we are more at risk of falling asleep at the wheel at these times than in the evening -- especially if we haven't been getting enough sleep.

The responses to these questions are short and general. If you think you may have a sleep disorder, you should not hesitate to talk with your doctor about it.

Side Bar: Weighing less seems to be the rage these days. Research has shown that not getting enough sleep can increase your appetite and slow down your metabolism. Insufficient sleep may also interfere with your body's ability to burn off carbohydrates, causing spikes in your blood-sugar level and putting your body into a fat-storage mode. I have always wondered why it seems that my clothes shrink while hanging in the closet, and I gain weight overnight.

Hot Website of the Month

Allergy Action Plan
from Asthma and Allergy
Foundation of America

<http://allergyactionplan.com>

Employee's family deploys to Southwest Asia



U.S. Air Force photo

Col. Bill Simpson shares lunch with his son, Airman 1st Class Doug Simpson. They are the husband and son of Information Management's Lissa Simpson.

SOUTHWEST ASIA (AFPN) -- At first glance, these two Airmen share only a name: Simpson. One is a senior officer, the other is junior enlisted; one is a reservist, the other active duty; one works in an office, the other on a flightline.

But a closer look reveals Col. Bill Simpson and Airman 1st Class Doug Simpson share more than a moniker -- they are father and son. They are also fighting the war on terrorism from the same forward-deployed location here.

"It's so great to have him here," said Col. Simpson, the air reserve component liaison and a 34-year Air Force veteran. "I've been dragging him to air bases since he could walk. And now he's working on

the same planes I used to work with."

Airman Simpson, a C-130 Hercules crew chief deployed from Pope Air Force Base, N.C., joined the Army initially. It was not until 18 months ago that he started following in his father's footsteps as an Airman.

"I used to be a combat engineer in the Army Reserve and was with them for like four years,"

Airman Simpson said. "My unit didn't deploy in that entire time though, and I knew I wanted to. So I came to the Air Force, and here I am."

Col. Simpson, who is deployed from Tinker AFB, Okla., did more than help his son transition to life as an Airman. In fact, he even swore in his son.

"That was easily one of the proudest moments of my life," Col. Simpson said. "I was enlisted for 12 years, so I'm real proud that my son is a crew chief for one of my favorite planes. He used to build models of them when he was growing up and now he launches them for real.

"One of the funniest things is that one of the C-130s we used to go see when I

was stationed at Little Rock Air Force Base, Ark., is now one of the planes they train on at Sheppard [AFB, Texas]," Col. Simpson said.

"I couldn't believe it when he called me from school to tell me that."

The Simpsons try to get together once a week to share a pizza or go off base together. "I like being in the same place as my dad," Airman Simpson said. "I know I always have someone I can spend time with or get a ride if I need one. We are also able to keep tabs on each other and let our family know how the other is doing."

Though his father earned a degree and a commission, Airman Simpson said he is not sure he wants to become an officer.

"I'd like to go to Germany or maybe even cross train into [explosive ordnance disposal]," he said.

"I did a lot of that in the Army. I've already applied things I learned with (the Soldiers), like knowing what is expected of me or dealing with certain situations."

While this is the first deployment for the younger Simpson, the colonel said he has been on "more deployments than I can count.

"What matters is that this is the first one with my son," Col. Simpson said, "and that's more important than anything."

(Editor's Note: This article was written by Airman 1st Class J.G. Buzanowski, Combined Air Operation Center Public Affairs. Col. Simpson and Airman Simpson are the husband and son of Lissa Simpson, Chief of Customer Assistance Section, Information Management Office.)

FEST-A Needs Volunteers

The Forward Engineer Team-Augmentation is in need of Civil, Mechanical and Electrical Engineers.

Anyone interested in volunteering should contact Charlie Tobin, Emergency Management at 324-5695.

Training will be 15-24 June in Vicksburg, MS.

Dunn testifies before Congress

by Raini Wright
LRDispatch Staff



DUNN

On March 31, in Washington, D.C., Donald Dunn, chief of Engineering and Construction Division, testified before the House of Representatives Appropriations Committee, Subcommittee on Energy and Water Resources.

The hearing was to highlight contributions the Army Corps of Engineers' active duty military and civilian employees made in the restoration of Iraq and Afghanistan.

"The testimonies highlighted two significant areas," Dunn said. "First, they provided the Corps the opportunity to demonstrate to Congress our use of the Civil Works mission in executing emergency operations. Second, they provided the subcommittee with an opportunity to recognize USACE for its great work done in Operation Iraqi Freedom."

Fourteen Corps employees testified. Dunn was the only employee from Little Rock District. He spoke briefly about his experiences overseeing and executing the daily restoration of the Iraqi oil infrastructure to pre-war production and export levels. Dunn served as the deputy for program management for the Forward Engineering Support Team Main.

"The Corps civil works missions and activities enabled [the Corps]...to support measures to protect and secure the nation's infrastructure," Lt. Gen. Robert Flowers, commanding general, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, said.

Complete testimonies of all employees, Flowers, and R.L. Brownlee, acting secretary of the Army, are available on the Corps homepage under Hot Topics.

Family News

(Continued from page 4)

Brittany Williams received honorable mention for her age group for her entry in this year's Junior Duck Stamp Contest by the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission. She is the granddaughter of **Don Hubsch**, a park ranger at Arkansas Post Field Office.

Eirin Lewis graduated from Conway High School May 14. She is the daughter of **Chris Smith**, an Outdoor Recreation Planner in Natural Resources Management Section.

Little Rock District Water Safety Team won an Award of Merit for Region IV from the National Water Safety Congress April 20 in Panama City, FL.

Ryan Jones placed Second in the Metal Cutting Event at the Arkansas Skills USA Competition in Hot Springs April 20-21. He is the son of **George Jones** of the Dardanelle Marine Terminal.

Change of Command Ceremony

10 a.m., July 23
Alltel Arena, Little Rock

COL Benjamin Butler
will relinquish command of
the US Army Corps of Engineers
Little Rock District
to
COL Wally Z. Walters

ENGINEER DAY 2004

June 18 @ Sherwood Forest in Sherwood



Bring your family for a day of awards, BBQ and tons of fun!

Retirees are Welcome!

There will be water-related games for the children, so remember to bring towels and dry clothes.

To purchase a picnic ticket, contact your CRA Representative. (BBQ - \$5 Hot Dogs - \$2.50)

Inspiration isn't as hard to find as you think

As a current member of the PPEP Class of 2004, I can relate to the hoards of people in our society that sometimes feel they are lacking in energy and need inspiration. It is very easy to get caught up in what some call the "daily grind" and to lose sight of what we are striving for. Webster's dictionary provides at least 4 definitions of the word Inspiration:

- 1) Stimulation of the mind or emotions to a high level of activity or feeling.
- 2) One that moves intellect or emotions or prompts action or invention.
- 3) A sudden creative idea.
- 4) Divine influence or guidance exerted directly on the mind and soul of man. I prefer the latter explanation. Even though all of the others make sense and they are all true, I like the last definition because it links inspiration with one of our most invaluable resources, people.

I liken this to an experience of which my teammates and I shared back in late October 2003. We were renovating the trails and backfilling the steps of Sugar Loaf Mountain on Greer's Ferry Lake. I know that I speak for us all when I say that the closer we got to the top of the mountain, the more it seemed to grow in height. It appeared that the mountain was laughing at us, we felt as if we would never get to the top of it. So there we were, the lucky seven exemplifying the three S's: sweaty, stinky, and starving! Talk about needing some inspiration. Three families were climbing Sugar Loaf that day, and each one of them stopped for a few seconds and told us that we were doing a great job, they said they could see the progress

that we were making and commended us for taking on this task on a beautiful Saturday. It may not sound like much now, but each time one person would stop on their steady pace of climbing just to tell us that we were making a difference, it gave the team a little more energy to complete our task.

Not only did their words of encouragement validate our efforts to make Sugar Loaf Mountain safer and cleaner for the public, it made us feel good. That's inspiration.

On February 14, I had the unfortunate fate of getting into an accident. It was a small fender bender, but an accident nonetheless. As many of you can recall it began to snow pretty heavily that afternoon. Unfortunately, I didn't realize how heavily until I had already left home and was on Mississippi Avenue going downhill, pun intended. After all was said and done, a sedan slid into my car, the snow was pouring like rain, and the sun was setting swiftly.

I had never felt so lost and confused. I knew I couldn't drive my car home; there was a three hour delay on tow trucks and I was too far to walk home; I couldn't find inspiration if it were to hit me on the top of my head. I managed to drive my car into the nearby driveway of the Mitchell family. They turned out to be one of my three guardian angels that evening. You would think that the satisfaction of being nestled



Tamika L. Slaughter
PPEP-04 Class

and cozy in their own home during a snow storm, and being concerned about rocket scientists who felt they have superior driving skills but ended up getting stranded in the snow would be their last concern. Not so. This family was so warm and welcoming that their concern made the snow feel not as cold. Mrs.

Mitchell said something to me that warmed my heart to the core; she said, "We're all in this together." What an inspiration, to feel that people who don't know you from a hill of beans would show such warmth and consideration.

I also met the Skarda's on this evening. I looked like a wet and deserted puppy, but the Skarda family immediately took me into their fold. Before I could blink, I had a warm towel wrapped around me and I was sitting in front of a warm fireplace drinking a hot cup of tea. Even though I was at the Skarda's household for about an hour at most, I will never forget them. In my book, they are an inspiration to the testament of people. They didn't see class, race, age, background, or any of the other superficial things that we are judged by on a daily basis. They saw a person in need, that's inspiration.

So the next time, that you find yourself questioning, "What's the use?" or "Why do I even keep trying?" just look around or just stand still and listen to those around you. I promise you that inspiration is not too far away.

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