Above & Beyond

This story of an effort above and beyond the call of duty begins with an astute observation, and ends with $500,000—a happy ending to say the least.

When Senior Financial Analyst Sarah Mandli recognized an outrageously high water bill in January of 2010, she took it upon herself to investigate.

Sarah sent dozens of emails, and made numerous phone calls in an attempt to schedule an in-person meeting with Water Department personnel to no avail. Still, she rose above unanswered solicitations in hopes of getting to the bottom of the situation.

Sarah drew the help of colleagues including John Carey, Senior Client Services Manager, building engineering staff and management at the Henry Crown Field House, Andy Cobb, Hull Court Supervisor, and Robert Tiberg, Director of Operations and Maintenance, ultimately granting her access for a water shutdown to install a digital water reading system for more regular tracking. By July 2010, all suspicions were confirmed, and then some.

Once the Water Department acknowledged that refunds were due, Sarah had to redouble her efforts to ensure that we received repayment. Finally, in April 2011 she ushered in a check for $500,000 in reimbursements for overpayments. Sarah’s keen eye for numbers and meticulous work and dedication to stewarding the University’s resources showed. Her efforts were key in closing a significant gap in our utilities budget this year. We commend Sarah for her diligent efforts.
Spotlight on Roberto Lupano

Roberto Lupano, Capital Planning Coordinator here in Facilities Services, had an indirect journey to the south side of Chicago. Roberto’s childhood and early career took him around the world from his birthplace in Australia, to Italy, Nigeria, and finally, Chicago.

At fourteen, Roberto’s Italian born parents decided to leave Australia for Italy, where after graduation he found work with an international contractor. More travels took him overseas for a gig in Nigeria on a dam building project for the local government. “For me at that age it was an adventure,” he said. “I was happy to go.”

There, Roberto saw political unrest among ethnic populations, and found himself without a passport in the midst of a military coup. “I was away from the main site and my passport was back at the camp,” he said. “In those situations you like to have your passport in your pocket.”

Work eventually took Roberto to Chicago where he opted to stay. He says he enjoys his work in FS and finds he is privy to the sometimes-unnoticed interconnectedness of FS units. “My favorite part of the job is bringing contributions together to present a request to the Provost office,” Roberto said. “I like to see different parts of Facilities come together.”

Although Roberto is no longer confronted with political turmoil in a military-fraught terrain, he says he is better suited for his job for having had such experiences. “It’s helped me in the way I interact with other people in a team environment,” he said.

Roberto is often busy with feasibility studies for project estimates in the pre-construction phase, as well as managing the database that tracks the conditions of campus facilities. Now, he is working on an estimate for the basement renovation in Cobb Hall, and is gearing up to start the annual (almost) year-long process of identifying capital alterations & repairs projects for next fiscal year.

Bottled Water Wipeout

A year ago, Facilities Services set its mind to beating its bottled water dependence, an addiction it shared with most Americans. Luckily, the life source can be found in purified water fountains that line the halls of the Young Building, in filtered water from our refrigerators, and in those old-fashioned sink things. Described in the Policy on Bottled Water,[http://sustainability.uchicago.edu/pdfs/FS%20bottled%20water%20policy.pdf] FS enabled Young Building occupants to wean off the bottle by providing refillable water bottles, pitchers, and glasses.

According to the Earth Policy Institute, one quarter of bottled water shipments cross national borders. Plus, the production of the bottles themselves uses 17 million barrels of oil a year. Instead of bottled water, our shops will be stocked with reusable cups, pitchers, and, in time, water filtration systems.

By eliminating constant bottled water purchases FS will save around $12,000 a year. Sustainability’s effort to spread the green word has proved trend setting. The University even hydrated convocation attendees with alternative water sources amounting to 15,000 fewer bottles of water than last year’s event.
Print Sprint Achievment

According to the EPA, the average office worker in the United States uses around 10,000 sheets of copy paper each year. Considering that staggering sum, it would seem we are a people set irreversibly in our paper pushing ways. But Katie Anson in the sustainability office thought better of us.

Following a tournament bracket similar to March Madness, Katie, along with SAGE Ambassadors, and Sarah Mandli challenged the paper dependent to cut their printing habit. Motivation surged as eight groups worked to create team names like 3 Sheets to the Wind, and The Team Formerly Known as ‘Prints,’ and the winners, of course, TANSTAAFL, which stands for, There Ain’t No Such Thing As A Free Lunch!

The goal? To print the fewest number of pages as a team for increased sustainability office wide, all the while building a sense of community. And of course, the delicious prize—a catered lunch—likely helped motivate the masses.

In April, the three day Print Sprint came to a close, instilling thoughtfulness in some of its participants formerly enmeshed in the printer problem. While no data was measured to assess exactly how much paper the department saved, Sustainability put together a reality check in the form of a fact sheet. The sheet quantified some of our wasteful behaviors explaining that the average employee wastes 6 pages per day, amounting to 108,570 pages per year!

ACE Tech Internships

If you've noticed lots of youngsters contributing to the good work of Facilities Services, that's because our partnership with ACE Technical Charter School has taken on a new and exciting turn. Twelve students from grades 10 to 12 are participating in a summer long internship program working in areas throughout FS including project management, engineering and trade shops, IT support, inventory, and apartment turnover.

Roslyn Johnson, director of Procurement and Economic Impact for FS, spearheaded the program and views it as integral to her mission. “We strive to be good community partners, which include helping to ensure that the youth of this community are engaged.”

As part of that engagement, the students participate in weekly lunches—heavily attended by staff too—along with college aged interns to hear panels of FS team members discuss their roles in the department and how they came to occupy them.

The students, who work four days a week, went through rigorous safety training. In the interest of safety, FS provided steel-toed boots to those intern shops and who frequent construction sites. Stay tuned for more information on the FS website!

Bike To Work Week

A total of 14 FS employees participated in BTWW 2011—a 100% increase in participation from last year. Collectively, FS cycled a total of over 570 miles, the distance from Chicago to Knoxville, Tennessee. Barry O’Quinn from the Metal Shop rode a whopping 204 miles while Robert Slivon from the BAS Shop put in 70 miles for the week. Almost half of the cyclists were first time riders to work.

The Fab 14...

Katie Anson  
Dave Culcasi  
Matthew Curtin  
Rob Jones  
C. Lee  
Brian Lipinski  
Alicia Murasaki  
Carla Nelis  
Barry O’Quinn  
Arleta Porter  
Brandon Rux  
Robert Slivon  
Erin Wieand  
Steve Wisenthal
Dear Colleagues,

I would like to thank all in Facilities Services who helped with last month’s spectacular convocation. Events such as this depend on an organized team operating as a well-oiled machine to succeed. This was just the second University-wide ceremony to occur since 1929, and ensuring success was no easy feat.

Whether for huge annual events or our day-to-day work, we’ve spoken a lot about the benefits of tracking our progress. The new Quarterly Operations Report, developed by Joel Schriever, delivers an easy tool to track progress through the lens of our five strategic themes. I expect it will become an essential resource for us as we work to further develop department standards. Other units are mirroring Joel’s efforts, giving us all more data to track our progress as we pursue our goals.

A few months after the barriers for Mansueto went down on Ellis Avenue, they’re about to go up again for the William Eckhardt Research Center (WERC) across the street. The University is proud to welcome Matthew Tirrell as Founding Director of the new institute for molecular science to be housed with the physical sciences department in WERC. Dr. Tirrell, moving to Chicago from UC Berkeley, is a groundbreaking researcher in biomolecular engineering and nanotechnology.

Facilities maintenance work for Residence Halls & Commons and International House has transitioned to our portfolio, and custodial services will transition on 15 August. This move acknowledges our improvements in service delivery and our strategic value to the University—two of our strategic themes. We hope to achieve performance improvements, efficiencies and financial savings in this transition, and are looking forward to more first-hand student engagement. Please join me in welcoming our new employees who have transferred into FS. Look for more information about the transition and new FS staff in the next addition of Pipeline.

In May I had the exciting opportunity to moderate an Architecture and Science Panel. It was quite successful in fusing these sometimes opposing fields, and it left me thinking—we in Facilities have long been considering the effects of the work we do. Our sustainability and economic impact work reminds us to think beyond our campus, and to consider our role in reshaping Hyde Park, Woodlawn, and our surrounding neighborhoods, as well as our impact on a global scale. Our role in shaping our campus directly impacts the way those in our community live and learn. I encourage everyone to consider the important role we play in building and maintaining the world beyond our campus.

With great appreciation,

Steve