

# EMPLOYEE FOCUS

April 2020

A Publication of the Employee Communication Committee  
Susan Rasmussen, Editor

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## Employee of the Month March 2020 Brian Bartlett

With Brian’s knowledge of the District’s IT infrastructure, and his dedicated effort, he has been able to help staff get set up to work – remotely, effectively, and so quickly... like over a period of days for the most part – as a vital component of our COVID-19 Risk Minimization and Outbreak Response Plan.

In fact, the whole IT Department has been fantastic – they had been working on implementing and testing these remote technologies to allow for offsite work capabilities. Many of these were in place and being used by some departments prior to COVID-19 extravaganza which helped the District make quick decisions to keep staff functional and healthy, so we can keep doing our jobs, to keep our environment and our community safe.

Recently, Brian upgraded the District’s phone system and added a plethora of features that paved the way for users to get the MiCollab app on their mobile phones which allows for chat, phone calls, and conference call setup. With this new phone system the District’s staff also has the ability to take their desk phones home and use them. This has been a huge benefit since COVID-19 has become a pandemic, allowing the Customer Service Department to answer phone calls from customers calling the District’s main phone number as if they were in the office.

Over the last few years, Brian has also worked with the IT team to install the Netmotion VPN client for field staff and engineers which allows them to work seamlessly from the field. This technology has allowed for the VPN client to be rapidly installed on additional District laptops and tablets allowing for many more staff to work from home.

Once the District’s COVID-19 risk level went to level three, Brian worked tirelessly with the IT team to get the majority of office staff set up to work remotely. In these times, we thank Brian and the entire IT department for all of the hard work and effort they put into continual upgrades of the Districts IT infrastructure over the years.

Brian is so dedicated, and without all these past and current efforts, we would not be able to provide for the District’s customers and staff as efficiently and effectively as we are able to today.

*“Optimism is the foundation of courage.”*

~ Nicholas Murray Butler

*“Optimism is the sunshine of the soul.”*

~ Old Saying



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# H.R. Happenings

by Liz Kauffman

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## Recruitments

### Senior/Associate Engineer

Adrian Combes was selected to fill the Senior Engineer position. Adrian is relocating from Pismo Beach and brings 13 years of experience working as an Engineer with Golden State Water. Adrian will start on March 31.

### Staff Engineer I/II- Limited Term

Aaron Zook was the successful candidate for the Staff Engineer position. Aaron worked as engineering intern at the District a few years ago. Most recently he was working as Staff Engineer for Auerbach Engineering Construction in Tahoe City. Aaron is scheduled to start April 6.

### URW I/II – Limited Term

Barrett's transfer to the Limited Term Meter Service Tech position opens a position in the URW Department. This position will be posted as a limited term as the MOU allows employees to transfer back to their prior position at the conclusion of the limited term. The application period for this position closed March 23. As a result of the Coronavirus outbreak, we have decided to put this recruitment on hold until further notice. More information to come.

### Maintenance Mechanic I/II

With Jay Alsbury's upcoming retirement, Kyle has been approved to hire early for his position. Look for this position to be posted soon.

### Seasonal Laborer Positions

We are still recruiting for seasonal laborer positions even though we are uncertain on when construction work will begin. Returning seasonal employees who are interested in coming back this seasonal can contact Human Resources directly. Blue Ribbon will be collecting and screening resumes of any new candidates.

Shipping and Receiving happily welcomes back Brandon Singleton to provide backup and shift-splits in light of COVID-19.

## Open Enrollment for Deferred Comp

During April you can make changes that will become effective with the first pay day in May (May 5). Please get your elections form to HR by April 24. The Deferred Comp Election Change forms can be found on the public drive in the HR folder under FORMS. You can also contact Liz to obtain a form. Completed forms can be emailed to Liz.

## ACWA-JPIA Temporary Prescription Benefit Changes

Several aspects of the prescription coverage have been modified in response to COVID-19. Anthem PPO prescription refills will not reject for "refill too soon." The Anthem PPO plan mail order requirement will be suspended allowing you refill your prescriptions at local pharmacies. Ninety-day refills will be permitted for many prescriptions at retail. COVID-19 testing is covered at no cost.

## Employee Assistance Program

As a reminder, all employees and their dependents are eligible to use this program. Being mindful of your mental health during the COVID-19 outbreak is important. If you need to get a grasp on your anxiety or need to find ways to connect during this time, the EAP could help. You can call 24-hours a day, seven days a week: 1-800-242-6220 or visit [members.mhn.com](http://members.mhn.com) and use the company code STPUD.



Birthdays

Marla Sharp	April 2
Aaron Zook	April 4
Richard "IV" Jones	April 11
Star Glaze	April 17
Anthony Gregorich	April 17
Juan Marquez	April 18
Justin Phillips	April 22
Steve Caswell	April 23
Linda Kosciolek	April 24

Anniversaries

Sara Lucero	1 year
Hector Vasquez	1 year
Perris Verduzco	4 years
Jason Brand	4 years
Ross Cole	4 years
Ryan Lee	5 years
Tommy Smith	5 years
Chris Skelly	13 years
Mike Chieffo	14 years
Matt Mendoza	14 years
Cuz Cullen	18 years
Jeff Lee	33 years

Welcome

Welcome to new employees Adrian Combs (Senior/Associate Engineer) and Aaron Zook (Limited Term Engineering Intern)!

Dates and Events

- 4/1 — April Fool's Day
  - 4/2 — Board of Directors Meeting
  - 4/15 — Tax Day
  - 4/16 — Board of Directors Meeting
  - 4/12 — Easter Sunday
  - 4/22 — Earth Day
  - 4/25 — Admin. Professionals Day
  - 4/27 — National Arbor Day
- April is National Garden Month!

Reminders from IT during COVID-19

Your IT team is fully prepared to support your remote work during this trying time. We wanted to remind you of a couple of tools at your disposal to help facilitate your remote meetings and communication with coworkers.

1. GotoMeeting and Zoom: These virtual meeting platforms are available for you to use! IT can setup these meetings for you and will email you the details. To set one up, email the HelpDesk with the following details:
  - a. Meeting Name
  - b. Date/Time
  - c. Length of Meeting
2. Remote Assistance: If you are having issues while working remotely, you can call or email an IT team member and we can remote into your computer to help!
3. Call forwarding: This allows you to route your desktop phone to your home or cellphone.

While many people are coming together in communities and workplaces to help and support each other, there are also those that are taking advantage. Please be vigilant of phishing emails using COVID-19 to get you to click on malicious links.

Key points:

- COVID-19 is being used as a phishing lure by cybercriminals and nation states.
- We expect to see an increase in exploits related to COVID-19 as publicity around the virus increases.
- Cybercriminals are using trusted brands, like World Health Organization (WHO) and U.S. Center for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC), to build credibility and entice users into opening attachments.

What can you do?

- Don't click on any COVID-19 related links or attachments you receive via email or messaging apps. This includes messages to personal email providers like Gmail.
- Don't be fooled by legitimate-looking branding on messages you receive, as there are good fakes making the rounds. Cybercriminals will also often use language that conveys a sense of urgency, so be alert.
- If you want COVID-19 news, navigate directly to the WHO and CDC websites. Use best practices by typing URLs into your web browser and use Google Search to search for sites.
- Don't put your credentials into third-party sites unless you're 100% sure you're on the correct site.



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## Perspectives

by John Thiel

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With COVID-19 impacting all of us, the District, our community, and our nation, these are historical and unprecedented times. I want to assure you that the District is here for you and your family. I also want to recognize that, amid all this change and uncertainty, it is awesome to see District staff coming together in a united front against this formidable enemy. With all this in mind, I wanted to provide some thoughts and perspectives on our COVID-19 response and recovery.

At the District, we have a solid plan in place which will continue to evolve as needed. We are trying to keep you fully engaged through emails and, next week, I'm looking forward to a District-wide call-in meeting where you can hear from other departments and ask questions. Be assured - we will get through this, working together (even remotely) to overcome challenges. I believe we will soon look back on this period with pride and confidence, emerging stronger and better than before, and looking forward to future challenges with firm resolve.

This is not the first time the District has weathered a major crisis and will certainly not be the last. Do you remember the financial crash of 2008? I was here at the District then, along with more than half of our current staff. Together we made many adjustments, to projects and priorities, while maintaining full District staff levels – there were no layoffs and we are very proud of that. This is a record I intend to keep in the face of any economic downturn. We were, and continue to be, financially stable and built for the long haul. Providing job security helps us remain sustainable through the toughest times in order to provide essential services to our community.

In the near term, we can expect to see changes at the District due to the virus. I think the Board will likely delay a rate increase, if approving one at all this year. This will impact the timing of Capital Improvement Projects, and we'll need to continue to rely on staff ingenuity and experience to take care of our assets. With continued direction to shelter in place through the end of April, our field season will likely be delayed for construction projects and other seasonal work.

Looking ahead, however, I see increasing probabilities for stimulus funding on the horizon – State and Federal funding for infrastructure projects including our many waterline replacement projects already identified for fire flow and structural deficiencies. So even now, while under Risk Level 3 response, we are shifting gears to get our projects “shovel-ready” to take full advantage of all potential funding.

As we continue to adapt, it is important to remember that this is temporary. Right now we need to focus on taking care of ourselves, our families, and our co-workers as we advance our core mission: to provide safe, clean drinking water and reliable wastewater services to our community, and for our environment.

Thank you for being such great partners as we confront COVID-19. I really could not imagine or wish for a better team to make it through all of this, than all of you, right here, right now.

*John*