

IS&C Builds Field of Dreams with Web Server Farm

Contributed by Rita Wagner Fernatt of the Information Services and Communications Division.

The Information Services and Communications Division (IS&C) has built a field of dreams hoping you, their customers, will come. What are we talking about? IS&C has made a major investment to build a web server farm (the Farm) to host websites and e-commerce applications for State agencies.

All the stops have been pulled out to provide an e-commerce platform of which we can all be proud. The web farm consists of development, staging, production, and database servers, and all are protected by redundant firewalls. The production servers are all load-balanced and redundant while the database servers are clustered. All servers are backed up daily to the mainframe via Tivoli, and they are connected to the SAN (storage area network) which lets application files be preserved even if a server “crashes.” Databases are backed up to the SAN as required by the application, and all servers have automatic real time virus checking done via Norton Anti-Virus. All of this was done to provide as close to 24/7 uptime for e-commerce applications as humanly possible.

The Farm opened for business in July of this year. At that time, the migration of current websites hosted by IS&C from its old web server to the Farm was begun. The process is still in progress, but they anticipate having all site migrations completed soon. In addition, there have been several new sites added since the Farm opened for business – for example, the State’s new Portal,

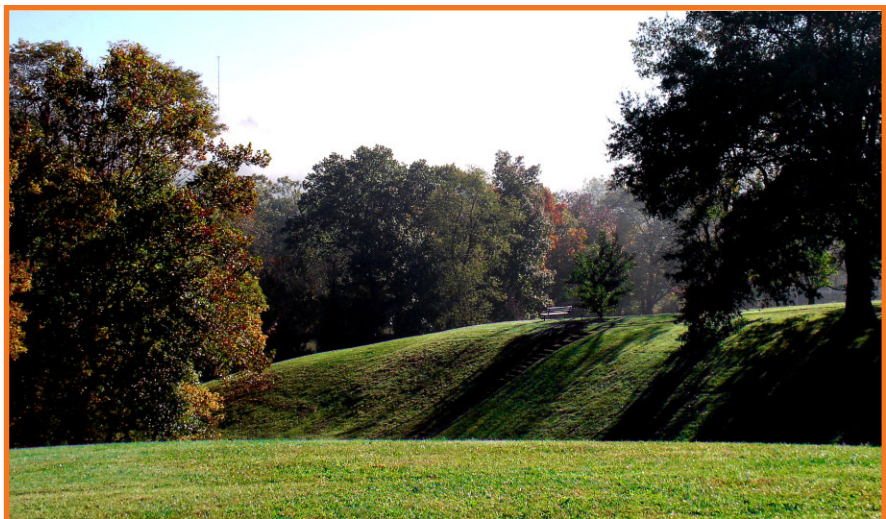
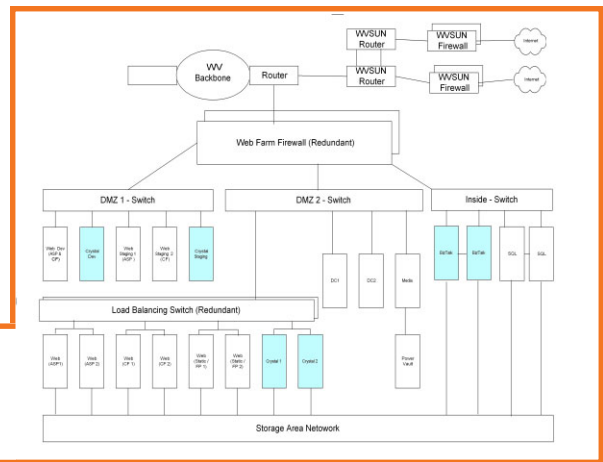
www.wv.gov, is hosted there. IS&C hopes this trend continues and that their customers will continue coming to the Farm.

FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN THE REALLY TECHNICAL DETAILS ...

In production are three pairs of servers for website hosting. A pair is dedicated to .asp/.net, a pair for Cold Fusion, and a pair for Front Page and static sites. All data is replicated between the servers via SureSync replication software. Web traffic is load-balanced between the servers in the pairs with redundant Cisco Content Sensitive Switches. Several

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RIGHT: Diagram of the new IS&C Web Server Farm



Spectacular October morning view from behind the Clarksburg VA Hospital

Weight Loss Expenses to Treat Obesity May Be Tax Deductible

The cost of weight loss programs and/or home exercise equipment purchased on a doctor's recommendation as part of treatment for obesity may be a deductible medical expense under Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code Section 213. On September 30, 2003, the IRS issued Information Letter 2003-0202 which provides some clarity and guidelines for claiming this type of deduction. The ruling opens the door for reimbursement of these costs through a health flexible spending account, which uses the definition of "medical expense" under Section 213 as a starting point for determining a claim's eligibility.

Deductions under Section 213 are limited to expenses paid primarily for the prevention or alleviation of

physical or mental defects or illnesses. Now that the medical community recognizes obesity as a disease, the IRS has ruled that participation in a weight-loss program as treatment for physician-diagnosed obesity is a deductible medical ex-



pense. The determination of what constitutes weight-loss program specifics are left to the individual's physician.

Accordingly, taxpayers may deduct exercise expenses, including the cost of equipment for use at home, if it is required to treat a disease or illness (including obesity) that has been diagnosed by a physician. For an exercise expense to be deductible, the taxpayer must establish that the purpose of the expense is to treat the disease or illness rather than to promote general health, and that the taxpayer would not have paid the expense but for this purpose.

To read Information Letter 2003-0202, visit www.irs.gov/pub/irs-wd/03-0202.pdf.

PEIA to Hold FY2005 Plan Public Hearings in Nov.

In early November, the Public Employees Insurance Agency (PEIA) Finance Board will hold public hearings in order to receive comments on next year's plan. The Board will present the Fiscal Year 2005 financial plan and take comments and questions on it from anyone interested.

For retirees or employees of State agencies, colleges, universities, or county boards of education, no benefit changes are anticipated, nor are there any proposed premium changes scheduled. Non-State agencies, however, are expected to see a 12% premium increase because they are in a separate risk pool.

PEIA staff members will be available in each location prior to the hearings to discuss the plan informally with anyone who is interested. They'll also take questions about the plan's contents and be available after the hearing for further inquiries.

PEIA again will offer face-to-face customer service sessions at the hear-

ings. These sessions will give members a chance to ask questions of customer service specialists. The face-to-face customer service sessions will be held from 4-6 P.M. in each location.

Every person who attends any hearing will be asked to register so that PEIA will have a complete record of attendance. Those interested in speaking must indicate so at registration. All registrations begin at 5:30 P.M.; hearings start at 6:00 P.M. and will be held as follows:




Mon.	Nov. 3	WVU-P BIDS Bldg., 300 Campus Drive, Parkersburg
Tues.	Nov. 4	Huntington Civic Arena, 3rd Ave. and 8th St., Huntington
Thurs.	Nov. 6	City Council Chambers, 1500 Chapline St., Wheeling
Mon.	Nov. 10	Erickson Alumni Ctr., Fine Arts & Pattenon Dr., Morgantown
Wed.	Nov. 12	Civic Center, 200 Civic Center Dr., Charleston
Mon.	Nov. 17	Tamarack, One Tamarack Park, Beckley
Tues.	Nov. 18	James Rumsey Vo-Tech Center, Route 9 West, Hedgesville

Hearings were scheduled earlier this year to avoid conflicts with the upcoming holidays, as well as hunting season, making it easier for employees who want to attend to do so. It's hoped that with this revised schedule, more employees will take advantage of the opportunity to participate in the hearings. PEIA will also accept written comments from those unable to attend a hearing. You may e-mail your comments to peia@peia.state.wv.us or send them in the mail to: The Public Employees Insurance Agency, State Capitol Complex, Building 5, Room 1001, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard, East, Charleston, WV 25305-0710.

DHHR Assists Eligibles with Heating Bills

Applications for the State's special reduced residential service rate program for home heating were mailed by the Department of Health and Human Resources (DHHR) in early October.

A 20% discount is offered to eligible individuals/households to assist in paying winter heating costs. To be eligible, individuals must receive services from at least one of the following programs between November 2003 and March 2004:

-  **Supplemental Security Income (SSI) - note that children under age 18 are NOT eligible.**
-  **WV WORKS**
-  **Food stamps (for people age 60 and over)**

The appropriate utility company is responsible for making the eligibility determination for the reduced rates. If you or someone you know needs additional information, contact the nearest local DHHR Office.

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other services are available including: ChatSpace (a chat service), access to list serv service, Crystal Reports webpage server, streaming media server, and Front Page server extensions. On the database cluster, application databases like Access, Paradox, etc., are hosted. If customers want to scale up, MS SQL Server 2000 is also running on the database cluster for hosting application databases.

In development is a server on which developers can work to develop their web applications. This server will also run MS SQL Server, and it will allow developers to try out their applications on IS&C's platform without affecting any production sites.

A pair of staging servers are available. One staging server is dedicated to .asp/.Net and the other is dedicated to Cold Fusion. These servers allow developers to set their site up for acceptance testing for the users of the application(s). These servers allow developers to take snapshots of their application(s) and move them to a site where the application users can take a look to see if they like the way things are being created without interrupting work on the development server.

Also in the near future, a cluster of BizTalk servers, a development Crystal Reports server, a staging Crystal Reports server, and a pair of production Crystal Reports servers will be added. An e-postcard service is being reviewed, and IS&C is open to reviewing and adding services as applications require them.

Now that IS&C's Web Server Farm is up and running, it's hoped that the field of dreams is as successful as the field in the movie. If you have any questions, want more information, or want to host your website on the Farm, give the IS&C staff a call or e-mail them at the information below.

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DOP Training Conference Saves West Virginia Money!

As part of Governor Bob Wise's efforts to make government more efficient, a recent management conference held by the West Virginia Division of Personnel (DOP) saved the State an estimated \$71,000. The conference was the first of a new program that regionalizes meetings to save money on travel expenses for employees.

The training, held in Morgantown, was the second of four regional events that make up the *Center for Quality Government 2003 Regional Management Conference: Protecting our Resources, Reducing Risk and Liability*. The DOP's Organization and Human Resource Development Section is sponsoring the conference, which focuses on the requirements of the State's mandatory management training program.

Tom Susman, Acting Secretary of the Department of Administration, said this educational initiative provides a number of benefits to the State.

"One of our primary goals is to help State managers and supervisors meet the requirements of the policy in a fiscally responsible way," Susman said. "We believe the conference offers significant long-term payoffs, most notably a reduction in the likelihood of loss and litigation."

Most of the conference classes deal specifically with employment law and personnel policy issues that help promote fair, equitable, and lawful management.

"Participants are overwhelmingly positive about the conference," said Max Farley, Acting Director of the Division of Personnel. "They appreciate our enhanced customer service and value the opportunity to attend the required training close to home."

Farley believes the two remaining conferences (Blackwater Falls, October 27-31 and Pipestem, November 17-21) also will result in significant cost savings for the State.

"We're committed to improving individual, team, and organizational performance," Farley said. "We're equally committed to achieving those goals in a cost-effective manner."

You'll find more about all training programs at www.state.wv.us/admin/personnel/classes.

Adults Need Shots Too!

Contributed by Joe Thornton of the Department of Health and Human Resources.

National Adult Immunization Week was held October 12-18. This year's theme was *Immunization: Building a Path to a Healthy Tomorrow*.

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, one in 20 people (12.5 million) in the United States have been infected with the hepatitis B virus during their lifetime. Another 4,000-5,000 die each year from hepatitis B-related chronic liver diseases such as cirrhosis and liver cancer.

Before the introduction of the chickenpox vaccine in 1995, approximately 4 million cases of chickenpox occurred annually in the U.S., resulting in nearly 11,000 hospitalizations and 100 deaths. Chickenpox carries a much higher risk of serious and fatal complications with adults than with children.

Even though flu and pneumonia shots are very important, **THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY SHOTS NEEDED!** The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices recommends adult immunizations against diphtheria, hepatitis A and

B, measles, mumps, rubella, tetanus, and varicella. Another immunization adults should consider is meningococcal vaccine. Though it is not yet recommended for routine use in any segment of the American population, meningococcal vaccination is encouraged and even required by some colleges, particularly for students living in dormitories. There are an estimated 2,600 cases of bacterial meningitis in the country each year.

Immunization is not a childhood activity – it's a lifelong process that adults need to keep up with in order to stay healthy and keep their communities healthy too. Persons traveling to other countries should consult a health care professional to determine whether additional shots are needed or recommended for their destinations.

Protect yourself and contact your physician, your local health department, or the West Virginia Immunization Program (1-800-642-3634) for more information. You can also visit the following website for more: www.wvdhhr.org/immunizations.

At the end of the day, you want to respect what you do. In a certain sense, our work is us. We get into it, and it gets into us.
John W. Rowe

Put the pumpkin on newspaper and see if it stands up evenly. If not, cut off the bottom so it stands straight.

Draw or trace the face on the pumpkin. Poke holes around the drawing every half inch. This makes carving from hole to hole easier, and you can push out the cut pieces from the inside.


Place the pumpkin in a bowl so it doesn't roll while you carve.

Cut around the top at an angle so it won't fall in when it's replaced, then scoop out the seeds and reserve them for toasting later.


Cut a hole in the bottom the same size as your candle OR if you had to cut the bottom off to make it stand straight, place the candle on a dish and set the pumpkin over it.

Cut a vent hole in the top so heat can escape.

CARVE THE PERFECT JACK-O-LANTERN





Pencil In ...



October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and the Division of Corrections' Victim Services Section is raising funds to help sponsor the **YWCA Resolve Family Domestic Abuse Program**. The section is raffling off items and having a bake sale each Friday in October (Bldg. 4, 3rd floor Conference Room) to raise additional monies for the shelters. For questions or to purchase raffle tickets, contact Kendra Bailey-Prine at 558-2036 ext. 33 or Davi Withrow at 558-2036 ext. 34.

Galaxy Lanes in Charleston holds **FREE bowling instruction for children** age 18 or younger on Tuesdays from 3:30-5:00 P.M. For more details, call 925-1156.

Want to **quit smoking** but not sure where to start? See how PEIA can help at www.ynotquit.com.

Stateline is a publication of the West Virginia Department of Administration, Division of Personnel

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