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http://www.ocio.usda.gov/news/index.html



Contents

| The Controller Operations Division | 1 |
|--|---|
| Note from the CFO/CIO | 2 |
| A Special Tribute: Marcia McCarthy Howe | 3 |
| Surplus Computers Donated | |

OCFO Summit and Signature 4
Awardees

OCIO Teamwork Yields Special Recognition

USDA Pii Awareness Poster Contest Winners!

FY 2008 – An Unqualified Success

Did You Know? OCIO Organization Modification

Staff Recognition & Farewells

Holiday Wishes from the Connections Team



OCFO / OCIO Calendar

December 2008 - January 2009

| Christmas Day | 12/25 |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| New Year's Day | 1/1 |
| Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday | 1/19 |
| Inauguration Day | 1/20 |
| Civil Rights Training Due | 1/31 |

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The Controller Operations Division:

A Leader in Financial Management and Here to Serve You!

by Karen Frederickson

When you think of the U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), you may think of farmers, meat and grain inspectors, nutritional foods, soil conservation, or forest fire prevention, just to name a few. But do you ever think of COD? . . . No, we are not talking about fish!

The Controller Operations Division (COD) is under the Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) and reports to John Brewer, the Associate Chief Financial Officer for Financial Operations. COD, directed by Charles (Chuck) Wallace, provides financial management services and support to all USDA agencies. COD was formed in 2002 to standardize and centralize certain accounting and financial reporting functions. Its predecessor organization was the Financial Services Division of the National Finance Center.

COD's mission is to be a proactive, costeffective, service organization focused on providing superior financial services to USDA

and its customers. Chuck Wallace stated, "Our staff is dedicated to providing outstanding support to our agency and OCFO customers. Not a day goes by that we don't challenge ourselves to ensure that each customer contact is of high quality. Our management team quickly addresses any situation that we feel did not meet customer expectations."

COD's 268 authorized positions are divided into 7 service branches:

- * Accounting Processing Branch (ACPB) reconciles transactions processed through USDA feeder systems to the Foundation Financial Information System (FFIS), manages the FFIS run cycle processes, prepares and distributes 143,000 tax forms 1099 for vendor payments and responds to related inquiries, administers the payment tables for 627,000 vendors/employees, and provides support services to Agricultural Research Service via a reimbursable agreement.
- * Cash Reconciliation Branch (CRB) reports cash transactions to the U.S. Department of Treasury (Treasury) and reconciles transactions by schedule number and Treasury Symbols. CRB submits the statement of transactions (FMS-224) and reconciles statement of differences (FMS-6652) for 18 Agency Location Codes, and reconciles more than 750 Treasury symbols monthly for undisbursed appropriation accounts (FM-6653) for USDA's cash reconciliation process. (Continued, page 2)



Photo: Bottom Row (Left to Right) - Dennis L. Jack, Associate Director, Reporting and Administration; Charles L. Wallace, Director, Controller Operations Division; Alva J. Chase, Associate Director, Accounting Operations; Joseph Giorlando, Associate Director, Reconciliations. Top Row (Left to Right)- Kirt H. Ulfers, Chief, Accounting Processing Branch; Elizabeth W. Rafferty, Chief, Customer Liaison and Training Branch; Ella R. Robertson, Chief, Financial Reporting Branch; Consuella L. Braggs, Chief, Cash Reconciliation Branch; Angelique D. Dyer, Risk Management Officer; Peggy V. Javery, Chief, Administrative Payments Branch; Shelda T. Melancon, Chief, Property Reconciliation Branch. Missing from photo: Charles W. Kyser, Chief, Intragovernmental Payment and Collection - Control Branch.

- Financial Reporting Branch (FRB) reviews, reconciles, and evaluates financial reports generated by FFIS, customer agencies, and FRB to ensure accuracy/timeliness of reported accounting data. FRB offers services related to Federal Agencies' Centralized Trial Balance System (FACTS I for proprietary accounting, FACTS II for budgetary accounting), Treasury Report on Receivables (TROR) due from the public, and consolidated financial statements.
- Administrative Payments Branch (APB) provides operational and inquiry support for customer agencies and vendors related to USDA administrative payments systems transactions (Integrated Acquisition, Telephone Vendors, Utility Vendors, Travel, and Government Transportation Systems). Through reimbursable agreements, APB also performs special services for the Office of the Chief Information Officer's (OCIO's) Information Technology Services (ITS) staff and Farm Service Agency. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2008, APB processed more than 1.36 million transactions and responded to more than 28,000 customer inquiries.
- IPAC (Intragovernmental Payments and Collections) Control Branch (ICB) facilitates timely and accurate processing of interdepartmental billing/collection data and certifies all administrative payments processed by COD. In FY 2008, the branch received more than 85,000 bills, initiated more than 38,000 bills, and processed 816,552 FFIS line transactions.
- Property Reconciliation Branch (PRB) administers general property, plant, and equipment accounting policy, reconciles capitalized asset details to general ledger

- balances, resolves reconciliation issues, ensures proper accounting for property events, and assists in the design and development of technological solutions for property accounting scenarios. For FY 2008, PRB reconciled \$7.5 billion in acquisition costs and \$4.7 billion in accumulated depreciation general ledger balances to 250,000 assets detailed in the property systems.
- Customer Liaison and Training Branch (CLTB) provides internal/external customer support and training services to agency financial organizations. CLTB maintains memorandums of understanding and service level agreements with agencies; prepares COD's monthly Certification Report of Financial Processes for agency Chief Financial Officers; and coordinates Office of Management and Budget Circular A-123, Management's Responsibility for Internal Controls activity in support of COD's annual assurance statement. In FY 2008, CLTB coordinated/conducted numerous training and orientation sessions which resulted in 4,474 Continuing Professional Education (CPE) hours earned by USDA employees.

In addition, COD has a full-time Risk Management Officer (RMO) responsible for establishing, monitoring, and revising data to COD's system security access. The RMO also manages the Division's Continuity of Operations (COOP) Plan should an event occur which interrupts normal operations at COD's facility.

Mr. Wallace stated, "We have assembled a highly talented accounting and financial staff. We want to be the best in Federal government!"

For more information about COD services, please visit our Web site at http://cod.nfc.usda.gov .

How OCFO and OCIO Connect to Support USDA Initiatives



A Note from CFO/CIO Charles R. Christopherson, Jr.

After reflecting over the past year, I am amazed and very pleased with the progress made by our OCFO and OCIO teams. You should each be proud of the hard work you have completed over the past year and I hope that we're able to carry this stride through the next year as well.

> Both teams have completed major projects and are well on their way to completing several more. Recently, we finished the full implementation of GovTrip and are currently working with all USDA agencies to ensure that they are having success using this new travel program. In working with our colleagues at Departmental Administration and the General Services Administration, we've made great strides in getting USDA employees registered for their new HSPD-12 identification cards.

You should take pride in the progress we have made in completing our audits as well. During the consolidated exit meeting, the Office of the Inspector General noted the remarkable progress that we have made during this last year; and, they look forward to reviewing next year's progress. I thank each of you for your help over the past year.

I wish each of you Happy Holidays and a Happy New Year.







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A Special Tribute to Marcia McCarthy Howe by Sheila W. Greene



Photo: Marcia M. Howe

Information Technology Services or ITS (recently renamed International Technology Services), by its very name, is a provider and manager of technology. ITS managers and technicians possess some of the best technical skills within the Department and across the entire Federal government. Managing the wide array of technologies and unique

applications of its customers is no small challenge. Each day presents a new problem and sometimes dozens. Yet, the ITS technical staff always rises to the occasion.

However, managing a large, complex, and nationwide organization does not rely on technicians only. Behind the scenes are dedicated employees who take care of much more mundane activities such as communications, policies, administration and accounting, to name a few. This story is about one such employee, for which all of ITS owes much gratitude -- Marcia McCarthy Howe.

In 2000, Marcia, an employee with the Office of Procurement and Property Management, was given an opportunity to serve as the Budget Analyst for the Common Computing Environment (CCE) component of the Department's overall Service Center Modernization initiative. In 2004, establishment of Information Technology Services (ITS), within OCIO, was approved and Marcia's excellent budget skills led to a position with ITS. She is currently serving as the Lead Budget Analyst. Some of her responsibilities include: ITS/CCE appropriated budget execution; ITS/CCE and Working Capital Fund (WCF) reimbursable agreement; and populating the ITS internal detail payroll (salary and benefits) report by Division each pay

period (used for the monthly Status of Funds reports submitted to the Offices of the Chief Financial and Chief Information Officer). She is also the ITS account refund processor; ITS/ CCE appropriated and reimbursable accounts record keeper for current and prior year obligations/expenditures; and preparer of period end estimates/year-end closing reviews and authorizations for the CCE and WCF.

As always, the end of the fiscal year is a particularly arduous period for the accounting staff. Purchases always increase in number and size. Reconciliation must be precise. Customers come forward with unexpected funds for new projects. It can be exhausting and frustrating.

For Marcia, this past End-of-Year was exceptionally trying. A painful hip from a surgical procedure earlier in her life left Marcia with limited mobility and many sleepless nights. In addition, in late September, Marcia's husband was diagnosed with an aneurism on a major artery. Extensive testing was performed and major surgery was required.

Despite these traumatic personal challenges, Marcia continued to show up for work each day, process expenditures, reconcile accounts, accept and process new funding, and tend to dozens of other necessary tasks. Her tireless efforts allowed ITS managers and technicians to continue their essential duties without interruption, oblivious to Marcia's extraordinary dedication.

Marcia states, "It is a pleasure for me to come to work each day to carry out daily functions of my job through coordination with Lisa Keeter, Steve Ettien, and Greg Montgomery. Plus, I can't forget my coworkers who are always there to help me. They never complain about sharing the work to get a project done." Marcia is an outstanding employee!

Surplus Computers Donated by Jody Wilde and Natasha Olsonawski

This past year, Rothsay Public School in Minnesota received 32 workstations through the Federal government's Computers for Learning Program. Jody Wilde, IT Specialist with the ITS Technical Support Division/Minnesota, worked with Natasha Olsonawski, Technology Director/Business Teacher to prepare

and install these workstations at this small K-12 school:

- Twelve outdated computers were replaced in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grade classrooms. Five computers went to the library. One computer is set aside specifically for a student with special needs to perform dexterity exercises with typing programs.
- Six laptops expanded Rothsay's Cub Lab to 26 machines, which may allow students without computers at home to check out the laptops to complete homework.

• Four machines were placed into the special education rooms where students access on-line curriculum in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Two machines were placed in the Spanish room. And a computer is in the school's Store-Front where students create promotional materials, track inventory, and create finan-

cial documents. The last machine is being used by a staff member to create online curriculum, take attendance, and present lecture materials to students.

In FY 2008, OCIO/ ITS donated \$20.5 million of IT equipment to eligible organizations through the Computers for Learning program. Questions concerning this program should

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> be directed to Kathy Fay, Chief, Asset Management Branch on 301-504-2121 or through email at kathy.fay@wdc.usda.gov.

بعز لايعز لايعز لايعز لايعز لايعز لايعز لايعز لايعز لايعز OCFO Summit and Signature Awardees by Sheila W. Greene, Jessica Bortolini, and Steve Spector

On September 16, 2008, the Office of the Chief Financial Officer held its Awards (Summit and Signature) and career service recognition ceremony (service awards recipients were listed in Connections #3, dated October 30, 2008). Summit Awards were presented to a group or a person who worked on a significant project or became a champion for a certain project and made significant progress with this project or idea. This perpetuates change at USDA. Signature Awards recognized a person or group who completed a significant

The SUMMIT AWARD (left) recipients were:

milestone that benefits the agency.

• Dennis Taitano, CFO, Farm Service Agency (FSA), for his work on the successful implementation of the Budget and Performance Management System. The System assists the Agency in its goal to improve efficiencies in the delivery of commodity, conservation, and loan programs

to FSA customers and maintains fiscal responsibility;

- Jack Carlson, former CIO, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), for his work advancing the Lean Six Sigma Grants Process pilot program at NRCS which is leading to a single, streamlined grants-making process for USDA; and
- Wendall Oaks, CIO, NRCS, for his continued work with the Lean Six Sigma Grants Process, especially in the design of the system that will be used when it is complete.

The Signature Award (right) was presented in five categories to the following recipients:

Outstanding Employee Contribution:

- · Denise M. Ruggles, Grain Inspection, Packers and Stockyards Administration (GIPSA), for her exceptional financial oversight of GIPSA's Field Management Division during October 2007 to April 2008, when, with her extensive knowledge and technical skills, she created and maintained tracking reports for five of GIPSA's major programs; and
- Kathleen Squires, FSA, where, as a systems accountant, she has taken initiative to improve fiscal responsibility, enhance customer service relationships, and lead project teams to improve operations.

Outstanding Management Contribution:

• Jesse King, Forest Service, for his sustained and exceptional efforts to improve financial management. Jesse led his team to continually improve the effectiveness of account reconciliations, timeliness of payment processes, and accuracy of financial reporting and for helping implement Lean Six Sigma Transaction processing which has streamlined invoice processing and management; and

• Teresa Lasseter, FSA, for her Improper Payments Information Act (IPIA) work, resulting in FSA reducing the number of improper payments processed at the Agency. Over the last year, FSA has greatly reduced the dollar amount of improper payments and the amount of paperwork that is processed incorrectly.

Outstanding Financial Organization Contribution:

 Animal and Plant Health Iinspection Service (APHIS) Financial Management Division for greatly enhancing the fiscal responsibility of all the agencies in the APHIS Marketing and Regulatory Program through discovering the need for process improvements that led to reengineering how the agencies do business.

Outstanding Cost Savings Contribution

• The OCIO AgLearn Team for making USDA's learning management system the online training leader in the Federal arena, with more than 3,000 online courses available to all USDA employees.

Outstanding Group Contribution

• OCIO Information Technology Service for great strides transforming its financial operations and reporting program into a world-class operation (see box below).

OCIO Teamwork Yields Special Recognition

ITS was commended for making achievements in transforming its financial operations and reporting process. ITS deployed a cost management system that provides transparency to its customers and provides senior executive leadership with timely and detailed

> information for more than \$215 million in technology operations and investments annually.

ITS developed a unit cost analysis that transformed a complex IT budget into a straightforward, easily navigable, metric-based costing model that utilizes industry standard taxonomy. This transformation directly resulted in timely agreement among senior executives for future year estimates and allowed senior leadership to focus on areas to identify possible cost savings and re-investment opportunities for infrastructure modernization. ITS operational managers are working to apply activity based costing methodology to their computer desktop services, telecommunications, and IT infrastructure support for USDA customer agencies that support our agricultural communities.

Group members receiving the Signature Award were from the following divisions:

Infrastructure Operations Division: Carol Henson, Phil Rendina, Jack Zechman, Rick Sabo, Janell Duke, Patrice Bryant, Bobbie Budget, Gary Davis, Ande Mascarenas, Wally Burkart, Tim Walkenhorst, Mark Hirst, Larry Reynolds, Waseem Ahmed, Diane Hord, Trina Redman, and Suzie McElroy; Technical Support **Division:** Larry Brooks and Pat Cummings; **Infrastructure Definition Division:** Scott Snover, Kelly Stelmach, Kathy Miller, and Gordon Robinett; Infrastructure Governance Division: Lisa Johnson and Gloria Pilkerton; and Administrative Management: Lisa Keeter and Steve Ettien. Congratulations team for your notable accomplishment!

Congratulations to USDA Pii Awareness Poster Contest Winners!

by Evelyn Davis and Shang Lee



The USDA Pii Awareness Poster Contest emphasized the importance of protecting personally identifiable information. Participation from USDA employees was excellent and the quality of the submissions made judging extremely difficult. The Pii contest winners are:

- Grand Prize (poster on left): The Nebraska Rural Development PII Committee Team (Brenda Darnell, Karissa Berks, Teresa Brohimer, Melba Davison, Angela Drudik, Karen Jones, Cheryl Larson and Debbie Tiedtke)
- 1st Place: Dennis K. Ware (NRCS)
- 2nd Place: Ronald N. Underwood (Forest Service)
- 3rd Place: Deborah L. Miller (APHIS)

The Pii winning posters and honorable mentions can be viewed at the Cyber Security Web site at http://www.ocionet.usda.gov/ocio/security/pii poster contest.html.

Congratulations Winners!

FY 2008 - An Unqualified Success

The Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO) is very pleased to report that the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Consolidated Financial Statements (CFS) received an unqualified (clean) opinion for Fiscal Year (FY) 2008. The unqualified opinion is earned as a result of the annual Office of the Inspector General (OIG) audit. In their opinion, OIG found that the Department's CFS fairly reflect the financial position of USDA as of September 30, 2008, and its net costs, changes in net position, and budgetary resources for the year ended in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles.

Successfully closing the financial year requires close collaboration between the dedicated employees of OCFO Headquarters, the Controller Operations Division, and all Departmentwide agency financial management offices. It is a complex and intricate process and requires countless hours at all levels to ensure that the process is smooth and efficient.

As Chief Financial Officer, Charles R. Christopherson, Jr., stated in the annual Performance and Accountability Report, "The employees of the USDA work hard. They understand the importance of customer centric service, efficient processes, and fiscal responsibility in executing the programs funded by Congress. We are proud of our accomplishments for FY 2008 and the hard working employees at USDA. USDA is committed to providing sound management of the resources under our stewardship."

DID YOU KNOW?

OCIO Organization Modification

On December 4, 2008, Chuck Christopherson announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has cleared a number of small modifications in the organizations reporting through the Office of the Chief Information Officer (OCIO). He stated, "During this time, we addressed a number of informal changes that occurred over the last five years which needed to be formalized to meet government requirements. While the majority of the employees will have no change in their operating structure, all employees will receive a Form 52 in the mail formalizing the renumbering of the OCIO organization structure. This structure is aligned with the best practice for large Chief Information Officer (CIO) organizations in the public and private sector.

While these changes do not organizationally affect most of the employees in OCIO, these changes will provide all employees better support in the changing IT environment. We now have better focus and alignment on operations, security, planning, project management, and innovation. I appreciate the hard work and support of each individual in our organization over the last year."

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Farewell Sandy and Chris



Photo: Sandy Facinoli presents Chris Wren with a memento of

Chris Wren, former ACIO-ITS (Acting), and Sandy Facinoli, former ACIO-ITM (Acting), have both left the USDA for other opportunities within the Federal government. Chris has joined the Interior Department in Herndon, Virginia, and Sandy has joined the Federal Emergency Management Agency's U.S. Fire Administration in Frederick, Maryland. Best of luck, Sandy and Chris, in your new positions.

STAFF RECOGNITION

★ 2008 Length of Service Recipients ★

40 Years - Linda M. Rogers

35 Years - Shelia D. Craig and Salvador Davila

30 Years - Lilian S. Andrada, Phyllis L. Cole, Stephen M. Ettien, Katherine E. Kasznel, Karen E. Moy, and Linda S. Thus

25 Years - Margaret L. Addington, Charles A. Cliburn, Bryan Dixon, Alfred J. Fleming, Peggy A. Knight, Rebecca J. Kurtz, Gail A. Mills, Armando Rosalez, and Phyllis D. Yearby

20 Years - Richard L. Bachert, James T. Blevins, Carlton R. Carlyle, Michael W. Clanton, Joey D. Cline, Ronald P. Degiuli, Kathleen A. Donaldson, Matthew A. Faulkner, Michael A. Fiene, Tambra S. Fletcher, Sherri D. Johnson, Kay E. Levy, Robert L. Marks, Michael A. Smith, Gail M Stevens, Timothy D. Walkenhorst, and Cheryl B. Walker,

15 Years - Tonya A. Allen-Shaw, Jeffery J. Boudreaux, Alan E. Bruskin, Howard Campbell, Kimberly Chapman, Jennifer L. Childs, Kevin R. Close, Douglas J. Hendry, Diane E. Hughes, Ava J. Lee, Sibyl Y. Miller, Riham M. Ramadan, Joseph E. Smith, Mario R. Torres, Annie H. Walker-Bradley, and Kirk Young

10 Years - Jesse P. Edwards II, Dixie J. Hebert, and Aaron F. Prose

5 Years - Zynise D. Carter, Jeni Halpern, Brian Hollis, Peter L. Laub, Hongmei Luo, Boris Lyubovitsky, Carolyn R. Mattocks, and Richard F. Saalfeld, Katie A. Thompson, Cherie D. Trahan, Yvette L. Waul, and Tyson P. Whitney

★ Recent Promotions ★

Lena Allen, Branch Chief, TSD/East Dennis Carlson, INFOSEC, IOD/OSB Richard Dougherty, GM, TSD/C-MN Innocent Lau, Sysadmin/OS, IOD/HOB Rick Leihgeber, Sysanalysis, IDD/SDB

Linda Lewis, Branch Chief, TSD/LO Gregory Bartosk, GM, TSD/E-DE/MD/NJ Tom Radermacher, Branch Chief, TSD/C Tammy Rathbun, INFOSEC, IOD/OSB Stanley M. Seago, Sysanalysis, IDD/ADB Dan Snyder, OS/Sysanalysis, IOD/IDB Mark Stevens, GM, TSD/E-KY

★ Recent Reassignments ★

Mary Ann Wilson, IDD/SDB

★ Recent Hires ★

Patricia Beagle, IGD/SPB Joseph Cieskiewicz, TSD/W-TX Group Glen Clugy, TSD/W-TX Group Steven Deines, IGD/SPB Ronald D. Dotson, TSD/E-PA Group Terry G. Duncil, TSD/W-CA/HI/NV/PB Mary L. Evitch, TSD/C-MN Brian T. Gorell, TSD/C-WI Samuel L. Hall II, TSD/E-AL Mary D. Howell, TSD/W-MT/WY

Jody Lee Lutker, TSD/C-IL David Milliken, IGD/ODB Daniel F. Perez, TSD/E-NY Barry D. Rookey, TSD/W-AK/WA Gerald E. Shulz, TSD/W-MT/WY Bruce A. Stanton, TSD/W-AK/WA Vivian C. Torres, TSD/W-CA/HI/NV/PB Zina Sutch, IGD/ODB Bradley D. Worch, TSD/W-CA/HI/NV/PB

After 22 Years, Ron Deguili Calls It a Career

by Stewart Small

A chapter in the Office of the Chief Financial Officer's (OCFO) history comes to a close. Consolidated Financial Statement Audit Liaison Ron Deguili has retired from the Federal government after 22 years of service. Ron spent the last 4½ years of his career with the OCFO. He cites the issuance of the Consolidated Financial Photo: Time to Go. OCFO Statements with a clean audit opinion in November 2004 as being his most memorable moment.



presented Ron Deguili with an antique clock for his service to the agency and the Federal

Ron and his wife plan to return home to Fresno, California, to be near their children and grandchildren. Ron looks forward to "playing more golf and being involved in our church there."

We wish Ron all the best in the next chapter of his life.



MORE FAREWELLS & BEST WISHES

Retirements: October/December 2008

Robert F. Grizzoffi, IOD/TOB - 30 years service Virginia L. Roberts, TSD/C-MO - 21 years service Gary F. Bump, TSD/LO-CO/NC/NE/OR/TX/UT - 42 years service Lynda L. Williams, AMD/AMB - 20 years service

Retirement for January 2009 (Announced)

Peggy J. Hanlon, TSD/W-NE - 30 years service Ruth Draper-Helland, IOD/HOB - 20 years service Carolyn B. McIntyre, TSD/E-TN - 28 years service Linda M. Rogers, TSD/W-NE - 40 years service Michael L. Tolle, AMD/ESB - 33 years service Janell K. Leidholt, TSD/C-AR - 37 years service Wylie T. Owens, TSD/E-GA/SC - 40 years service

Connections Communications Team

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Financial Systems -National InformationTechnology Ann Adam Center - Bruce A. Pacot

National Finance Center -Washington Communications and Michelle Bergeron Technology Services - Yvonne Winston

To email a POC, just click on his or her name.

United States Department of Agriculture OCFO - OCIO **Connections Newsletter**



We wish you and your families a happy, safe, and memorable Holiday Season with much success in the New Year.

From: Chuck, Jon, Chris, and the Connections Team.







