



# **NEWS**

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## **STATE EMPLOYEES HONORED FOR INNOVATIVE IDEAS** *Florida TaxWatch Honors Those Who Save Taxpayers Money*

**GAINESVILLE** — Florida TaxWatch is proud to recognize eighty-six individual state employees and teams from the Gainesville area receiving recognition today for a job well done from the Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards. Their achievements will be published in the “**2007 Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards**” *magazine*, released at today’s awards luncheon at the Best Western Gateway Grand Hotel.

“Our state employees are Florida’s most valuable resource. I’m proud to be a part of a program that helps distinguish and encourage the initiative and creativity of our state employees and promotes wise innovations that serve the people of Florida better,” said Lt. Governor Kottkamp, Chairman of the program.

The Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards program is a major government improvement initiative chaired by Lt. Governor Kottkamp and sponsored by Florida TaxWatch, The Florida Council of 100 and the State of Florida. Cash awards of \$200 to \$2,500 plus commemorative plaques and certificates of commendation are presented annually to state employees who clearly exceed their job descriptions and performance expectations in ways that improve service delivery and save money for Florida taxpayers and businesses.

“The Davis Productivity Awards are proof that the State of Florida has some of the most creative and innovative minds working to save our taxpayers’ dollars,” said Mike Jennings, Vice President of Government Relations for Prudential Financial and Chairman of Florida TaxWatch. “They continually go above and beyond the call of duty, and I think it’s extremely important to recognize that,” said Jennings.

This year’s awards magazine will include two new and noteworthy sections. One highlights achievements of significant technology advancements and the other showcases wellness innovations throughout state government.

“Our state government is continually challenged to deliver services more efficiently and effectively,” said Dominic M. Calabro, President of Florida TaxWatch. “But Florida’s state employees constantly rise to the occasion.”

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The 2007 competition awarded 490 winners for their innovations and productivity improvements worth \$332 million in cost savings, cost avoidances and increased revenue for state government. Some winners from the Gainesville area who were honored at today's luncheon include:

**Steven Johnson, Maintenance Mechanic  
Agency for Persons with Disabilities, Gainesville**

Steven Johnson designed and built a tool to use on top of an electric scissors lift that holds and lifts sheet rock in place while it is being screwed into place. The tool allows movement forwards, backwards, up and down at the touch of a button. An electric drywall lift is not available anywhere, and a manual or hydraulic drywall lift requires more than one person to achieve the same movement safely. Mr. Johnson's innovation freed four people to work on other tasks, saving 480 labor hours and \$5,563 in salary dollars. This tool is accessible for anyone to use in the future. For more information, please call Ricky Mott at (352) 955-5806 or Michael\_Crockrell@dcf.state.fl.us. (Award 2007 APD-006)

**FICA Alternative Implementation Team  
University of Florida, Gainesville**

The Internal Revenue Service Code authorizes retirement plans for temporary employees of governmental entities. This 16-member team developed a defined contribution FICA alternative plan and a method for tracking and recording resource savings to annually save the university more than \$6 million in Social Security taxes. For more information, please contact Paula Varnes Fussell at (352) 391-4621 or pvarnes@ufl.edu. (Award 2007 UF-004)

**Maintenance of Traffic Training Team  
Department of Transportation, Lake City**

Shaun Stewart and James McDonald, both with more than 20 years with the department, volunteered to become instructors of the maintenance of traffic course, a process requiring several years of education and experience leading to certification. Training for approximately 450 employees of the Departments of Transportation, Corrections and the Highway Patrol, in an 18-county area, valued at \$41,670, helped to ensure that traffic control devices are in place during hurricane evacuations to facilitate safe travel of emergency responders on state roads and contra-flow on interstate highways. Most Department of Transportation districts send employees to out-sourced vendors for maintenance of traffic because they do not have employees who are certified trainers. For further information, please call Ed Ward at (386) 961-7581 or ed.ward@dot.state.fl.us. (Award 2007 DOT-001)

**S&T Sand Cement Columns Team  
Department of Transportation, Lake City**

This five-member team designed a hopper that feeds sand and cement into sinkholes to stabilize roadways, reducing the cost on two projects by nearly \$50,000. The team's innovation can be patented and used by other DOT districts. The nominator rates this among the top 5% of roughly 50 nominations he has submitted over the past 15 years. For more information, please contact Binay Prakash at (386) 961-7737 or binay.prakash@dot.state.fl.us. (Award 2007 DOT-008)

Prudential Financial is in its fourth year as Anchor Sponsor of the Davis Productivity Awards program. Their support is crucial for sustaining and growing this nationally unique initiative. Governor Charlie Crist and Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp have made leveraging the added value of award winning achievements by adapting them to other areas of state government a priority for building a more effective and efficient government. The Florida TaxWatch Adaptable Achievements on-line publication identifies more than 700 achievements from the past five years of winners that can create more than \$100 million worth of this added value within three years after full implementation.

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Florida TaxWatch, The Council of 100, and the State of Florida has honored other award winners from across the state at other regional luncheon ceremonies as well.

Since 1989, more than 12,000 individuals, teams, work units and partnerships have been honored for producing more than \$5.6 billion worth of added value.

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**MEDIA NOTE: The actual awards presentation will begin at noon. The “2007 Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards” magazine and the Adaptibles magazine is posted on our website at [www.FloridaTaxWatch.org](http://www.FloridaTaxWatch.org).**

Florida TaxWatch is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 28 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Its mission is to provide the citizens of Florida and public officials with high quality, independent research and education on government revenues, expenditures, taxation, public policies and programs and to increase the productivity and accountability of Florida Government. On the web at [www.FloridaTaxWatch.org](http://www.FloridaTaxWatch.org).