



# **NEWS**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**  
June 16, 2006

**CONTACT:** Harvey Bennett  
Communications Director  
850-222-5052 ext.20

## **LOCAL DCF WORKERS HONORED FOR STREAMLINING PUBLIC ASSISTANCE SYSTEM**

***Projected to Save Taxpayers \$36 Million Annually***

TAMPA — Two teams of state employees that work for the Florida Department of Children and Families in Tampa will be honored at a luncheon Tuesday, June 20<sup>th</sup> by the Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards for saving the state money and going above and beyond the call of duty.

The six-member team of Denise Hicks, Dianna Laffey, Richard Grace, Gary Stephan, Jeremy Ray, and Martin Smalley pioneered an electronic system to store and retrieve the region's 190,000 public assistance cases. Their design makes it easier to access cases and eliminates costly paper files. They created the system after a private company failed to provide a solution to the inefficient, paper-laden filing system with its many misplaced cases.



The Department of Children and Families SunCoast Region Electronic Filing System Team from the Left to right are: Dianna Laffey, Denise Hicks, Gary Stephan, Marty Smalley, Jeremy Ray and Richard Grace

"Now we can retrieve cases immediately for clients from any location with little or no need to reproduce documentation," said team member, Dianna Laffey.

Their enterprising solution has been implemented throughout the region and adopted by thirteen districts in the state. The *SunCoast Region Electronic Filing System* is currently in the process of being adopted statewide, and will store 1,264,000 files saving the state nearly 18 million dollars per year.

Across the bay, the eight-member Department of Children & Families *SunCoast Fraud Prevention and Reduction Team* has been busy with its own innovation. Donna Lytwyn, Donovan Thompson, Phoebe Quarterman, Sherri Mason, Nancy Sanderbeck, Patricia May, Joyce Remick, and Duane Woolard took the initiative to redesign the existing public assistance benefits fraud prevention program and saved taxpayers \$6,960,425. Their efforts are projected to save \$17,641,152 in fraudulent welfare benefits statewide over the next year.

Their redesign made major changes to department procedures that enable case processors to work on all public assistance cases – open or pending, allow investigators to uncover fraud at any time in the eligibility process, facilitate periodic review of open cases, and encourage increased field visits rather than desk reviews.

Fraud investigators are now able to assist case processors in determining the correct benefits. In-depth investigations and referrals from case processors have increased. The pilot program will be implemented statewide under the name of *Access Integrity*.

"We commend these teams of state employees for rolling up their sleeves and getting the job done in innovative, cost-saving ways for the state and taxpayers of Florida," said Dominic M. Calabro, President and CEO of Florida TaxWatch. "Ensuring there are systems of efficiency in place in state agencies helps maximize taxpayer value."

The Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards program is a major government improvement initiative sponsored by Florida TaxWatch, The Florida Council of 100 and the State of Florida. In its 18<sup>th</sup> year, the program recognizes and rewards state employees who clearly exceed their job descriptions and performance expectations in ways that improve service delivery and save money for Florida taxpayers.

The 2006 awards competition is honoring 555 winners across Florida for innovations and productivity improvements worth \$340 million in cost savings, cost avoidances, and increased revenue for state government. Since 1989, more than 12,000 individuals, teams, work units, and partnerships have been honored for saving taxpayers \$5.3 billion.

The DCF teams' awards are two of 78 individual state employees and teams in the Tampa Bay area recognized for cost savings in the course of their jobs. Other honorees include:

- ▶ Special Agent Ken Sanz, with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) who initiated a complex, labor-intensive criminal investigation involving securities fraud. Zygmunt Zabolotny, the primary target in his investigation was a Polish National and international fugitive who had committed crimes while in the United States. Extradition from Poland was literally impossible, since Poland and the United States do not have a treaty. Through creative research Sanz discovered that through a "Red Notice" and the assistance of international law enforcement partners at no cost, he could obtain an arrest warrant and apprehend Zabolotny. Zabolotny has since been arrested in Germany and extradited to the USA, where he awaits trial.

"Agent Sanz is to be commended for his tenacity and forward thinking. He has introduced another investigative tool to FDLE and has saved the state approximately \$180,000," said Troy Walker, FDLE Special Agent Supervisor.

- ▶ Rehabilitation specialist and 21-year veteran of the Division of Blind Services, Rose Moye, who developed a 12-day summer camp for blind and visually impaired children, an opportunity not formerly provided in the Tampa Bay area.

District Administrator, Tony Ames said, "Rose not only devoted time and energy during work hours to plan, organize and create the camp for a cost of \$25,000, which included food and transportation – she contributed over 40 hours of her own time. If provided by a private facility, it would have cost almost \$110,880. Her efforts have enriched the lives of 22 youngsters and saved the state \$85,800."

► The DCF SunCoast Adult Protective Services Operations Team, which demonstrated exceptional performance managing a complex, high profile case that gained national and international attention. The team remained focused on its primary mission of investigating allegations of abuse, neglect and exploitation of a hospice patient while maintaining its objectivity and professionalism

The six-member team of Susan McPhee, Ben Shirley, Michael Will, Ellen Gough, Bettina Dodson, and Timothy Mc Clain, was the first in the state to use the Statewide Adult Protection Team created by the legislature in 2004 to provide expert opinions and consultation regarding the allegations and findings in complex cases.

The Adult Protection Team physician and attorney members contributed more than 160 hours for meetings, record reviews, telephone consultations and written opinions, which, if purchased, would have cost approximately \$40,000. State employees contributed over 300 hours of uncompensated overtime to the investigation, valued at approximately \$11,000.

A luncheon honoring area winners will be held Tuesday, June 20th at the DoubleTree Hotel at the Tampa Westshore Airport. The complete list of winners can be viewed at [www.floridataxwatch.org](http://www.floridataxwatch.org).

###

[Click Here to View the 2006 Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards magazine](#)

**MEDIA NOTE: The Awards Ceremony will take place Tuesday, June 20th at the DoubleTree Hotel at the Tampa Westshore Airport, 4500 West Cypress Street from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Presenting the awards will be Barry McGuane, Regional Sales Manager, Tampa Group Insurance Office of Prudential Financial and Clarissa Dunlap, director of the Prudential Financial Davis Productivity Awards.**

Florida TaxWatch is a private, non-profit, non-partisan research institute that over its 25 year history has become widely recognized as the watchdog of citizens' hard-earned tax dollars. Our 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)