

Information Services Department expands services to internal and external customers in 2004 and 2005



Geographic Information System Technicians Monte Myers (left) and Gary Wittmuss

The Information Services (IS) Department's electronic arm reaches out to every Central Arkansas Water (CAW) building and facility and almost every employee.

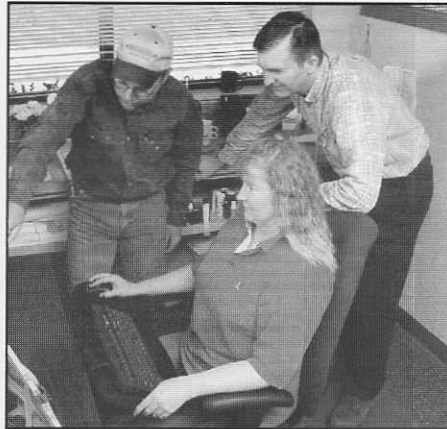
Responsible for our computer system and networks, Geographic Information System (GIS), all data bases, security surveillance, and much more, the IS team always is behind the scenes helping to make sure all of our automated operations run smoothly.

And a critical job the department has.

Right now, our IS team is in the process of developing our utility's first-ever Information Technology Master Plan. **Lisa Luyet**, Data Base Coordinator, is project leader.

"EMA is working with us to determine what's working well, how we can improve in efficiency and responsiveness, and what new technologies would be beneficial to customers and utility operations," **Allen Vincent**, Director of Information Services explains.

Over the past several years, the department has implemented many new business practices, such as the pay-by-telephone option for customers, a new telephone system that puts most of our buildings on the same prefix, an updated meter reading system, and the expansion



Mark Ragland (left), Engineering Assistant I, and Graphic Technicians Teresa Uekman (seated) and John Davis

of laptop computer technology into field operations.

Distribution Department crews once got all facility location information from the Dispatch Center or paper map books. Today, in many instances, instead of having to call back to the Dispatch Center, the crews have right at their fingertips computerized map displays of facility locations.

Having this information so accessible means quicker response and repair times, which translate into better service to customers and greater work productivity among employees. The GIS data base depicts in map format locations and sizes of water main, valves, meters, fire hydrants, etc. It also shows buildings, street addresses,



(Left to right) Jeff Eades, Information Service Technician II; Allen Vincent, Director of Information Services; and Marshall Burroughs, Network Administrator

street names, and the location of facilities of other utilities.

In cooperation with the Pulaski Area Geographic Information System (PAGis) partners, our GIS team over the past year undertook the tremendous job of building a data base on property parcels in the county. Since its pilot start in 1988, PAGis had been unable to make an effective link with Pulaski County records on property ownership and boundaries.

The PAGis partners are CAW, Little Rock Wastewater Utility, North Little Rock Wastewater Utility, Pulaski County Road & Bridge Division, the City of Little Rock, and the City of North Little Rock. "PAGis" is the umbrella for the partnership.

Using the county's property information and other sources, the PAGis consortium built a data base that includes property ownership, boundaries, assessments, valuations, physical addresses, and additional ownership information.

Our GIS team also was instrumental in the development of a data base of final plats for most subdivisions in the county. Coupled with the utility and public facility location information, the new data bases make planning, designing, and engineering even more efficient and effective for the

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Jos Bell (left), Geographic Information System Manager, and Marie Dugan, Engineering Assistant III, review project plans.

Employees help in holding down insurance costs

For the **fourth** consecutive year (2005), CAW has incurred a 0% increase in health and dental insurance premiums for employees, while at the same time maintaining an excellent coverage plan and not having a reduction in benefits.

While other public and private employers are experiencing increased costs as high as almost 14% annually, we have not — thanks to several factors.

For the year 2003, we had a reduction in the annual insurance

premium and in 2004 and 2005 we incurred no increases. Once again, in 2006, we will receive a reduction.

Our ability to hold down premiums and costs are attributed to (1) the negotiation process utilized for renewal (in-house team negotiates with provider), (2) the restructuring of benefit levels in 2002, (3) employee education about preventative health and dental care, and (4) CAW-sponsored wellness initiatives.

The average increase in employer-sponsored health insurance nationwide over the last three years has ranged from 1% to 13.9%. At this rate of increase over the past four years, we estimate the utility has saved more than \$705,000 (almost three-quarters of a million dollars) in cost.

Becky Wahlgreen, Director of Human Resources, oversees our insurance review and Employees Insurance Committee. ●

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entities that provide basic services to homes, businesses, and industries in the county.

In addition to governmental entities, the private sector also utilizes the GIS information for planning construction, expansions, and community improvements.

In 2003, our GIS team was one of 133 worldwide to earn the Special Achievement in GIS Award. The global distinction was in recognition of our team's being a world-class leader in the utilization, application, and innovation of the computerized mapping, planning, and design technology.

The CAW and PAgis teams currently are working with local and regional governmental entities on

the sponsorship of GIS Day 2005, a special event that will target students and other agencies that utilize GIS technology.

Jos Bell is our GIS Manager.

Utilitywide, our IS team maintains 30 to 35 servers that include such operations as the Municipal & Utility Package Software (MUPS), basic file and print functions, the Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition System, the Geographic Information System, the utility's web site, E-mail, voice mail, telephone-call recording, and the telephone systems for the utility and the Customer Service Call Center.

In addition, they are responsible for the network of 250+ personal computers at our 6 office buildings, as well as laptops in the field.

The customer billing process, which the department handles, directly touches every customer thus requires extraordinary teamwork and dedication within the department and with other departments.

Each month, the department generates billing statements in cycles for all 116,000 customers. When rates change, when new customers come on to our system, when we add a new billing partner, when we have billing, collecting, and customer information computer system upgrades, etc., IS is on the job.

Today, every aspect of our operations involves automation. It is an ever-evolving process that benefits our external customers and that for us internally means greater efficiency and responsiveness. ●

Matt and Amber (continued from Page 36)

the moment for Junior Boys All-Around Cowboy.

Amber is setting fourth-place in Poles, sixth in Goat Tying, and seventh in Pole Bending in her age division and she is almost at the top with third-place in Pee Wee Girls All Around Cowgirl.

Matt and Amber have both been riding for close to two years now and have been competing in rodeo events for one year. They both have their own horses. Matt has an older roping horse named **Juice** and Amber has **Taz**, who really likes to run poles. They also use

two other horses that the family owns to compete in rodeos:

Socks, which is a calf roping horse, and **Squaw**, a paint horse that loves kids.

Amber carries the American flag and posts the colors in the Grand Entries at all of the OTRA Rodeos. While at Mountain View on the 4th of July this year, she got a special invitation to carry the American flag in the honor guard and lead the parade through the downtown on Saturday afternoon. Of course, Taz and she accepted and had a great time. Plus, a picture of them was in the Stone

County newspaper's feature on the rodeo parade.

Amber likes leading the grand entry to competitions, posting the colors, and being able to ride her horses. In the rodeo arena, she is very competitive and pushes for Taz and her to better each run they make. She likes visiting with her friends and having a good time.

Matt relishes the challenge of doing his best and having a partner, Juice, who also understands competition.

Both Matt and Amber are diligent toward their goals of going professional — Matt in Roping and Amber in Barrel Racing. ●