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Features

The House That Julie Helped Build

The province of Usulutan in El Salvador holds beauty in its dusty potholed roads, bustling morning markets, and tile-rooftop-lined sunsets, but most of all its beauty resides in its people. Before I spent a week in El Salvador building a house with Habitat for Humanity, I really did not know what to expect of the country. The Internet and travel guides had little to offer aside from a history of the country's more-than-a-decade-long civil war.

My worksite for five days would be the future home of a middle-aged woman, Transito, and her three sons, age range 16 to 23. Transito's at-cost, interest-free mortgage of \$40 monthly would be paid for by a daughter living in the United States. At a price of about \$4,000, that equates to 10 years of financial support. It was

not surprising to learn that about 17 percent of the country's GDP is from Salvadorans living abroad; the average monthly income is

less than \$200. Even the professional mason working beside me could not afford a home of his own on a salary of only \$6 a day. I am not really sure how he supported his wife and baby. Nearly every Salvadoran I met had a family member or friend living in the United States.

Known as the Land of Volcanoes, El Salvador has in recent years been devastated by destructive earthquakes, volcanic activity, and hurricanes. The 450-square-foot home built for this family of four had to withstand these threatening natural disasters. The home was made of cinderblocks and strengthened with rebar. Like most homes in the impoverished neighborhood, the kitchen, comprised of a hot plate and sink, would be outside the house and there would be no indoor plumbing. Forget refrigeration, and anyway, who needs that when local women profit from "door-to-door" sales—fish, fruit, and meat—balanced on their heads as they walked by our construction site each day.

Each day on the worksite, I joined a small group of U.S. volunteers, family members of the future homeowner who were contributing "sweat equity" (one of the requirements of being provided

a Habitat home), countless children for whom our cement staging area was a sandbox, and a number of roosters, baby chicks, and dogs. The long day consisted of hauling cinderblocks and filling walls of the house with mortar. We were an attention-grabbing bunch; El Salvador is not known for tourism and the locals had a hard time understanding why anyone would want to come to their country to toil for a vacation.

So why spend a week toiling in the unforgiving sun in a small Central American village where the air was bursting with the smell of burning garbage and animal feces and the sounds of political campaigning (the national election was only a week away)? Why not just send our U.S. dollars, capable of going a long way toward financing homes? If you seek the comforts of home when you travel—hot water, clean streets, reliable transportation—this is probably not the vacation for you. However, if it is exploration

of a foreign culture, making friendships, and bringing some optimism to a country still reeling from civil war and a poor infrastructure, your vacation may leave you with the same hopes I have—to someday return. *

Ross is a Program Analyst, with the Office of Program Development and Delivery



Building a Home With Habitat for Humanity



In The News

NHTSA Training Council (NTC)

NHTSA has created a newly appointed Training Council whose membership represents a cross-section of organizations in NHTSA. The council will act as an advisory body whose primary role is to help provide a NHTSA policy that will guide the planning, development, and implementation of all NHTSA training programs and activities. For more information, contact Nadra Milan-Dunbar, NHTSA training coordinator, at 202-366-2613.

Thrift Savings Plan and Federal Employees' Group Life Insurance Alerts

Thrift Savings Plan e-mail scam alert

We have been notified by the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board about an e-mail scam. Some Thrift Savings Plan participants have received a scam e-mail purporting to be from the TSP. The e-mail includes a link to a bogus Web site that looks like the TSP account access page. **If you receive this e-mail just delete it. Do not respond to it. The TSP would never ask for this information via e-mail.** The TSP and the FBI are actively investigating this matter. For additional details about this scam, see the TSP's *e-mail scam alert*.

Federal Employees Group Life Insurance (FEGLI) Misrepresentations and Deceptive Sales Practices

In addition, we have been notified by the Office of Personnel Management that employees are being contacted by insurance company salespeople who may be misrepresenting themselves as either having permission from OPM or being connected to the Office of Federal Employees Group Life Insurance. The FEGLI Program does not use sales agents nor does it use telephone solicitations of any kind. If agents are trying to sell life insurance to employees, they are most assuredly NOT connected with the FEGLI Program. While employees are free to purchase whatever life insurance they choose, they should do so knowingly and not because they were misled into believing

that the insurance was sponsored by OPM or FEGLI.

For additional details about this matter, see the OPM Benefits Administration Letter.

Questions should be directed to your Human Resource Office.

New Procedures for Applying for Federal Positions

The Department of Transportation's Careers in Motion Automated Staffing System (also known as Quickhire) has officially integrated with the Office of Personnel Management's USAJOBS Web site.

To apply for DOT vacancies, you will now need to first register with USAJOBS at www.usajobs.gov. If you are already registered with USAJOBS, you need not re-register. If you have not yet registered, there are two basic ways to do so. You can start the registration process by applying to a DOT vacancy or you can go directly to "My USAJOBS" or "New to USAJOBS" at www.usajobs.gov and register.

NBC Payroll Hotline

With the Department of Transportation's successful migration of its payroll system and services to the Department of Interior's National Business Center in Denver, Colorado, the process for employees to request assistance with payroll matters has changed. As a reminder, if you have any questions concerning your pay or leave (e.g., salary payment, leave balance, savings bonds, W-2 address, electronic direct deposit to your bank account, special allotments, tax withholding, deductions for benefits, Thrift Savings Plan, payroll debts, etc.) your point of contact is the NBC Payroll Hotline at 800-662-4324. The hotline is open from 8 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Eastern Time, Monday through Friday.

NBC's Payroll Hotline staff is committed to responding to your questions within 24 hours of your initial contact. They may not be able to solve your problem or answer your question in that time frame, but their people will contact you and indicate how and when they expect to answer your question. In some cases, questions or

issues may require additional research or other efforts to resolve satisfactorily.

NBC is committed to resolving payroll concerns in a timely fashion and has an internal tracking system for all calls they receive. It also has its own internal process for escalating calls if you do not receive a satisfactory response. The DOT Office of Financial Management continually monitors reports from NBC's system to ensure that DOT employees receive timely, high-quality service from NBC.

Important Information: Financial Institution/Bank-Related Scam Activity

Purpose

Many computer users, including those at NHTSA, are receiving e-mails that appear to come from their financial institutions or banks. In most cases, these e-mails are not legitimate and are from criminals trying to access and inappropriately use your personal financial information. The purpose of this broadcast message is to raise awareness and protect all NHTSA employees from this type of fraudulent activity being conducted through your e-mail.

Background

There are many scams being perpetrated against the computer-using public. Many of these are conducted via e-mail, general use of the Internet, and over hand-held devices such as Blackberrys and cell phones. While the NHTSA computer staff is blocking many of these types of e-mails before they get to you, some could get to your e-mail box. Consequently, please read the information below to increase your awareness of this problem and to prevent being defrauded.

What You Should Be Aware of and What You Should Do—

Characteristics of Fraudulent and Scam Activity

- Be suspicious of any e-mail, telephone call, or text message with urgent requests for personal financial information.

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Employee Pens Powerful CFC Theme Song

by Jennifer Silber

Tracie Walker, an Administrative Assistant for the Office of Research and Technology at the Department of Transportation, was asked last year to write and sing a song for the Combined Federal Campaign. Her powerful poetry and inspiring performance combined to create an electrifying theme song for the CFC.

At the DOT's CFC kickoff on October 6, Tracie sang her song before an audience that included CFCNCA Honorary Chairman and Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta, Chairman of the Local Federal Coordinating Committee Vince Micone, and WJLA-TV anchor Kathleen Matthews.

Tracie knows the difference a charity can make in a person's life. She was turned out of her house as a teenager and did not know how to go about asking for help, so she slept on beaches and survived with a little wit and determination. Now she works with a program that gives guidance to teenagers and parents of teenagers. Tracie tells them her story in the hope of preventing young people from giving in to negative influences.

"I've seen ups and I've seen downs," she said. "The downs are so much worse if you can't see a way up and don't know that there is help. You're not alone."

"When I read about the CFC, it touched my heart, and I was honored to be able to contribute in this way," she said. "I was in that position at a time in my life, so I could identify. Had I known then what I know now, I would have known there was help out there. This [song] is my way of giving back."

Listen to Tracie sing "Just What the Nation Needs, a CFC Hero" [[mp3 file, 4.31 MB](#)]

If you would like Tracie Walker to perform the song at an awards ceremony, she can be contacted at Tracie.Walker@nhtsa.dot.gov. ★

Silber is a Marketing/Communications Specialist for Global Impact

Just What the Nation Needs, a CFC Hero

Lyrics by Tracie J. Walker

Sung to the tune of "Wind Beneath My Wings"

by Larry Henley and Jeff Silbar

*It must have been cold there in the shadows
Not even a place to call your own
Just looking for work throughout the day,
there's no way
Just let me say you're not alone.*

*So listen here while I tell this story
Of people to help you through the strain
We put up the posters all around
so you know it
It's the Combined Federal Campaign.*

*Do you ever know a CFC Hero
It's just what the nation needs—you see
Your pledges can help so many people
With CFC wind beneath their wings.*

*It might have appeared to go unnoticed
There's charities spread across the land
Coming together one by one—
for your neighbors
CFC's got a master plan.*

*So we're asking you to make a pledge now
A glimmer of hope's what it will do
Just pulling together hand in hand
for our nation
They can do nothing without you.*

*So tell me you know a CFC hero
It's just what the nation needs—you see
The pledges can help so many people
With CFC wind beneath their wings.*

*Don't you want to be a CFC hero?
Contribute a dollar perhaps, maybe three
Then you, you can help so many people
With CFC wind beneath their wings.*

*So fly, try, contribute—don't be shy
Humanity will love you and say thank you,
thank you
Thank God for you, my hero CFC*



Tracie Walker sings, "Just What the Nation Needs, a CFC Hero," at the Department of Transportation CFC kickoff.

CFC

Your say

National Moment of Remembrance on Memorial Day: "This Nation does not forget"

We, the People, honor our fallen with a promise to remember. The Congress of the United States officially established the *National Moment of Remembrance* on Memorial Day to unite the country in their memory. No other holidays would be possible without the sacrifices of the brave men and women who died for freedom since the founding of our Nation. We ask you to help us in this act of national unity. Let us put "Memorial" back in Memorial Day.

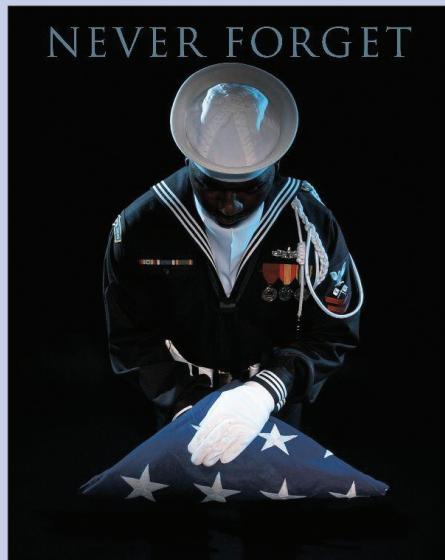
When I asked children what Memorial Day means, they responded: "That's the day the pool opens." A Gallup Poll revealed that only 28 percent of Americans know the meaning of this noble holiday.

Americans were asked to observe the *National Moment of Remembrance* wherever they were at 3 p.m. local time on Memorial Day. It was a time to make a commitment to give back to our country in memory of our fallen.

For additional information, please visit the *National Moment of Remembrance* Web site at www.remember.gov and click on "Downloads" to access more resources.

We appreciate your cooperation in our mission of remembrance. For all the fallen, let us make this Nation one.

—President George W. Bush



In The News

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- No reputable institution (financial or otherwise) will ever ask for any personal information. (They may request account and Social Security numbers if you contact the institution; however, they will never contact you and request the information.)
 - Never provide any credit card or other personal information (Social Security number, bank account numbers, etc.) to anyone unless you are absolutely certain of the source.
 - If you are in doubt about the legitimacy of a request, contact a well-known customer service number for the requesting institution.
- To Whom You Should Report These Incidents**
- Remember, it is better to ask if there is any question about the legitimacy of a request over e-mail, even if it appears to be from someone you know. Always report this suspicious activity by forwarding the e-mail to the following contact:
- NHTSA Information System Security Officer Dee Smith, at Dee.Smith@dot.gov.

Around the Region



Jack Oates spoke at the Governor's Traffic Safety Conference in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, on March 22. He talked about the progress and challenges in traffic safety in America but more specifically, those facing Iowa.



Cyber-NHTSA

Latest Information, Updates and Features on Our Site

- **5/15/06:** New Report Cites 3 Groups Still Not Buckling Up — Young Males, Those in Rural Areas, Pickup Truck Occupants
- **5/15/06:** Nuevo Informe Dice que 3 Tipos de Personas Todavía no se Abrochan el Cinturón de Seguridad: Hombres Jóvenes, Personas en Áreas Rurales y Ocupantes de Camionetas "Pick Up"
- States with Primary Safety Belt Laws Have Lower Fatality Rates
- **5/16/05:** Race and Ethnicity in Fatal Motor Vehicle Traffic Crashes, 1999–2004
- Occupant Fatality Rates by Vehicle Type & Size
- Complete Corporate Average Fuel Economy (CAFE) Information
- Breakthrough Research on Real-World Driver Behavior, Distraction and Crash Factors Released
- **Driver Cell Phone Use Study** Released by NHTSA

To download any of these stories please go to www.NHTSA.dot.gov

Our New Building

In our continuing efforts to keep you informed of the latest status of DOT's new Headquarters Building project, we invite you to visit the Web site at <http://sharepoint.nhtsa.dot.gov/BuildingProject/> and viewed the FAQs recently developed and posted to answer the questions received to date.



Any additional questions you may have, let us know, and we'll try to answer them for you. ★

Ins and Outs

Welcome aboard

Code	Employee	Position	Location
NCR-110	Gant Jr., Elvin J.	Equal Opportunity Specialist	Washington, DC
NPO-122	Chege, Miriam N.	IT Specialist (system analysis)	Washington, DC
NPO-220	Tucker, Ivy P.	Contract Specialist	Washington, DC
NPO-300	Austin, Tanesha S.	Administrative Staff Assistant	Washington, DC
NPO-330	Bilker, David	Accounting Officer	Washington, DC
NPO-400	O'Brien, Margaret H.	Chief Information Officer	Washington, DC
NPO-401	Ainsworth, Charles L.	Supervisor IT Specialist	Washington, DC
NPO-404	Pugh, Jan P.	IT Specialist	Washington, DC
NPO-404	Bohorfoush, Walter L.	IT Specialist	Washington, DC
NTI-122	Williams Jr., Hector M.	Highway Safety Specialist	Washington, DC
NTI-122	Price, Wilfrid K.	Highway Safety Specialist	Washington, DC
NTI-132	Sifrit, Kathy J.	Research Psychologist	Washington, DC
NTI-132	Cheung, Melissa A.	Social Science Research Analyst	Washington, DC
NTI-250	Cabral, Tony A.	Highway Safety Specialist	Olympia Fields, Cook, IL
NTI-280	Ramos, Mario A.	Highway Safety Specialist	Lakewood, Jefferson, CO
NVS-010	Ascone, Debra Sweet	Program Analyst	Washington, DC
NVS-211	Alkondon, Ajit M.	Safety Defects Engineer	Washington, DC
NVS-213	Noel, Andrea A.	Safety Defects Engineer	Washington, DC
NVS-222	Yates, Kenneth H.	Safety Compliance Engineer	San Angelo, Tom Green, TX
NVS-230	Deschenes, Nathan A.	Criminal Investigator	Washington, DC
NVS-322	Lehmer, Matthew J.	General Engineer	Washington, DC
NVS-323	Rudd, Rodney W.	Mechanical Engineer	Washington, DC
NVS-323	Ridella, Stephen A.	Supervisory Mechanical Engineer	Washington, DC

Fair Winds

Retirements

Code	Personnel	Position	Location
NPO-100	Jones, Brenda A.	Administrative Staff	Washington, DC
NPO-100	Sakay, Joseph R.	Program Analyst	Washington, DC
NPO-400	Dornseif, Stephen	IT Specialist	Washington, DC
NTI-112	Mitchell, Ann E.	Highway Safety Specialist	Washington, DC
NTI-132	Gurin, Douglas B.	Social Science Research Analyst	Washington, DC
NTI-200	Filbert, William R.	Highway Safety Specialist	Washington, DC
NTI-210	Cloherty, Edwina S.	Highway Safety Specialist	Cambridge, Middlesex, MA
NTI-260	Gibson, Shelia A.	Highway Safety Specialist	Fort Worth, Tarrant, TX
NVS-322	Britell, C J	General Engineer	Washington, DC

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Ins and Outs

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Eligibility for Federal Retirement Benefits

Here are the criteria for retirement eligibility under the Civil Service Retirement System and the Federal Employees Retirement System.

- Federal Employees Retirement System
- Civil Service Retirement System

Federal Employees Retirement System

There are three categories of benefits in the Federal Employees Retirement System Basic Benefit Plan:

Immediate

Early

Deferred

Eligibility is determined by your age and number of years of creditable service.

In some cases, you must have reached the **Minimum Retirement Age** to receive retirement benefits. Use the following chart to figure your Minimum Retirement Age.

If you were born	Your MRA is
Before 1948	55
In 1948	55 and 2 months
In 1949	55 and 4 months
In 1950	55 and 6 months
In 1951	55 and 8 months
In 1952	55 and 10 months
In 1953 through 1964	56
In 1965	56 and 2 months
In 1966	56 and 4 months
In 1967	56 and 6 months
In 1968	56 and 8 months
In 1969	56 and 10 months
In 1970 and after	57

Immediate Retirement:

An immediate retirement benefit is one that starts within 30 days from the date you stop working.

If you meet one of the following sets of age and service requirements, you are entitled to an immediate retirement benefit:

Age	Years of Service
62	5
60	20
MRA	30
MRA	10

If you retire at the MRA with at least 10, but less than 30 years of service, your benefit will be reduced by 5 percent a year for each year you are under 62, unless you have 20 years of service and your benefit starts when you reach age 60 or later.

Early Retirement:

Refers to special eligibility rules as follows:

The early retirement benefit is available in certain involuntary separation cases and in cases of voluntary separations during a major reorganization or reduction in force. To be eligible, you must meet the following requirements:

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Deferred Retirement:

Refers to delayed payment of benefit until criteria are met, as follows:

If you leave Federal service before you meet the age and service requirements for an immediate retirement benefit, you may be eligible for deferred retirement benefits. To be eligible, you must have completed at least 5 years of creditable civilian service. You may receive benefits when you reach one of the following ages:

Age	Years of Service
62	5
MRA	30
MRA	10

If you retire at the MRA with at least 10, but less than 30 years of service, your benefit will be reduced by 5 percent a year for each year you are under 62, unless you have 20 years of service and your benefit starts when you reach age 60 or later.

Civil Service Retirement System

There are five categories of benefits under the Civil Service Retirement System. Eligibility is based on your age and the number of years of creditable service and any other special requirements. In addition, you must have served in a position subject to CSRS coverage for one of the last two years before your retirement. If you meet one of the following sets of requirements, you may be eligible for an immediate retirement benefit. An immediate annuity is one that begins within 30 days after your separation.

Optional

Special Optional

Early Optional

Discontinued Service

Disability

If you leave Federal service before you meet the age and service requirements for an immediate retirement benefit, you may be eligible for deferred retirement benefits. To be eligible, you must have at least 5 years of creditable civilian service and be age 62.

Optional

Age	Years of Service
62	5
60	20
55	30

Special Optional

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Special Requirements: You must retire under special provisions for air traffic controllers or law enforcement and firefighter personnel. Air traffic controllers can also retire at any age with 25 years of service as an air traffic controller.

Early Optional

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

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Ins and Outs

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Special Requirements: Your agency must be undergoing a major reorganization, reduction-in-force, or transfer of function determined by the Office of Personnel Management. Your annuity is reduced if you are under age 55.

Discontinued Service

Age	Years of Service
50	20
Any Age	25

Special Requirements: Your separation is involuntary and not a removal for misconduct/delinquency.

Disability

Age	Years of Service
Any Age	5

Special Requirements: You must be disabled for useful and efficient service in your current position and any other vacant position at the same grade or pay level within your commuting area and current agency for which you are qualified. The disability must have onset prior to retirement or within one year of separation. The one year requirement may be waived in cases of mental incompetence.



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Patricia Oladeinde, Editor

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If you would like to submit articles or photographs, please email them to patricia.oladeinde@dot.gov or mail them to:

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Washington, DC 20590.

Awards & Certificates



Name:
Dorothy Mason
Home town:
Whaleyville, MD
Hobbies:
Reading, shopping,
and gardening

Most memorable moment: After purchasing my retirement home on the Eastern Shore, all of my friends and family joined me there and blessed the occasion.

Favorite Quote: "Those who stand for nothing, fall for anything."

Role Model: Grandparents and my high school teachers

Key to Success: Treat others the way you would want to be treated.

Favorite vacation spot: Lake George, NY

Goals: Office manager for Arent, Fox, Kitterer, Plotken and Kahn

NHTSA SALUTES Dorothy Mason for winning second place in a Toastmaster's speech contest. Mason's speech, titled "Everyone Feels Blue," was given on April 8 in front of an audience of approximately 60 people. Mason received an Award of Merit certificate, and a speech contest lapel pin.

NHTSA Incentive Awards Working Group

The Office of Policy and Operations has established an Awards Working Group to assist with revamping the Length of Service Recognition Ceremony and the NHTSA Administrator's Awards Ceremony. This will be an ongoing working group, so if you have any comments or ideas regarding the two ceremonies and needed improvements, please discuss with Prentis Kie or the representative from your program area. All comments and ideas will be taken into consideration.

The following people will comprise this Working Group:

NPO

Prentis Kie (Chairperson)
Beth Williams (Co-chair)

NCC

Dorothy Nakama

NPO

Barbara Rhea
Kim Jackson

NTI

Susan McHenry
Carmen Hayes
Philip Gulak

NVS

Barbara Faigin
Charlie Case

20 years or more for the Length of Service

Carl E. Pierchala	October 15, 2005	20 years
John F. Abbott III	November 27, 2005	20 years
Susan L. deCourcy	December 9, 2005	20 years
Rock A. Bazzle	November 16, 2005	25 years
Carl Ragland	October 30, 2005	30 years
Dennis Flemons	December 16, 2005	30 years
Charlie Case	February 1, 2006	30 years
Iona S. Warrick	February 16, 2006	30 years
Joan C. Taylor	March 28, 2006	30 years
Gary R. Toth	March 28, 2006	30 years
Lawrence J. Blincoe	January 31, 2006	35 years