

October 2006



CHANGE AGENTS & AGENCIES



**Georgia's
Trend
in Customer
Service**

Paul Burks is featured on the cover of *Georgia Trend* magazine as this year's statewide winner of the prestigious Excellence In Public Service Award. The executive director of the Georgia Environmental Facilities Authority (GEFA) represents the highest standards of leadership, service and devotion to the citizens of Georgia.

This award comes on top of GEFA's recognition by the Georgia Oglethorpe Award, the state's top level of recognition for organizational performance excellence. The Award results from a rigorous self-assessment of one's own organization, and the competition is against the criteria for Performance Excellence, which are based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Criteria.

In contrast, the *Georgia Trend* award winners are determined by a special selection process, coordinated by the Carl Vinson Institute of Government at the University of Georgia, in partnership with the magazine. This award considers a variety of criteria including stable leadership, innovation, productivity, encouragement of citizen involvement, and a strong record of ethical public service.

Burks was particularly recognized for his dedication to customer service, an attitude he brought with him from Rich's department store to state government.

Both awards represent the culmination of Paul Burks' 30-year career in public service. He became executive director

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EPD Brings Water Permitting To Farmers

The agricultural water permitting office has just gotten closer to its customers. The Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources opened an office in Tifton to improve customer service for south Georgia farmers.

"It makes good sense to move the water withdrawal permitting process closer to the farm community," says EPD Director Carol A. Couch. "Farming is a key part of Georgia's economy and proper management of irrigation water is vital to a farmer's success."

The Tifton office will use new technology such as a geographic information system (GIS) and color satellite imaging to streamline the permitting process while ensuring the sustainability of water resources.

DFCS: The Call Center In Focus

Changing the focus from an office to a call center resulted in significant improvements in service for customers of the Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) of DHR. In the past six months:

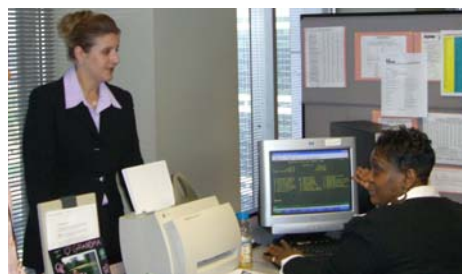
- ◆ Hold times have decreased by 87%.
- ◆ Number of calls answered has increased from 60% to 90%.
- ◆ Over 87,000 more clients are served now than were served six months ago.

DFCS (cont.)

These are welcome improvements for the families served by DFCS, whose goal is to provide the highest level of customer care while effectively and efficiently processing changes for Georgia recipients of TANF, Medicaid, and Food Stamps.

Call Center Director Erica Cockfield used data to track numbers of calls, hold and talk times, and other metrics to help determine effectiveness. She established performance measures for each category as well as accountability measures for each call center agent. But primarily, says Cockfield, "we focused on improving the overall customer experience."

A team from the Office of Customer Service is working with the DFCS call center to look at systems and processes that will support continued improvement.



Erica Cockfield, left, speaks with DFCS call center employee Joyce Cosby.

Customer Service: The Front Lines and Beyond



Coins "Challenge" Employees To Reward Customer Service Heroes

65 gold "challenge coins" were introduced to Georgia Technology Authority (GTA) employees as part of GTA's customer service initiative kickoff. One coin was awarded at each customer service meeting to a participant who demonstrated enthusiasm for customer service.

Emory Morris in GTA Internal IT Support suggested the "challenge coins," a concept inspired by a similar program used by the United States' military.



Patrick Moore, GTA interim executive director, gives his gold "challenge coin" to Jeremy Spencer of the Solutions Development office.

A single platinum "challenge coin" was introduced in October. Its purpose is to recognize outstanding individuals who go even further in their commitment to customer service by suggesting creative and innovative ideas that make customer service faster, friendlier and easier. The platinum coin is tracked on GTA's intranet so employees can see where it goes.

All coin recipients are urged to give their coin to another GTA employee who exemplifies excellent customer service within one week.



Georgia will have the BEST customer service of any state in the nation

Governor's Office of Customer Service
404-463-5914
Jerri Cloud, *Director of Communications*
Cassie Yoder, *Communications Intern*
<http://team.georgia.gov>



Charlin Tabb received GTA's platinum "challenge coin." Since this picture was taken, Tabb has passed the platinum coin on to her manager, Joe Gray, and the entire Portal Contact Center team. Tabb says, "We are all team players and I can honestly say that I am thrilled to work with a dynamic and diverse group of people. It is truly never a dull moment [here]."



Emmett Thomas (right) of the Department of Administrative Services' Motor Pool assists a customer. Thomas and Patrice Roberson have received customer service awards based on letters of appreciation from customers. One customer described them as "living examples of what customer service leaders should be."

Customer Service Week Highlights

October 2-6 was National Customer Service Week. Agencies across the state celebrated in a variety of ways:

- ◆ GEMA issued a special parking spot for outstanding customer service employees.
- ◆ GBI held a variety of events, including a "Know Your Internal Customers" scavenger hunt.
- ◆ Georgia Forestry Commission had employee/rap artist Jesse Bartlett write an agency customer service theme song entitled "Do It Right" (copyright pending!).
- ◆ Donna Satchell, president of STARR Consulting & Training, was guest speaker at a joint GTA-DCH event. Satchell's company specializes in helping businesses better serve their customers by emphasizing teamwork and individual success.

Georgia's Trend...continued

of GEFA in 1993, following his post as program manager, and then director, of the Office of Energy Resources, where he served for 10 years.

The first of ten principles for each GEFA employee is to be "customer focused" and responsive "to the needs and expectations of both internal and external customers."

GEFA demonstrates consistent customer satisfaction results, strong results for customer loyalty, and customer perception of perceived value, according to the Oglethorpe application. GEFA also regularly surveys its employees about job satisfaction.

Customer comments and complaints drive a process of continuous improvement. Customer focus has directed the changes made at GEFA, in both its organizational alignment and program development.

GEFA's mission is to make low-interest water and sewer loans to small cities and counties in Georgia, which allow for infrastructure improvements. In addition, GEFA administers a wide array of programs within the division of Energy Resources and a state Fuel Storage Tank program.

In 1993-1994, Burks' first year at the agency, GEFA made \$20 million in loans. During this past fiscal year, GEFA's Board of Directors approved \$281 million in water and sewer loans.

GEFA has branched out from working with small cities and counties to dealing with the city of Atlanta's \$3.9 billion project. "This revolutionized the agency," Burks says. GEFA is providing financial oversight and working with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division on overall oversight of the project.

When a staff member comes to Burks with questions about the services GEFA provides to its customers, Burks recalls his Rich's orientation.

"We're trying to help communities. If it's not illegal, immoral or unethical, let's do it."