

NEWS & NOTES

from the **ALLEGHENY REGIONAL ASSET DISTRICT**

SPRING 2006

RAD BOARD NEWS

RAD Welcomes New Board Members

The Allegheny Regional Asset District is pleased to announce the appointment of two new members to its Board of Directors, **Mr. Robert D. Jones** and **Mr. Stanley J. Parker**. Both Mr. Jones and Mr. Parker were appointed by City of Pittsburgh Mayor Bob O'Connor. In addition, Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato, with the approval of County Council, reappointed Mrs. Constance Yarris to the RAD Board.



Robert D. Jones

Mr. Jones is Sr. Manager, External Affairs for Dominion's Pennsylvania operations. His responsibilities include local government affairs, community affairs and economic development. He has also served as instructor for the

University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs (GSPIA) and is active in many community organizations.

Mr. Stanley J. Parker is a shareholder in the Litigation Section of the law firm of Buchanan Ingersoll PC, and is chair-elect of the Pennsylvania Bar Association's Civil Litigation Section. He also serves on the Council of the Allegheny County Bar Association, Civil Litigation Section. Mr. Parker is active as well in the civic and charitable communities, was selected by *Impact Magazine* as a member of the 2004 Young Leaders Group, a group of emerging Pennsylvania leaders aged 45 and younger that is committed to improving Allegheny County's future through the United Way.



Stanley J. Parker

RAD Board Elects New Officers

At its annual Board of Directors meeting on March 27, the Board, in accordance with its by-laws, elected officer for the year 2006. The following officers were elected: **Chair, Rick Pierchalski; Vice Chair, Robert Jones; Secretary/Treasurer, Stanley Parker.**

At the same meeting the Board also reorganized its standing committees, appointed its Citizen Advisory board liaison, and created an Ad Hoc Committee to review District grantmaking procedures. **Allocations Committee:** Daniel J. Griffin, Robert Jones, Connie Yarris; **Library Committee:** Stanley Parker, Connie Yarris, and one member to be named later; **Audit Committee:** Daniel J. Griffin, Stanley Parker, and one member to be named later; **Advisory Board Liaison:** Dr. Herman Jones; **Ad Hoc Committee:** Daniel J. Griffin, Robert Jones, Rick Pierchalski.

New Members Appointed to Citizen Advisory Panel

The Board of Directors is pleased to welcome four new members to the Citizen Advisory Board to serve four year terms. They are: **Marilyn Coleman**, consultant with Dewey & Kaye from the Eastern suburbs of the County; **Ralph Hale**, an insurance broker from the North Hills, active in support of parks; **Cynthia Maleski**, lawyer and former state insurance commissioner from the Allegheny Valley; **F. Charles Spence**, an insurance broker from the Clairton area who is active in a number of civic and charitable efforts.

Nominations Open for RAD Board's "7th Member"

The Board is seeking nominations from regional economic and community development organizations for a person to be elected to the "at-large" seat on the District Board. The current member is eligible for re-nomination. The at-large member is elected by the appointed members of the Board from the list of nominations secured from such organizations. Qualified groups may request information from the District by: writing to the Executive Director at One Smithfield Street, Suite 310, Pittsburgh PA 15222; by phoning 412-227-1900; by faxing 412-227-1905; or by email at info@radworkshere.org.

ASSETS REACH OUT VIA DISTANCE LEARNING

It has been estimated that students graduating from high school today will be exposed to more new information in one year than their grandparents were in a lifetime (elearners.com).

While much of this learning will happen in a classroom made of brick and drywall, increasingly there are opportunities to access
(cont. on back page)



RAVEN users at The National Aviary in Pittsburgh can learn about avian life via distance learning technology.

MUNICIPAL REMINDER: Sales Tax Revenue Sharing

Municipalities that receive a share of the sales tax are reminded that Act 77 of 1993 mandates that 25% of the increase received in sales tax each year must be dedicated to Councils of Government or other programs started under the Intergovernmental Cooperation Act. Most municipalities saw a growth in revenue from 2004-2005 for the first time in a number of years.

The District provides grants from half of the process of the 1% county sales tax. The other half of the tax proceeds go directly to Allegheny County and municipal governments for continuing tax reform and to fund services, including public safety, public works and local parks.

Act 77 specified a distribution formula that provides funding for all municipalities that elect to participate but provides special consideration for the poorest and most distressed communities in the county.

Municipal distributions since 1994 have totalled \$761 billion. Detailed information on the yearly municipal distributions can be found on the RAD web site www.radworkshere.org.

TAX REVENUE UPDATE

District grant program tax revenue for the first quarter of 2006 totals \$19.7 million. An equal amount was received by the county and municipal governments to support property tax relief and ongoing government programs. This is essentially the same amount received in the first quarter of 2005. The first quarter of each year is normally the largest revenue producer as it includes end of previous year holiday sales taxes.

For now the tax revenue exceeds budget projections. The final 2006 budget assumed that there would be about a 2% decline in tax revenue by the end of 2006. If the tax sustains at the level experienced in the first quarter, how-

ever, it would mean that the District would not have to call on the \$1.2 million in reserve used to balance the 2006 budget.

Although holiday retail sales posted strong growth nationally, sales tax yields are not keeping pace with that growth. There are a number of factors for this including issues with collecting sales on internet transactions and a softening in the auto market. The Department of Revenue recently briefed the District on an initiative to enforce "use tax," which is the sales tax due by a purchaser when the tax is not collected by the buyer. This is often the case in internet sales.

Monthly tax revenue reports are posted on the RAD web site, www.radworkshere.org.

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(cont. from front) knowledge from a distance via technology that relies on a network for delivery, interaction or facilitation.

What is "distance learning"? According to the United States Distance Learning Association, distance learning is the acquisition of knowledge and skills through mediated information and instruction, encompassing all technologies and other forms of learning at a distance. Learning can be synchronous (at the same time) such as on-line chat, teleconferencing or videoconferencing or asynchronous, such as email, listserves, web forums, newsgroups or blogs. Media can be delivered by print (text, graphics), audio (streamed, taped), video (streamed, video cable TV) or date (web pages, on-line tests, interactive tools).

Several RAD-funded assets are experiencing success in creating "distance learning" programs that can reach learners around the country and abroad. By doing so, organizations can extend their education efforts beyond on-site offerings like tours, classes and lectures, to provide professional development and in-service opportunities to teachers anywhere, to support rural and inner city children with enrichment they might not otherwise have, and to create electronic "field trips" in which transportation costs are no longer a concern.

At **The Mattress Factory**, the 14s teen art class started a blog where they post about their class, their projects, artists they are learning about and more. The Youthworks students have also participated in making two websites that serve as educational resources.

A far-reaching educational effort combining cameras and television screens has brought thousands of K-12 students from New

York to Texas in touch with staff from the **Carnegie Museum of Natural History** on topics ranging from moth anatomy to dinosaurs. To accomplish this, a camera is mounted just above the television monitor on both ends of the classroom using specialized phone lines. While participants have to deal with a half-second delay in voice transmission, this virtual environment can easily close a geographical gap.

The Worlds in Motion project at the **Sen. John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center and Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum** is a special collaboration of national scholars and American Indians who are experts in the history of their communities to guide elementary, middle and high school teachers in a scholarly study of eastern American Indians from precontact through colonial times. Teachers



Visitors at the *Clash of Empires* exhibit at the Sen. John Heinz Pittsburgh Regional History Center and Western Pennsylvania Sports Museum.

and scholars from a seven-state committee are working with a History Center project director to develop a curriculum that integrates the story of eastern American Indians into our nation's history

Coinciding with commemoration activities of the 250th anniversary of the French and Indian War (1754-60), participants have spent three years of intense scholarly inquiry and designing, developing, piloting and assessing model curriculum. All participants were provided with full access from their own computers to an easy-to-use web-based software that offers interactive tools for collaboration to ensure regular interaction. Workshops were held at historical American Indian sites and online.

The RAVEN distance-learning program at **The National Aviary in Pittsburgh** offers schools and other organizations anywhere in the world a unique opportunity to study and learn about birds. RAVEN uses video-conferencing technology that allows the participants and instructors to hear, see and interact with each other from remote locations, via IP or ISDN. In addition, the RAVEN robot holds a sizeable library of video, photo and audio clips that allow viewers to observe birds in their natural habitats, or even take a tour of the Aviary. This program has served more than 1500 students from around the world and made topics like ecology, endangered species, evolution, animal behavior and conservation available in a memorable way.

To learn more about the distance learning projects and other education outreach efforts of regional assets, go to www.radworkshere.org, and click on any of the assets under "Funded Assets 2006."



ASSET PHOTO FEATURE: PHIPPS CONSERVATORY

Spring is in full bloom at Phipps Conservatory and Botanical Gardens and throughout Allegheny County. The season's gentler temperatures offer a perfect opportunity to come out of hibernation and visit the region's parks, gardens, trails and other green spaces. See and experience your tax dollars at work at places like Phipps, Beechwood Farms Nature Reserve (Audubon Society of Western PA), nine county parks, four city regional parks, and scores of regional trails. Visit www.radworkshere.org for links to these nature assets that provide diverse recreational opportunities.



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