

In God We Trust

### Volume I, Issue 6

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Ron Wright

# The Wright Stuff

#### The Meaning of Money

It is true, as we so often hear, that money talks. Although its language is primarily monetary, it communicates much more and means much more than the numeric value we see stamped on coins and printed on currency. In fact, our money speaks volumes about who we are as a people. And no coin or currency has more to say to us than the dollar bill.

Fittingly, since it is the smallest and most often used denomination of currency, the face side includes a September 1, 2014

portrait of the father of our country, George Washington. Otherwise, it is not particularly noteworthy. The rest of the face includes the technical adornments of all currency: U. S. Treasury and Federal Reserve Bank stamps, signatures of the U. S. Treasurer and the Secretary of the Treasury, an obligatory serial number, the year it was printed, the numeric value, and the ever-important notation that it's OK to use it to buy stuff.

It is the back side of the bill that is rich with history and meaning. On this side is displayed the Great Seal of the United States, the source of the bill's symbolism and, for some, its enduring mystery.

The reverse side of the seal is on the left side of the bill; the obverse is on the right. Above the center is the official motto of the United States, but it is not the only motto on the bill. There are three more printed in Latin.

The reverse side contains an unfinished pyramid and above it an eye. This has been fodder for unfertile minds and conspiracy theorists for more than a century, but its meaning was clear to the founding generation of Americans.

The pyramid, a symbol of strength and duration, is made of 13 layers forming 13 steps, representing the

Continued on Page 2

Office Hours Monday - Friday 8:00 am - 5:00 pm Our main office and 7 locations around the county are ready to serve you.

Tarrant County Tax Assessor-Collector 100 E. Weatherford Street, Fort Worth, TX 76196 817.884.1100

Charles

of

the

Congress,

Thomson, who took elements from

each design and made a fourth that

was adopted by the Congress on

June 20, 1782. In his report to

Congress, Thomson explained the

different elements of the seal. To

this day, the Great Seal serves as

States, In God We Trust, found

above the center of the bill, was

formally adopted and signed into

law in July, 1956, by President

Dwight Eisenhower. It was added

The official motto of the United

America's Vision Statement.

symbolism

Continental

important

## The Wright Stuff, Continued

original 13 states. Printed on the bottom layer is the year of our independence in Roman numerals. The pyramid is unfinished at the top because the United States was new and unfinished. Atop the pyramid is an eye within a triangle within an aurora. This is the classic symbol for Providence, commonly understood as the allseeing eye of God. Above the eye is the Latin motto, Annuit Coeptis, meaning Favors Our Endeavors. With the eye, the meaning was Providence favored our clear. This reflected the endeavors. belief held by most revolutionary leaders that Providence had favored the American cause during the Revolutionary War. Otherwise, their ragtag army never could have prevailed against the greatest military force in the world. At the bottom of the seal beneath the pyramid is another Latin motto: Novus Ordo Seclorum, meaning New Order of the Ages. This was the hope and vision of the new nation, that its experiment in selfgovernance would endure and be a model for the world.

The obverse side of the seal is the side that is made into a die and used to stamp official documents. It is the official coat of arms of the United States. We see this on official documents such as passports, military insignia, embassy placards and flags.

This side of the seal includes the bald eagle clutching an olive branch of peace in one set of talons and the arrows of war in the other. Notably, the eagle is facing the side of peace. Its shield is the familiar red and white stripes with a blue field, similar to our flag, but without stars. The eagle's beak is clutching a banner with the third Latin motto, E Pluribus Unum, meaning Out Of Many, One. This, of course, represented the many people from around the world, particularly Europe, that settled here to form a nation. Above the eagle's head is a sunburst with 13 stars on a blue field, again representing the original 13 states.

Adoption of the seal did not come easily. Indeed, it took three committees and six years of disagreement. After a third design was considered in May of 1782, all three committee designs were referred to the secretary of the



Source: www.moneyfactory.gov

#### to U. S. currency a year later. But this was not a new motto for the country; In God We Trust had been an unofficial motto for a century and a half. It first appeared on coins in 1864, was not used for

coins in 1864, was not used for many years, then was added again in the 1930s. The idea of the phrase as a national motto actually dates back to the War of 1812 and the writing of our national anthem, *The Star Spangled Banner*. The fourth verse of Francis Scott Key's famous poem includes this line:

"And this be our motto, in God is our trust!"

The beauty of the motto is it speaks to all religions, not favoring one over another, and reflects what has been a keen sensibility of the American people since Colonial times. Like the Great Seal of the United States, the motto is historic and iconic. And like the Great Seal, it is part of who we are as a nation. May it always be so.

The next time you unfold that crumpled dollar bill in your pocket or purse, take a moment and look at it closely before you pass it on. What you will see has helped define America for more than two hundred years.

# **Tidbits from....Tom Spencer, Chief Deputy**

# **Digital Signage coming soon!**

Digital signs are coming. All locations office tax are scheduled to receive a digital signage system in the very near future. Digital signs will afford our offices the ability to transmit important and timelv information to our customers. An added benefit of the system is to make the waiting time a little less stressful.

The system will consist of television monitors connected to a computer that will display programed messages, news, weather, alerts, video clips and much more. Each office will have a monitor prominently



located in the waiting area displaying selected information while customers wait. In the July newsletter, I discussed the queuing system. Don't confuse the digital sign project with the queuing system – the digital sign project is completely separate from the queuing system.

This is an excellent forum to help our customers understand what they need to complete their business in the tax office such as valid identification and current insurance. We can also post information on new initiatives such as one sticker for registration and inspection. At the same time, the message boards can display tax office information, news, weather, as public well as service announcements on West Nile virus, flu shots, Amber alerts,



and the like.

The plan is for high traffic offices to have two queuing monitors on the left and right facing the waiting area with the digital sign located in the middle. Not all offices will have queuing system in the initial implementation but all offices will have digital signs.

The system will be somewhat similar to those that are located in the Tarrant County Credit Union offices with a few more features.

The system will be managed from the downtown office so staff members will not be involved other than to turn the monitor on and off each day.

#### **Mission Statement**

We will serve the citizens of Tarrant County with pride, courtesy, respect, and determination. We will achieve excellence in what we do by providing accurate, efficient, and timely service consistent with the laws of the State of Texas and the highest ethical standard.





# Tax Forum

### Ron Wright, Tarrant County Tax Assessor-Collector

The Tarrant County Tax Office will host public Tax Forums in October, 2014

#### 6:30 pm-8:00 pm

Dates and locations are as follows:

Thursday, October 9:	
Tuesday, October 14:	Mansfield Sub-courthouse 1100 East Broad, Mansfield TX 76063
Thursday, October 16:	
Thursday, October 23:	

#### GET ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS AND MORE:

601 SE Parkway, Azle, TX 76020

- How are property values determined?
- How are tax rates determined?
- Do I qualify for an exemption?
- Does the Tax Office offer payment plans?
- · What is going on with minerals?
- How do I transfer my car title?
- How do I get a disabled Placard for my car?
- I have lost my registration renewal notice, what do I do?
- How do I get a toll tag?
- How is the one sticker system ("Two Steps, One Sticker") going to affect me?

This event is FREE! All Tarrant County residents are encouraged to attend.

For questions, call 817.884.1100

Please feel free to duplicate and share with others who are interested in attending.





Dorothy Starr, MV Director

# **Motor Vehicle News**

## TIADA Annual Conference, July 27—30

The annual Texas Independent Dealers Association Annual Conference was held in San Antonio July 27-30, 2014. Dorothy Starr, Motor Vehicle Director, attended the conference to hear updates from the association that affects the motor vehicle department.

Included on the agenda was the new OCCC licensing system and the discussion about the most common dealer violations, in addition to numerous other workshops on customer service, WebDEALER, and damaged vehicles. Roundtable Discussions and Legislative Summaries were provided before the conference ended.

Dealers and county officials from all over the state attended the conference. The conference was informative and helpful in discovering dealer needs as it relates to the tax office. However, there was a little time to network with other county officials. Pictured below is Jason Downing, Dallas County Motor Vehicle Director, with Tarrant County's Dorothy Starr.



## New VTR Director Named by TxDMV

The Texas Department of Motor Vehicles (TxDMV) has selected Jeremiah Kuntz as the new director of the Vehicle Titles and Registration Division (VTR). Kuntz currently serves as the director of the Government and Strategic Communications Division for TxDMV. He has experience in the division plus has a strong background in public service, having worked for the Office of Governor of Texas, the Texas Dept. of Transportation, and the Texas Senate.

VTR is responsible for vehicle titling, registration, and issuing license plates and disabled placards. It oversees 16 regional service centers and provides policy and procedural support to the 254 county tax assessor-collectors who process registration and title applications throughout Texas.

Kuntz's new position begins on September 1, 2014. Congratulations Jeremiah!



Jeremiah Kuntz





# **Property Tax News**

Jim Pritchard, PT Director

## Adopting a Tax Rate

How do school districts, cities, counties, and special districts fund services for their citizens? They do so through property taxes. Each year, taxing units must set a tax rate. This process begins in the summer months before their fiscal year begins. The units draft a budget and then go through the process of adopting a tax rate.

# Manual Receipts

This time of year there's a lot of work in preparation for the new Tax Year and all that goes into it. The current tax year ends on September 30th and the new tax year (2014) begins on or around October 1st.

Once the tax computer system is shut down during the transition from one year to the next, we officially stop posting to that year's taxes. We enter a period where nothing else can be posted in the tax office system and it is available to us The process of adopting a tax rate is known as Truth in Taxation. The process uses formulas that limit the amount a unit can increase their rate over the current rate. It also allows for transparency through public notices and opportunity for public input.

The Tarrant County tax assessor-collector's office

collects for 67 taxing units in Tarrant County. It assists one third of these with their tax rate calculation. The governing body then votes to adopt the rate. For more detailed information, check out the Texas State Comptroller's website at *www.window.state.tx.us*.

Contributed by Jeffrey Hodges, Property Tax

Assessment Manager



in a "Read-Only" version. This period is referred to as *Dead Week*.

During Dead Week the old tax year is closed & balanced and the tax accounts and system are rolled over into the new tax year and the new year's taxes are calculated. Tax payments, however, do not stop during this time. We must give taxpayers a receipt for their payments. In past years we've given them a hand-written receipt. These payments were then posted manually into the tax office system when it reopened in the new tax year.

To reduce errors and in-

crease efficiency, we have a new program that is compatible with the tax office system and will replace the old handwritten receipts. Tax payments will be posted and a receipt generated. The payment posts once the tax office system is reopened in the new tax year, simply with the push of a button.

It is expected that this new method will be more accurate and will streamline the end of

year payment processing and posting.

Contributed by Danny Nichols, Property Tax Collections Manager





# What's Been Happening....

# Training the Property Tax Way

Supervisors and managers in the Property Tax Department provided training to the motor vehicle staff who are on the front lines in the branch locations switching between motor vehicle transactions and property tax transactions at any given moment every day of the week. The week long hands-on training was provided in the months of April, May, June and July this year. A follow up



Jan Phillips and Gena Cliff

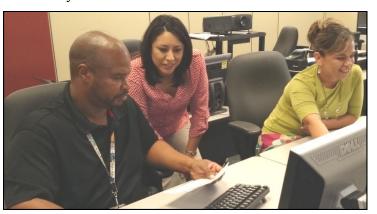








training session will be provided after the tax season to answer questions from participants after they have an opportunity to apply what they learned to what they do. This is another way we feel we can hold true to our Mission Statement to provide accurate, efficient, and timely service consistent with the laws of the State of Texas and the highest ethical standard. Training makes us better. Here are some pictures from the last training session in July.



Brian Rawlston, Amelia Rice (Property Tax Collections Supervisor), Sonia Reyes



Cecilia Coleman and Kat Woldt (Property Tax Refund Supervisor)



# What's Been Happening....

# Leadership Development Program

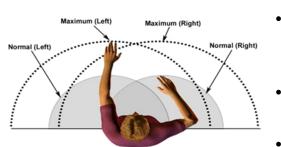
Two employees from the tax office were recognized for their participation in the Leadership Development program in August. One of the requirements of this year long program is to have a mentor who provides support and encouragement. The mentor also provides training in the different aspects of their job to the program participant.

Congratulations to both of you for this accomplishment!

Judy Burgess, Property Tax Supervisor—Egov, gave a presentation on Tax Accounting. She worked with her mentor, Sheila Moore, to learn more about Sheila's accounting role. Specifically, she learned how to deal with the taxing entities, how the money is disbursed, and what the money is used for once we receive it.

Theresa Steele, Customer Service Representative, gave her presentation on Mineral Accounts. She worked side by side with her mentor, Christine Smith, to learn more about how mineral accounts are handled.





- Keep it Close—Frequent needed items within forearm reach and avoid reaching greater than arm's length.
- Orient needed work fixtures such as staplers and mouse so wrists are straight, elbows are close to body, and can be viewed with your head straight.
- Adjust your chair to promote good posture and permit use of arms close to body for all work tasks.
- Support legs flat on the floor or use a footrest.
- Position your monitor and keyboard to minimize awkward positions and extended reaching.

# What's Been Happening....



Commissioner Andy Nguyen initiated the annual Town Hall event to provide citizens an opportunity to learn more about Tarrant County government. Addressing the crowd, Ron Wright welcomed questions about the tax office, and reminded everyone of the Tax Forums that will be held at different locations around the county in October.



Ron Wright addresses the crowd at the Town Hall on August 20, 2014.

For information on fitness, nutrition, weight management and more, check out the Working on Wellness site. There you will find helpful tips and articles as well as information and documents you need to complete the WOW program. Participation in the WOW program is not required to enjoy access to the information. Did you know Tarrant County offers rewards to employees who choose to maintain good health or improve health? Check out the details on the Working on Wellness site. If



you have any questions, email <u>*Amber Norris*</u> or call her at 817-212-7036. Individual commitment to a group effort that is what makes a team work, a company work, a society work, a civilization work..... Vince Lombardi



A Look Back ..... by Ron Wright

## PRODUCT OF ARLINGTON MADE MILITARY HISTORY

The bronze statue of a pensive fighter pilot overlooking the west lawn of the Arlington Public Library in downtown Arlington honors one of Tarrant County's greatest military heroes. A nearby Texas Historical Marker describes some of his exploits. On a brass plaque mounted to the granite base of the statue is the pilot's name in his own handwriting, Neel E. Kearby.

Neel Earnest Kearby was born in Wichita Falls in 1911 to Dr. John Gallatin Kearby, a dentist, and his wife, Bessie. After spending a few years in Mineral Wells, Dr. Kearby moved his family and his dental practice to Arlington. This is where young Neel spent his most formative years, the years when the boy became the man who would become a hero. He graduated from Arlington High School in 1928 and from North Texas Agricultural College in 1930. The college, then a two year school affiliated with Texas A&M, would later become the University of Texas at Arlington.

Kearby worked for a few

years, then moved to Austin to complete his college courses. Upon graduating from UT in 1937 with a business degree, he joined the U. S. Army Air Corps and was sent to Randolph Field in San Antonio for flight training. It was in San Antonio that he met the beautiful Virginia Cochran.



Kearby had gone to a department store to buy perfume for a girl when he saw Cochran working the counter. The perfume and the other girl were quickly forgotten. He and Cochran married and over the next few years had three sons. As a tribute to his wife and her red hair, he named his fighter plane The Fiery Ginger.

When World War II began Kearby was assigned to the Panama Canal Zone and then to Westover Field in Massachusetts where he was given command of the 348<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron and their new P-47 Thunderbolt fighters. The P-47, derisively called "the Jug", was large and bulky for a fighter, but its big engine allowed it to be flown at higher altitudes and higher speeds. Although not as quick and nimble as smaller fighters, the Thunderbolt was absolutely lethal in surprise attacks from high altitudes. Over the next few months, he and his men pioneered the fighting tactics for the P-47.

Kearby, now a Lt. Colonel, arrived in the Pacific Theater in June, 1943. Over the next eight months he would rack up an aerial combat record that the other flying aces would take years to match. By November, he had 12

## A Look Back, Continued.....

aerial victories under his belt, including a record six in a single engagement, for which he received his nation's highest decoration for valor, the Medal of Honor. The medal citation tells the story best:

"Place and date: Near Wewak, New Guinea. 11 October 1943. For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty in action with the enemy, Col. Kearby volunteered to lead a flight of four fighters to reconnoiter the strongly defended enemy base at Wewak. Having observed enemy installations and reinforcements at four airfields, and secured important tactical information, he saw an enemy fighter below him, made a diving attack and shot it down in flames. The small formation then sighted approximately 12 enemy bombers accompanied by 36 fighters. Although his mission had been completed, his fuel was running low, and the numerical odds were 12 to 1, he gave the signal to attack. Diving into the midst of the enemy airplanes, he shot down three in quick succession. Observing one of his comrades with two enemy fighters in pursuit, he destroyed both enemy aircraft. The enemy broke off in large numbers to make a multiple attack on his airplane, but despite his peril he made one more pass before seeking cloud protection. Coming into the clear, he called his flight together and led them to a friendly base. Col. Kearby brought down 6 enemy aircraft in this action, undertaken with superb daring after his mission was completed."

Despite the fact that a promotion to full Colonel required that he spend a great deal of time at a desk, he continued to fly combat missions as often as he could. By March of 1944, Kearby had 21 aerial victories and was in a tie for Top Gun in the Pacific. On March 5 in combat near Wewak, he shot down his 22<sup>nd</sup> enemy aircraft before also being shot down and killed at the age of 32.

Kearby's remains were found in the jungle in 1947 by a Royal Australian search team, but they were not identified until two years later. He was finally laid to rest with full military honors in July, 1949 at Hillcrest Cemetery in Dallas. He was buried next to his only brother, John Gallatin III, who was also killed during the war.

In addition to the Medal of Honor, Kearby received two Silver Stars, four Distinguished Flying Crosses, five Air Medals, and the Purple Heart. After the war, the Air Force honored Kearby by naming a missile facility at Sheppard AFB and the Officer's Club at Kelly AFB in his memory.



This statue of Colonel Neel Kearby was sculpted by Paul Tadlock. The statue was unveiled in 2010 and is located in the heart of downtown Arlington.



## Comment Cards

Last month, we highlighted the Northeast office for the highest percentage of positive Comment Cards last quarter. This quarter will end on September 30. As a reminder, all customers should be given information about the comment cards, regardless of the



	Tarrant County Ta Comment Ca	rd	
you think of the servi	Tax Assessor-Collector Ron Wi ices we provide. We value you g a few moments to fill out this a slable box.	r feedback and would	
Reason for Vielt			
Location:	01	de	
Name of clark who helped yo	w		
I walled a reasonable amount I feel the clerk listened and o I was happy with the service	tax office was a positive separation. it of time for my number to be called, indensitivel my question(b), I rancelved, is office was professional and proficient.	1111	1111
Additional somments:			_
			_
			_
Would you like to be contact		Yes	
if yes, piease provide contac	tinformation:		_
			_
Website: Property Tax erasit	www.fartachcounty.com		

situation. In early October, the totals will be tallied and the highest ranking office will receive the banner along with ribbons for each employee in the office. New with the *October* edition of *Taxing News*: Beginning next month, we will add the employee name to the remarks on the KAB page so that everyone knows who provided great service!



Jennifer (Mandi) Chance claims her gift card for winning last month's newsletter contest again! Congratulations, Mandi!

### **Our Vision:**

We are a professional team of positive and dedicated individuals who serve with integrity, tenacity, and compassion in an innovative and inclusive environment.

## Armed Forces First Initiative





County Commissioners adopted a resolution last week that allows members of the armed forces to be served at the front of the line, and encouraged all county offices to adopt the initiative. As the resolution says, they "serve at the front lines to help preserve our freedom, we as citizens can honor our armed forces in uniform by allowing them to move to the front of a line when seeking in-person county services."

To support the initiative, all uniformed service members will be allowed to move to the front of any line at all of our eight locations. Active duty and reserve service members not in uniform may move to the front of the line but must show proof of military service such as a Military ID Card.

Signs will be displayed in all county offices to notify the public. We expect this to be a positive and welcome move toward supporting and honoring the service and bravery of all members of the armed forces.

# **PEOPLE ON THE MOVE....**



Juana Garnett Motor Vehicle Manager from Arlington to Poly



Elvira Simpson Motor Vehicle Manager from Southwest to Northwest



Alana Raner Motor Vehicle Manager from Poly to Southwest



Josh Kobayashi Motor Vehicle Supervisor From Northwest to Poly

# Congratulations!!



Candice Bryan Promoted to Quality Assurance Coordinator

Read Candice's story in the next edition of Taxing News.



Judy Terrazas



Eulalia Rodriquez Motor Vehicle



Daniel Caban Motor Vehicle (Part-Time)



Motor Vehicle





Elizabeth O'Dell (front) and Eulalia Rodriguez (back) complete IT Security Awareness Modules as part of new employee orientation.



Billy O'Dell

Motor Vehicle

Welcome New Employees!!

Elizabeth O'Dell Motor Vehicle





Left to right: Judy Terrazas, Brittany Molinar, and Billy O'Dell complete the online Ethics course from V.G. Young Institute as part of new employee training.





# Long Term Tax Office Employees Retire....

# Taking a Collective 50+ Years of Experience With Them

# Jackie Dixon, Motor Vehicle Manager—26 years



Jackie accepts her plaque and watch from Ron Wright with Motor Vehicle Director, Dorothy Starr. Jackie has been a manager at the Mansfield, Southwest and most recently Northwest branches for the past 10 years.









With over 36 years of service in the Motor Vehicle Department, Gloria Williams accepts her official symbols of retirement—plaque and watch—from Ron Wright. Best wishes to Gloria as she begins this new journey.







The goal as a company is to have customer service that is not just the best but legendary.

- Sam Walton

### Here's what the citizens say about Tax Office employees:

"...was efficient, professional, and helpful."

"...went above and beyond and was very friendly. Thank you for starting my day on a happy note."

"...staff were very helpful. Website was useful."

"...handled my transaction with expertise and professionalism."

"...this comment card needs to have a 0-10 scale. I could rate this location at 9-10!"



Congratulations to these employees who will be recognized in Commissioners Court in September:

 $\langle U | c \rangle$ 

10 Years—Janice Davis Danny Nichols Daniel Taylor **25 Years**—Jada Sorrels

tember Birtl

Misti Elledge4	Tammie Shephard14	Gina Mashai23
Anita ElSakhawy4	Brooke Houghton15	Debbie Rimerman25
Sheila Harvey5	Sandy Barclay17	Melissa Barnes26
Joe Abrego6	Diana Blanco18	Heather Thompson28
Josh Kobayashi10	Macy Redd21	Lupe Ramirez29

### Volume 1, Issue 6

### Taxing News

September 1, 2014

**Tarrant County Tax Office Locations** *Hours: Monday—Friday* 8:00 am—5:00 pm

### **Main Office Building**

100 East Weatherford St. Fort Worth, TX 76196 Phone: 817-884-1100

### Arlington

700 E. Abram St. Arlington, TX 76010 Phone: 817-548-3935

### Mansfield

1100 E. Broad St. Mansfield, TX 76063 Phone: 817-473-5127

### Northeast

(Temporary Location) 201 Harwood Rd. Suite 124 Bedford, TX 76021 Phone: 817-581-3635

### Northwest

6713 Telephone Rd. Rm. 101 Lake Worth, TX 76135 Phone: 817-238-4435

#### Poly

3212 Miller Ave. Fort Worth, TX 76105 Phone: 817-531-5635

#### Southlake

1400 Main St. Suite 110 Southlake TX 76092 Phone: 817-481-8141

#### Southwest

6551 Granbury Rd Fort Worth, TX 76133 Phone: 817-370-4535



Making a Difference

## CONTACT US

817-884-1100

Email Property Tax Department at:

taxoffice@tarrantcounty.com

. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .

**Email Motor Vehicle** 

**Department at:** 

mvt@tarrantcounty.com

Questions about the newsletter may

be directed to

Vickie Doane at

Tax-SDC@tarrantcounty.com

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Visit our website at: www.taxoffice.tarrantcounty.com

Registration renewals may be purchased at your local Tom Thumb, Fiesta, and Carnival stores in Bedford, Hurst, Keller, Mansfield, Southlake, Arlington, Grapevine, and Fort Worth.

Check our website for a list of locations at <u>www.taxoffice.tarrantcounty.com.</u>

Be sure to bring your renewal notice, proof of insurance and an acceptable form of ID such as a Texas Driver's License or ID card.



Email Tax-SDC@tarrantcounty.com to subscribe to our monthly newsletter distribution list.