

* The U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics uses this formula to compute the annual turnover rate: the number of total separations for the year divided by average monthly employment for the year.

EERC promotes job satisfaction

The Energy & Environmental Research Center’s (EERC’s) Human Resources Manager Sue Bartley recently compared the EERC turnover rate for benefited employees to rates for similar work types in the U.S. Department of Labor’s Bureau of Labor Statistics.

“We have extremely low turnover,” said Sue Bartley. “The University of North Dakota (UND) benefited employee turnover rate from UND Human Resources is 8% for fiscal year 2010–2011 (FY11). That number does

not include faculty, just staff with benefits, and it includes the EERC benefited employee turnover rate of 5.2% for FY11.”

What does the EERC’s low turnover rate mean?

“What that means, in my opinion, is that people are happy in their jobs at the EERC,” said Bartley. “We have low turnover; therefore, we are doing something to satisfy our employees and to encourage them to stay, whether it’s through job satisfaction,

job stability, monetary compensation, a family-friendly climate, or perhaps all of the above.”

Bartley explained that many employees at the EERC find job satisfaction in having the opportunity to work and grow in their fields and in their positions. Jobs at the EERC are stable jobs, she said. “The turnover we do have is not because people are losing their jobs; the turnover is because they want to change fields, they want to move elsewhere or move back to where they’re from, or they want to go back to school.” And, she continued, people are compensated well at the EERC. “These are good-paying jobs for Grand Forks, and the dollars go farther than in other cities.”

“I believe the low turnover rate at the EERC is a testament to the culture here and how well people like working at the Center,” said EERC Director Gerald Groenewold. “They’re looking forward to the future and new directions in the important work we do. They have a chance to be innovative, to pursue their dreams, and to make a difference in the world. Obviously, job satisfaction is still worth something in this day and age.”

–Sandy Van Eck

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Ben Stommes of Prairie Public Broadcasting creates graphics for the documentary.

Behind the scenes: The making of a documentary

In May and June of 2009, EERC Research Manager Dan Daly accompanied the Prairie Public Broadcasting film crew to the northern Great Plains, northeastern India, and the African country of Cameroon to film “a day in the energy life” of typical families. Here is the final installment of his experience behind the scenes creating the PCOR Partnership documentary “Global Energy and Carbon: Tracking Our Footprint,” which premiered on Prairie Public and is available at www.undeerc.org/PCOR.

Hope you had a good trip to Cameroon—how does your July look?

Charlene Crocker’s chipper voice was coming from the speaker phone. Charlene’s business card might say EERC Research Scientist, but since 2005, her job has involved coordinating with Prairie Public Broadcasting on EERC documentary projects. So far, we’d completed three documentaries, and another two were currently in postproduction (cutting and pasting video images and

interviews together). “Footprint” was now officially added to the group. Well, I won’t have to look too far for something to do, I thought as we discussed postproduction activities.

Looks like we have about 42 hours’ worth of raw footage...

Five of us sat around the conference table at the Prairie Public offices in Fargo: Bob Dambach (Executive Producer), Barb Gravel (Production Manager), Ben Stommes (Editor), and the EERC/PCOR Partnership crew (Charlene and me). My job would be to review the raw footage and record the source and time for the scenes I found useful. Ben and Charlene would boil down that raw video to a few hours of select B-roll—the “good stuff” used to create the visual storyline.

We’re gonna need narration to tie it together...

In previous documentaries, we had relied on interviews to supply the words for the story. But “Footprint” was different. We had lots of footage

of families using energy and lots that showed the “look” of energy in different economies: three-wheeled propane vehicles and hoards of motor bikes in India, people selling bottles of gasoline and diesel along the road in Cameroon, the typical appliances in an American kitchen. Bob didn’t think that a bunch of experts would fit with the footage of families, so Charlene and I would be writing the words—lots of words—for a narrator.

One shot of the Sharma’s propane cooktop coming right up...

I watched all of the film on fast forward, chose 25 clips for each family, and categorized them by energy use. But we had other shots, too—women in colorful saris carrying firewood along a four-lane highway, hundreds of office workers in white

shirts and dark pants arriving by train to go who knows where in the early Delhi morning, the lively crowd at the weekly market in Ikata, and laughing children playing soccer in Muyuka. All in all, we had about 150 clips ranging from 1 to 5 minutes. It was fascinating to watch the families cook, eat, work, travel, and live. There were so many shots of our six families preparing meals I was expecting a call from Anthony Bourdain!

Is this a travelogue or a show about energy?

The first rough cut was 50 minutes long. Prairie Public knew what the show needed to look like for its audience, and the EERC review team added knowledge of energy issues and science. Neither team was shy when it came to feedback and suggestions! Over a series of review sessions, we listened, chopped, rearranged, added new video and content, animated pie charts and bar graphs, listened and chopped again, discussed the content, and checked it against the original

outline. Eventually, we got the show to the final length of 27 minutes.

Think about the families – what did you learn from them?

It was a simple question from across the table, and the answer turned out to be the ending we’d been searching for all along. All of the families were concerned about providing for their kids...all were concerned that their children got an education...they were all working hard for a better future... They weren’t thinking of energy in particular, but energy was part of it all.

Tying up loose ends...

Sheila Hanson (EERC Senior Market Research Associate) and Charlene showed “Footprint” to a focus group of typical viewers, who had questions and comments but also encouragement and praise. We incorporated their feedback and sent the draft to our funders at DOE for approval. After we incorporated their thoughtful comments and final adjustments to color and sound, the EERC Directors viewed the film and gave their approval. “Footprint” premiered on Prairie Public in October 2010. DVDs were printed, followed by Web streaming and marketing the show to more than 350 public television stations nationwide.

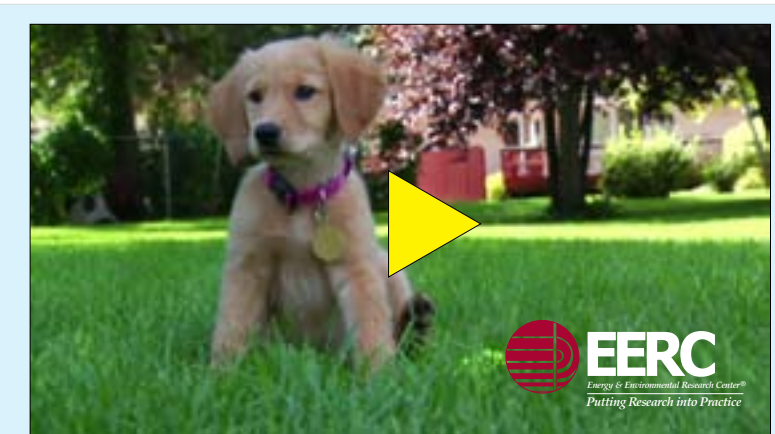
That must have been something to make that show with Prairie Public...

That was my cue! But what to say? I thought back to how our families had all graciously welcomed us into their homes and patiently endured cameras and sound booms during breakfasts and dinners, to how a camera had brought out curiosity and smiles for a group of school kids in Cameroon, to the hours of reviewing footage, to all the times that I was so surprised that our crystal clear narration wasn’t clear to anyone else, and of being part of a team that really cared about the work. Yeah, I heard myself say, it was definitely really something...and I’m really glad I was part of it.

The documentaries created for EERC projects, eight and counting, are team efforts from start to finish involving EERC personnel, partners, and clients. We wish to acknowledge and thank the production and postproduction teams at Prairie Public (Bob Dambach, Barbara Gravel, David Geck, Ben Stommes, Frode Tilden, Ryan Sailer, Heidi Nelson, and Ann Hall Anderson), country guides Poonam Girdhar and Alexander Azenkeng, the PCOR Partnership review team (John Harju, Ed Steadman, Wes Peck, Katherine Anagnost, and Janelle Ensrud),

EERC Graphics and Editing, the focus group members for providing comments and Sheila Hanson for organizing the focus group effort, the EERC Directors, the DOE review team (Andrea McNemar, John Litynski, and Sean Plasynski), others who helped organize visits and shots (Greg Archer and Gary Connett of Great River Energy, the Minnesota Center for Energy Efficiency) and our six families (the Amins, the Anumendems, the Handas, the Langes, the Preslers, and the Sharmas) who invited us into their homes.

–Dan Daly



New TV commercial features puppies

The EERC launched a new nationwide television ad campaign this fall. “The commercial features a group of playful puppies as an attention getter,” said Derek Walters, Manager, Marketing, Communications, and Outreach at the EERC. “We, along with the production team at the University of North Dakota Television Center, conceived of the idea as a way to appeal to a very broad audience. This same concept was used in an ad we debuted last year, which focused on kids of our employees. This type of advertising helps us touch on the nature of what we do in a way that everyone can relate to and remember.”

The overall goal of the commercial is to generate general interest in the EERC’s projects and programs to audiences throughout the upper Midwest region. The commercial is airing on UND’s Studio One as well as the Fighting Sioux Network during UND football, hockey, and basketball games. The network reaches more than 470,500 cable households throughout North Dakota, South Dakota, and parts of Minnesota. It also gets rebroadcast by other networks around the nation.

You can also see the video by clicking on the YouTube icon on the EERC home page.



Alex Azenkeng of Cameroon earned his Ph.D. in Theoretical Physical Chemistry from UND before being hired at the EERC.

Azenkeng named president of UAC

Alex Azenkeng, EERC Research Scientist, was recently elected president of the new United African Community (UAC) organization, which was formed to help African immigrants ease into the Grand Forks community and to raise awareness of issues affecting Africans. The group's mission is that the community and the immigrants learn from and value one another. It is unclear how many people from Africa live in the greater Grand Forks area, Azenkeng said—that determination will be one of the first tasks of the group. A number of Africans have come to the area because they have a job and others to go to school, but many are refugees from war-torn countries.

These new immigrants must struggle with a new language and an unfamiliar culture (not to mention the weather!) as they seek work and an education for their children. One of the priorities for the UAC will be providing help to families struggling with their children's education. Azenkeng said that "in the United States, parents are expected to help children with homework," but many immigrant parents are unfamiliar with the material and often the language. "What happens to those kids? A good education is critically important, and they can't afford to get left behind," Azenkeng said.

The UAC has members from Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Egypt, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Malawi, Mali, Morocco, Nigeria, Somalia, Southern Sudan, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Togo, and Uganda. The nonprofit group is applying for tax-exempt status and plans to hold fund-raising events for its projects.

"We call Grand Forks and East Grand Forks home," said Azenkeng, who is from Cameroon. "We want to share our many African cultures with our new community."

—Sandy Van Eck



Researcher's photos make national news

In early November, NBC News used two of Wes Peck's photographs as part of a closing montage for "Rock Center with Brian Williams," a new primetime news magazine. Peck said NBC found the pictures he had posted on the Flickr photo-sharing Web site, contacted him regarding their use, and had him sign a release for the show to potentially use four pictures. The two winter snowstorm scenes shown here were eventually used at the end of a story on Williston and the oil boom. Peck was listed in the credits.

"That's one of those things that doesn't happen every day, at least not for me," said Peck, an EERC Research Manager for whom photography is an avid hobby. "Too bad no money was involved," he added, half-jokingly.

See more of Peck's photography at www.flickr.com/photos/44442915@N00/.

—Sandy Van Eck

New employees



Malhar Khambete, Research Scientist, designs, operates, and scales up experiments and processes related to direct coal liquefaction,

process chemistry, and chemical synthesis including developing advanced catalytic and thermochemical conversion technologies for coal and other hydrocarbons such as biomass to fuels and chemicals. Khambete's interests and expertise include process development for the synthesis of fuels and chemicals from various sources, optimization of processes by statistical methods, and statistical data analysis.

"What I enjoy most about the EERC is the opportunity it gives me to be creative," said Khambete. "I like having the resources available for me to explore new ideas, and working with so many experts in different fields around me is also something I appreciate very much—it gives me the opportunity to learn new things. The people here are like family. I thoroughly enjoy working with and around everyone here."

Khambete earned an M.S. in Chemical Engineering from UND and a bachelor's degree in Chemical Engineering from the University of Pune, India. While a student, Khambete worked as a Research Assistant at the EERC.

Born and raised in Zambia, Africa, Khambete moved to India to attend college and chose to pursue his master's degree in the United States. He transferred to UND from a Chicago university because he found he really doesn't like big cities. Khambete likes to visit his two sisters who live in Oregon when

he can and his parents, who now live in India, every couple of years.

Khambete enjoyed hiking during his undergraduate days in India. Some of his more memorable hikes were to isolated ancient ruins of forts and temples on mountain tops, sometimes hiking at night to avoid the heat but always trying to avoid bears and snakes. In the summertime, Khambete mountain bikes at every opportunity and rides his motorcycle to enjoy the weather. During the winter, he spends a couple of hours a day playing racquetball and likes to entertain guests.

"I have been told I'm a pretty good cook, and I like to cook to relax," Khambete said. "Typically on a Friday, I like to have friends over and cook different cuisines for them—and sometimes I fuse them."



Christin Fine McWaters is an Environment, Health, and Safety Specialist at the EERC, where her work focuses on developing, maintaining, and

improving the EERC's Environment, Occupational Health, and Safety Programs, which encompass hazardous materials and waste management; radiation; air pollution control; wastewater, storm water; and occupational health, safety, and process safety management. McWaters' principal areas of interest and expertise include radiation safety, occupational safety, industrial hygiene, and emergency management.

"A safety person is kind of a 'jack-of-all-trades,'" McWaters said. "One week I will be learning as much as possible about a certain chemical and the protective equipment necessary to keep people safe, and the next week I will be focusing on fire safety. I like to explain my job as being paranoid. I'm trained to think of the worst-case scenario: what can go wrong, when, where, and how? Then I take action by implementing plans to prevent incidents from occurring—safe design, appropriate protective equipment, proper waste disposal, etc. If I cannot prevent something from happening, like a tornado, I help make plans for what we do if that situation occurs—sounding the alarm, proper shelter, evacuation plans, etc."

Originally from Bismarck, North Dakota, McWaters holds a B.S. in Occupational Safety and Environmental Health from UND and is working on her M.S. in Safety and Security from Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). Prior to her position at the EERC, McWaters was an EHS Specialist with the Environmental Health and Safety Office at UND.

McWaters and her husband, a production coordinator for New Flyer of America in Crookston, Minnesota, spend much of their free time on the Greenway and working in their garden. McWaters is the Vice President for the Northern Occupational Safety and Health Association, a group of safety professionals in the Valley that hosts a monthly training session on current safety topics and an annual safety conference, and she is also a referee for the Forx Roller Derby League (see following article in this issue).

—Sandy Van Eck



Derby ref: Rolling with the punches

When you first meet Christin Fine McWaters, you think she's a pretty quiet, almost shy, safety officer at the EERC, and you assume she plays it safe. Then you find out that her roller derby persona is Prairie RoseRage and she's in the Forx Roller Derby League. She's not escaping the action by being a referee, though.

"Refs have to skate at least as well as the players do in order to keep up with the action and stay on top of penalties," said McWaters, who started out as a player but became a referee because she knew the 50-page rule book forward and backward. "I always tell doctors that I play roller derby. I don't want them to think all the

bruises in various stages of healing are a result of domestic violence!" McWaters was like most of the women who joined the newly formed Forx Roller Derby League by responding to a poster in May 2010: she couldn't really skate and had only seen roller derby on TV. She just knew that, now married and working at her first job after college, she was ready for a new interest. After practicing three times a week all summer and fall, the women looked like a team. The "Sugar Beaters" had their first bout in February of 2011. All their hard work paid off with that first win, and McWaters and the others were already hooked. In fact, the 19 members will split into two teams in the spring of 2012 and are actively recruiting new members (they'll teach you how to skate—they promise!). Anyone over 21 can join: the Sugar Beaters have a few college students, a number of working mothers over 30, a few grandmothers, and a retired university professor who is 66.

People are often surprised, McWaters said, that strategy is far more important than strength or even speed. Here are the basic rules: A game, or bout, has two 30-minute periods broken up into fast and furious 2-minute plays called "jams." Two teams of five skate at high speed around an oval track with a circumference of ~236 ft. Each team has a "jammer," who scores points by lapping the opposing team. Points are given for how many of the opposing team the jammer passes, and the "lead jammer" can "call off" the jam to stop the opposing jammer from scoring

points. The rest of the team, called "blockers," protect their own jammer while obstructing the opposing team's jammer by blocking her or smashing into her with their shoulders, hips, or "booties." The head blocker, the "pivot," maneuvers the pack to do this.

McWaters is one of seven referees working at a game. Penalties are common and dished out for infringements such as skating outside the marked track or blocking an opponent above shoulder height. Penalties can be incurred even between jams, so referees have to watch the players at all times. If penalties are serious enough, players are sent to the penalty box.

Despite tough-sounding Sugar Beaters like Hebl Can Evil, Deevious Doxee, Jackie O'sassin, and Vintage Vixen, McWaters said not to expect punching, hair pulling, or tackling in this league—it's much more likely that you'll see someone trip and five skaters will fall down on top of her. McWaters said that "what you can expect is an evening of hard hits, amazing skating skills, and lots of fun!" Not only are there few actual fights, but after a bout, opposing teams get to know each other at the traditional "afterparty." Many deep friendships have formed among teammates and opponents who seemingly have nothing in common but roller derby.

McWaters said the League wants people to see roller derby as a family-friendly sport that empowers its

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Comedian David Crow did an onstage costume change between being the opening act and the main act. He was also the entertainment this fall at the Air Quality VIII Conference.

EERC holiday party draws big laughs

The annual EERC holiday party was held at the Alerus Center on Friday, December 2, 2011, where employees and guests were treated to piano music by Brent Hermans during the social hour, a delicious buffet dinner, and lots of laughs prompted by comedian David Crow. Crow's comedy has been seen on Comedy Central, CBS, ABC, and NBC as well as on his very own "One Hour Comedy Special," which aired 14 times and was released on the DVD "Crooked Finger."



Shown with just some of the Adopt-a-Family gifts donated by EERC employees are (left to right) Sue Bartley, Shannan Longsdorf, Joyce Sundby (who keeps it all organized), Bonnie Hillerud, Jimmie Kennedy, and Jenny Le Texier.



Sue Bartley and UND Staff Senate representative Shelly Pecka at the EERC. Pecka picked up a large tote full of gifts for area senior citizens.

Keeping "happy" in the holidays

There's nothing like the holiday season to remind a person to count one's blessings and to help others less fortunate. As in past years, EERC employees have generously contributed to a couple of programs. The Adopt-a-Family Program has now been a feature of the EERC for 11 years, giving clothes, household items, toys, and gift certificates to help families in need over the holiday season.

"We were initially approached by DeAnn Beard (wife of EERC Computer Systems Manager Roy Beard), who saw working families struggling to provide the basics for their children

and with few means to provide presents for them. This year we worked with Beard, Barb Kitko, and Jennifer Modeen, all social workers with the Grand Forks Public School system, to provide gifts for three larger families," said Sue Bartley, EERC Human Resources Manager and liaison to the Adopt-a-Family Program.

"The social workers identify families in need and get lists of things they need such as clothing, special needs like a bus pass or gas card for work, and wish lists of toys," Bartley added. "EERC employees are always so generous that families usually get

everything on their lists and oftentimes more."

A new way for EERC employees to give back this season was the UND Staff Senate's "Holiday Cheer Packages." The EERC was a campus collection site for items donated to the Grand Forks Senior Citizen Center, whose volunteers visit and deliver packages of goodies (puzzle books, playing cards, snacks, lotion, etc.) to community seniors who have no one with whom to spend the holidays.

—Sandy Van Eck



Award winners (from left) are Kari Schmidt, Angie Morgan, Jane Russell, and Lisa Borgen.

AR awards announced

The annual Administrative Resources (AR) Employee Recognition awards were given out on December 12 at the Annual Administrative Resources Holiday Luncheon. This year's winners are Jane Russell – Leadership, Kari Schmidt – Attitude, Lisa Borgen – Customer Service, and Angie Morgan – Team Player.

Award winners are nominated by their colleagues in each category and selected by AR managers and Deb Haley, Associate Director

for Marketing, Outreach, and Administrative Resources.

“I am honored to work with such an outstanding group of individuals,” said Haley. “The number of people nominated attests to Administrative Resources’ commitment to providing excellent service to the EERC.”

Several people were nominated in all four award categories this year: Angie Morgan, Kari Schmidt, Bobbie Rakoczy, and Jane Russell.

–Sandy Van Eck



Communications, Outreach, and Marketing received Judge Tom Erickson's (far right) vote for its red-carpeted movie premiere theme (with bags of popcorn as “bribes”). Accepting the award are (left to right) Kari Gagner, LaRae Foerster, and Derek Walters.

Holiday door contest

The Holiday Door Decorating Contest at the EERC resulted in some good-natured fun and lots of creative competition. All five judges had a favorite, and there were awards in several other categories as well. The coveted “People’s Choice” award went to the Contracts/IP Office, which also won for “Best Theme.” Food bribes were even more rampant this year, and Dureanna Robertson, Jen Knudson, and Teresa Bonev in the Director’s office set the bar high for next year with their homemade candy and cookies.

–Sandy Van Eck

Derby continued

players individually and as women, is self-supporting, and also gives back to the community. Players volunteer their time at a number of community events, and the Forx Roller Derby League is a not-for-profit organization that gives a portion of its profits to various charitable causes.

For example, an upcoming bout with the Bismarck–Mandan Bombshellz on February 4 at the Alerus Center in Grand Forks will be a fundraiser for the local chapter of the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. The event is still in the planning stages, but watch for free face painting, photo opps, and lots more! Tickets are \$10 in advance (through Ticketmaster) or \$15 at the door. “Like” the Forx Roller Derby on Facebook and get in on their Facebook scavenger hunt in the 2 weeks before the event. Contact Christin for more information or advance tickets.

–Sandy Van Eck



EERC EDGE

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