

SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

# O-A-S-I-S

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**Commissioner  
Kenneth S. Apfel**



In addition to the new mission and goals statement, the plan describes performance objectives for each goal, lays out general strategies and identifies specific initiatives that will be the basis for accomplishing each goal. For example, the goal "to be an employer that values and invests in each employee" is supported by strategies and initiatives that focus on the workforce of the future, including providing tools and training and enhancing the physical environment.

Publication of the strategic plan meets the requirements of GPRA. "This law was enacted to help the federal government restore the confidence of the American people in its ability to provide good service while managing their tax dollars wisely," said Carolyn.

GPRA requires that federal managers focus their efforts on "managing for results." For SSA, this means focusing on attaining specific outcomes and putting SSA's mission, goals and performance at the heart of decisionmaking by dedicating the necessary resources.

Initiatives are being undertaken across the agency to implement the strategic plan. Future OASIS articles will discuss some of the initiatives and changes that occur.

"Keeping the Promise" is on the Internet, Social Security Online (<http://www.ssa.gov>), and on the Intranet, Social Security Employee Information Server (<http://eis.ba.ssa.gov>), by clicking on "What's New?" ♦

# Oldies but goodies

*Contest sparks interest in original cards*

**W**hen Field Office Manager **Adam Harrington**, Yreka, Calif., asked local residents to participate in a contest, he had no idea he'd be taking a step back in history

It all started when resident Philip Eastman visited the Yreka office. He showed his Social Security card dated Dec. 18, 1936, and said he wanted to challenge others in Siskiyou and Modoc Counties-served by the office-to see if anyone had an older original card. So Adam, who writes for the Siskiyou Daily News, issued the challenge in his column.

Yreka's 10 staff members provide service to 12,500 Social Security beneficiaries and more than 2,500 SSI recipients. Located in a remote area over 100 miles north of SSA's parent office in Redding, Yreka has a population of 8,000 people.

"The column generated a good response from readers," said Adam. "From the entries, we chose the oldest 10 and invited these individuals to a breakfast at the office. Eight were able to attend."

During the ceremony, Adam welcomed everyone and gave a brief history of Social Security. The winners had the chance to share some of their lifetime achievements with the group.

"We found that some of these folks had led very interesting lives," said Adam. "For example, Bob Smith had travelled the world as a merchant marine. He shared a variety of stories and photographs with the group. We even had the world's jalapeno-pepper-eating champion. Harold Sickler, one of our finalists, won the title by consuming 116 jalapeno peppers at one sitting."

The big twist to this story is that the winning card of Lauren Paine, dated Nov. 16, 1936, is actually two weeks older than the one Social Security has always publicized as the first issued-that of John D. Sweeney, of New Rochelle, N.Y., on Dec. 1, 1936.

According to information on SSA's history page on the Internet (<http://www.ssa.gov/history>), in 1936 the Social Security Board did not have a network of field offices. So, it contracted with the postal office to distribute and assign the first batch of SSNs through 45,000 local post offices-1,074 of which were designated as "typing centers" where the cards themselves were prepared. According to the contract, SS-4 applications were to be distributed to employers beginning Monday, Nov. 15, 1946. From data provided, the employer then received SS-5 forms for each employee, beginning Nov. 24. The



Participants in the Yreka office's card contest are, from l., Lauren Paine, Philip Eastman, Vee Meloche, Clarence Dzomba (seated), Harold Sickler, John Kushwara and Bob Smith.

### Health and safety

I was quite interested to read your article "What's new with the EnviroTeam," in the Summer issue of OASIS. While the article mentioned that in each field facility there are health and safety representatives, it seemed to forget the role of joint AFGE/union/SSA management health and safety committees.

These committees exist in large facilities such as the PsCs, central office, the Wilkes-Barre DOC, Falls Church OHA headquarters and in smaller facilities....

Furthermore, there are three national health and safety committees for field offices, RPIR and OHA field offices which consist of three AFGE members and three management officials....

These organizations ensure employee input on matters involving the EnviroTeam.

*Howard Egerman  
Health and Safety Rep  
Oakland, Calif.*

completed SS-5s had to be returned to the post office, either through the mail or in person. If the individual went to a "typing center," he or she could wait while the card was prepared. Once the SSN was assigned, the record was sent to SSA headquarters.

When the cards arrived in Baltimore, they were put in groups of 1,000 and processed to create the master record and establish individual earnings records. On Dec. 1, Joe Fay head of the Division of Accounting Operations, walked over to the first stack and declared the first card as the first official Social Security number—thus began the notoriety of John D. Sweeney

"Mr. Sweeney's status as the first cardholder is more symbolic than actual," said SSA Historian Larry Dewitt, who also maintains the Internet page. "It would be more accurate to say his was the first SSA master record established. The first cards should have been issued on Nov. 24. But,

there are cards showing earlier dates. It's possible that some of the local post offices issued SSNs as soon as they received their card stock—sometime in mid-November 1936."

Regardless of how they got their cards dated early, Adam said the contest was a success. "It allowed us to honor those in our community who have shown a great deal of stewardship, and luck, in keeping their original cards over all these years. They are to be congratulated on this accomplishment." ♦