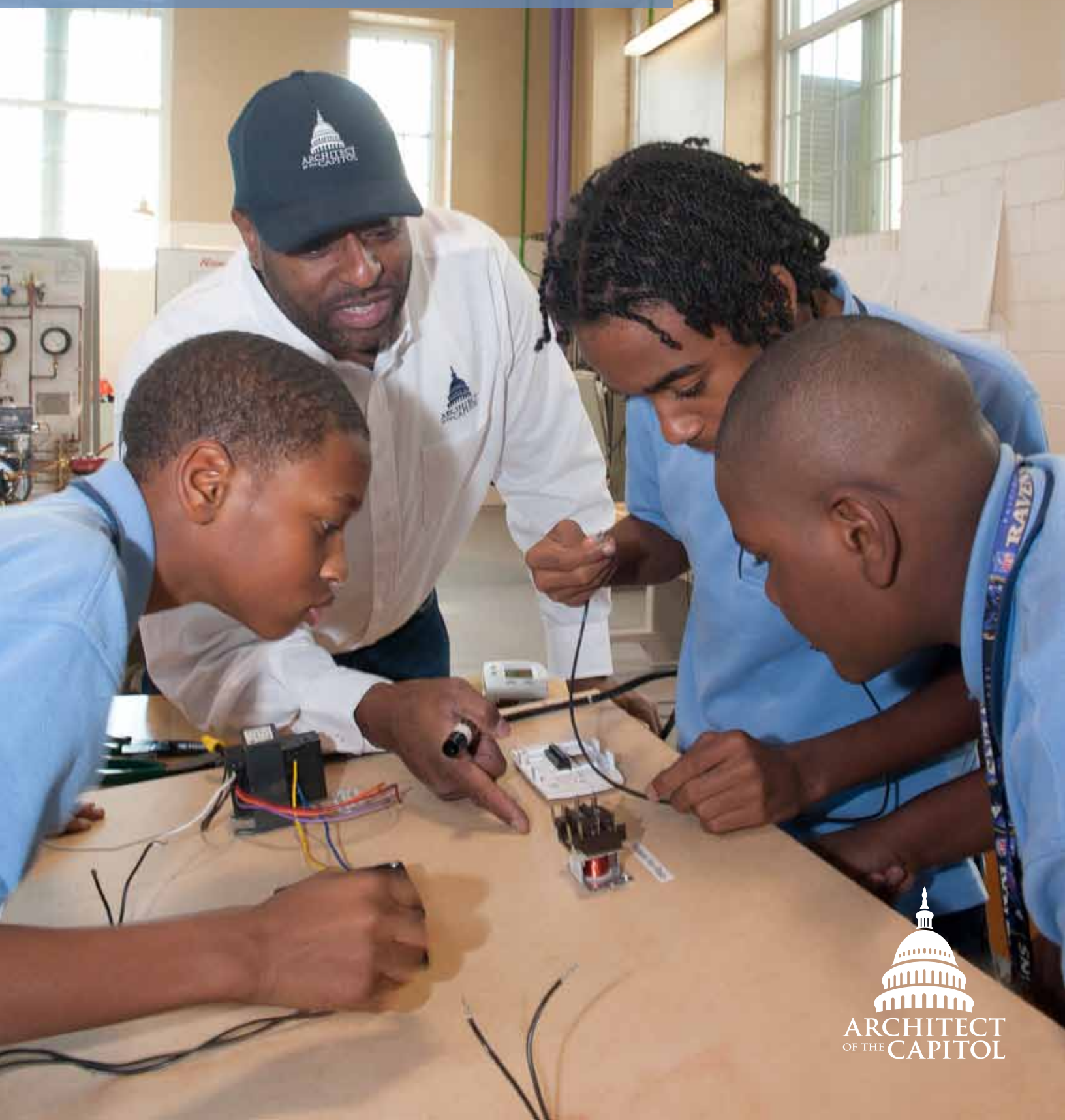
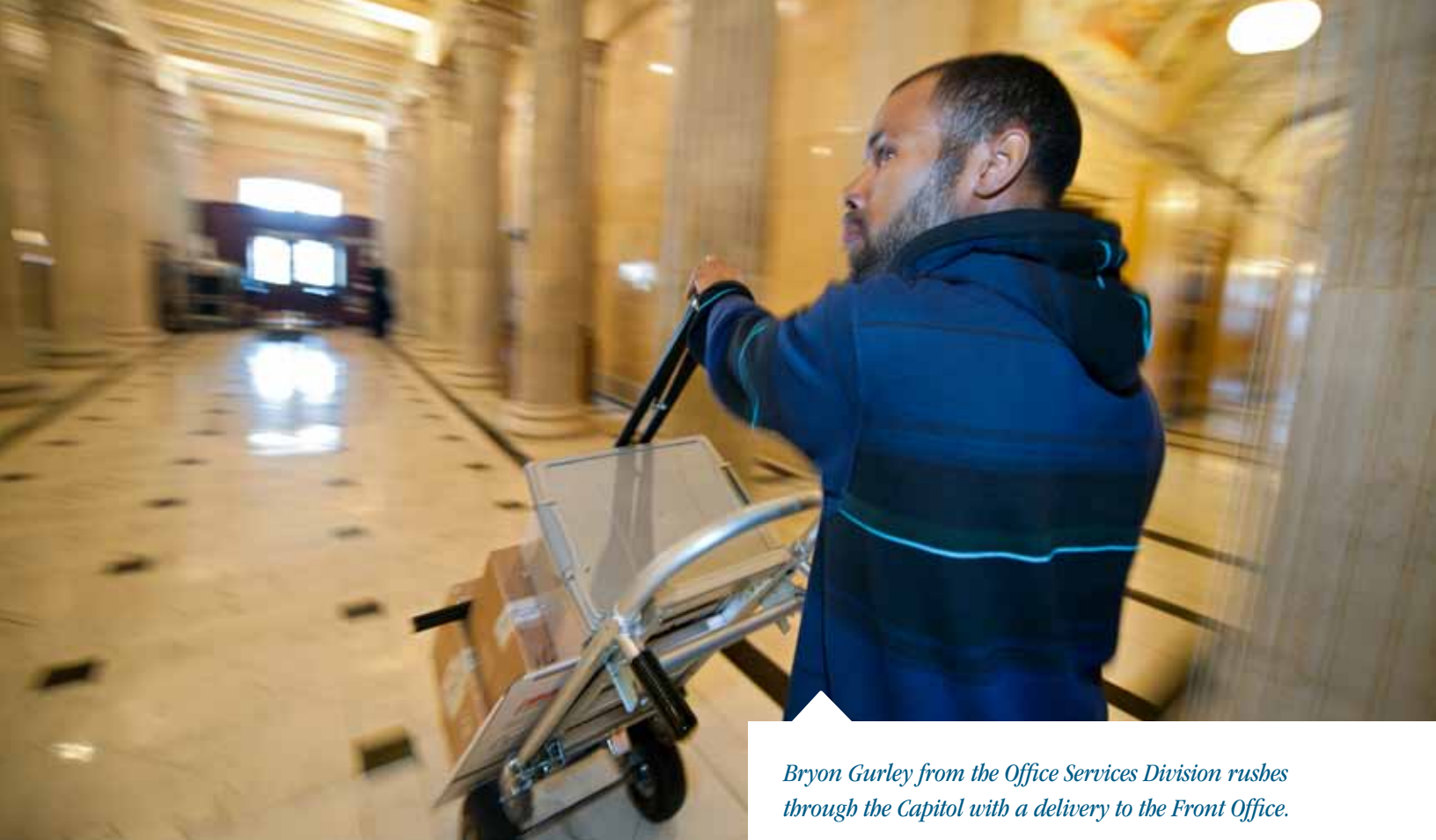


Foundations & Perspectives

Volume 8 | Spring 2012





Bryon Gurley from the Office Services Division rushes through the Capitol with a delivery to the Front Office.

Photo by: Susanne Bledsoe

In This Issue



Photo by: Chuck Badal

Project Manager Eugene Poole teaches students at Phelps High School about architecture by using the array of impressive buildings the AOC cares for on Capitol Hill as examples.

- 1 Letter from the Architect
- 2 Achieving the Future by Building on Legacy
- 6 Delivering Extraordinary Customer Service
One Call at a Time
- 10 Capitol Curriculum: Enticing Educational Initiatives
- 14 New Era of Doing Business with Tony Hutcherson
- 16 AOC and Phelps High School Partnership: Discovering
the Joys of Teaching — and Learning
- 22 At Your Service: Spotlight on Office Services Division
- 24 Doing Good: Employees Give of Themselves

Front Cover: Photo by Chuck Badal

Theon Parker, general supervisor of facility operations at the Library of Congress, teaches students about electrical circuits at Phelps ACE High School.

Letter from the Architect



Even in challenging times, having a strong vision of the future — of what is possible — can help us overcome obstacles and take advantage of unique opportunities. At the AOC, we are committed to pursuing opportunities for being more efficient, saving money and collaborating across the agency.

Recently we launched the AOC's Strategic Vision and Five Year Focus, which empowers us as an agency to rally around a common vision for the future, where we share good ideas across the organization and build stronger relationships with our customers and one another.

In this issue of *Foundations & Perspectives*, you will explore the Strategic Vision's four goals through the eyes of the Goal Leaders who are charged with making this vision a reality (see page 2). As you'll discover, it is vitally important that we use this vision as a tool to help us make real improvements in our daily work.

**“In the middle of difficulty
lies opportunity.”**

— *Albert Einstein*

Opportunity and the vision of a brighter future is also what propels the students at Phelps ACE High School to succeed (see page 16). Through a strong partnership with the AOC, Phelps students gain first-hand knowledge of the skills that you use each and every day to accomplish your jobs.

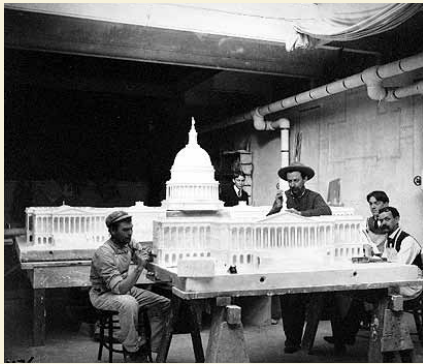
For employees like James Myers, a work leader in the Capitol Power Plant Insulation Shop, the chance to teach a course at Phelps is a homecoming of sorts, having graduated from what was then called the Phelps Vocational School in 1975. Myers' passion for his work infuses his lessons with energy, leaving students enthusiastic about what the future may hold once they leave the halls of school. It's entirely possible that some of them may one day walk the gleaming halls of Capitol Hill as a proud member of our AOC team.

Like these students, I am enthusiastic about what the future holds for the AOC. As Albert Einstein once said, “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.”

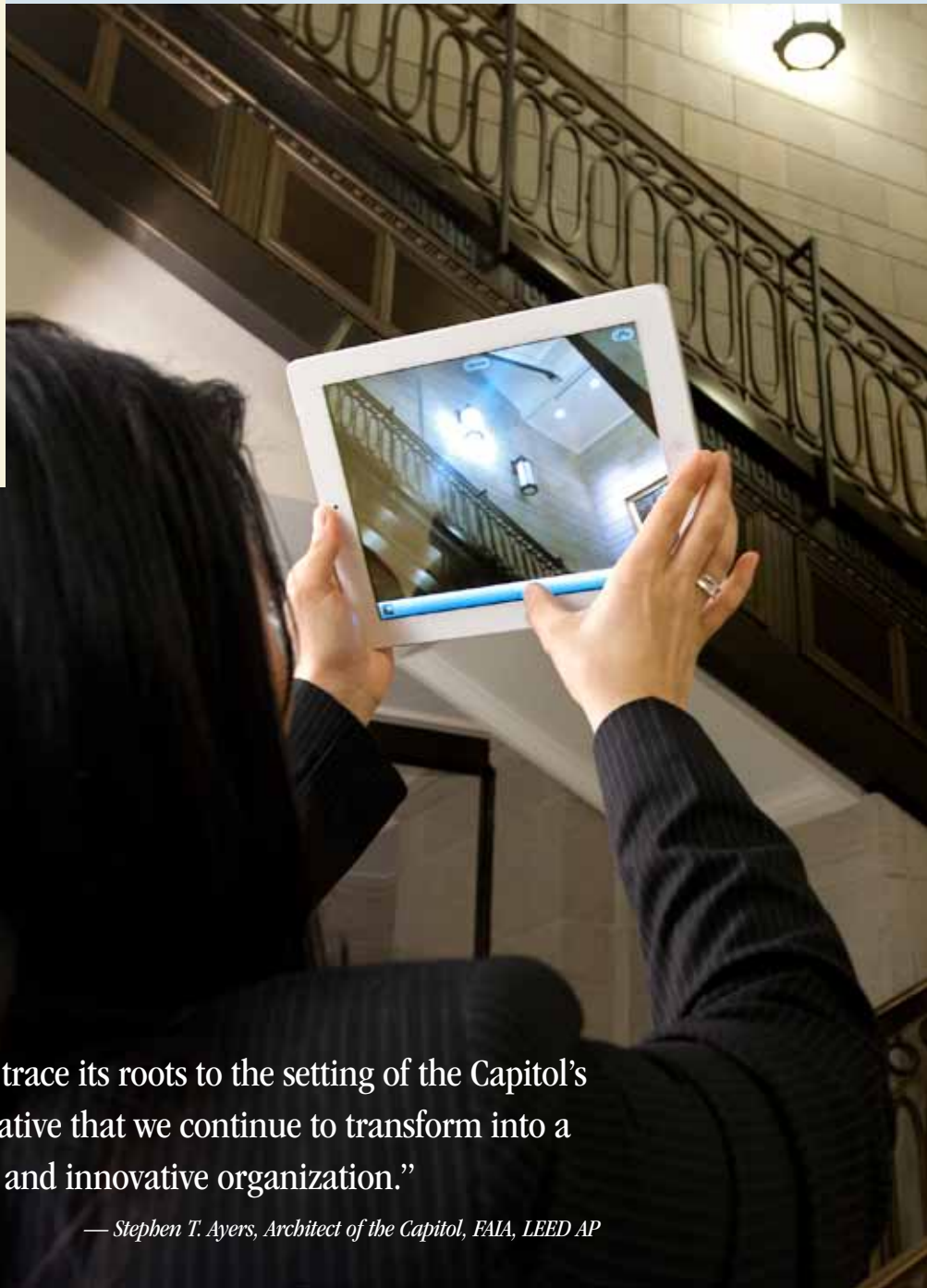
I am counting on each and every one of you to make our shared vision a reality.

Stephen T. Ayers, FAIA, LEED AP
Architect of the Capitol

Serve — Preserve — Inspire



Achieving the **Future** *by Building on Legacy*



“Although our organization can trace its roots to the setting of the Capitol’s cornerstone in 1793, it is imperative that we continue to transform into a forward thinking, collaborative and innovative organization.”

— *Stephen T. Ayers, Architect of the Capitol, FAIA, LEED AP*

Tracing its roots back more than 200 years, today the Architect of the Capitol continues a remarkable legacy, bringing to life some of the most awe-inspiring buildings and grounds in the world. The AOC pedigree includes names like Pierre L'Enfant, Benjamin Henry Latrobe, Charles Bulfinch, Thomas U. Walter and Fredrick Law Olmsted.



Photos by: Susanne Bledsoe

Capitol Building Inspector Jenna Grooms uses an iPad to conduct her inspections, giving her more time in the field to improve service to Congress.

The AOC has built a legacy of American ingenuity and craftsmanship, of caring for the buildings of Congress and the Supreme Court and sustaining their history. For many Capitol visitors, a trip to Washington may be a once in a lifetime event — and the AOC has played a part in every one of those visits, from the aesthetic to the inspirational.

Also in its legacy, the AOC and its predecessors have overcome immense challenges, including rebuilding the Capitol after it was burned by the British, extending the Capitol and constructing the Dome during the Civil War, and addressing decades of problems caused by weather, constrained resources and ever-changing demands.

The road ahead looks no different from these challenges of the past. The AOC faces challenges of fiscal austerity, aging infrastructure, baby-boomer retirements, rapid technological change and evolving customer needs.

“To meet these challenges, we must operate differently, we must be innovative,” says AOC Chief Operating Officer Christine Merdon. “Together we need to look outside the agency and bring in the best practices from across the industry, and we need to look inside for our best ideas and share them across the AOC.”

As part of this new approach to thinking differently, and to shape a vision of the future, hundreds of AOC employees have been working for the past year “from the ground up” to shape the best strategies and actions necessary to overcome the challenges facing the AOC.

These AOC employees defined the AOC’s mission: To **serve** Congress and the Supreme Court, **preserve** America’s Capitol, and **inspire** memorable experiences.

The AOC will achieve this mission with the support of every AOC employee and through the execution of a number of specific strategies outlined within four goals.

One Team, One Mission — United in Excellence



The AOC is comprised of numerous separate jurisdictions and internal service providers. If a good idea — a new way of working, an efficiency or improvement — is discovered in one area, there are few ways to ensure that the whole AOC benefits.

“This goal is to focus on working better together, on establishing frameworks for how we work,” says Goal Leader Tom Carroll, AOC chief financial officer. “When this goal is achieved, the AOC will have the scaffolding in place to ensure that every good idea can be built to the benefit of the entire organization.”

The actions that will be encompassed within this strategy include creating communities of practice, such as trade-based groups, that will share and document lessons and ideas. Additional strategies will look at standardizing quality programs, such as International Organization for Standardization (ISO) or Six Sigma, and improving knowledge management through better use of agency data.

Innovative and Empowered Workforce — Leading Change Together



The next area of focus is on each AOC employee as an individual. It is about ensuring the AOC is a workplace that enables everyone to thrive personally and professionally. If AOC employees are not satisfied in their work environments,

AOC customers are less likely to be satisfied and feel that we are delivering on our promise.

“This is also a focus on bringing more empowerment to each of us. This means we have the autonomy to bring solutions to our customers and do our jobs in new and better ways,” says Goal Leader Sandra Coffman, Capitol Visitor Center deputy chief executive officer. “Empowerment also means we have the training, tools and support to deliver and be held accountable to do so.”

The actions within this goal include creating programs that help build AOC employee careers by broadening opportunities, improving training and crafting performance goals that reward employees for supporting the mission. This goal is also about ensuring maximum flexibilities for work-life balance within the requirements of the AOC mission.

Awe-Inspiring Facilities — Unsurpassed Craftsmanship and Stewardship



The “bread-and-butter” of much of the AOC, this goal focuses on delivering the facilities that Congress, the Supreme Court and

the American people expect and that reflect the highest ideals of democracy, justice and knowledge.

“This is about making improvements in how we plan and execute our work, on how we use our materials and resources and to help us prioritize the immense workload that faces us,” says Goal Leader Robin Morey, superintendent of the Senate Office Buildings. “If we have 10 cents less, but have 20 cents more in work, we can’t say no. We have to focus on doing things smarter, being innovative — or put another way — measuring twice and cutting once.”

At the core of the AOC mission, this goal encompasses the most actions as identified by the teams of employees who shaped it over the past year.

These critical actions include using technologies to enhance preservation of facilities and landscapes. This might include using mobile platforms such as iPads to arm employees with real-time information to make on-scene decisions and allow for collaboration.

Additionally, this strategy will drive improvements in cleaning programs, maintenance programs, asset management, and ensure the AOC is leading the efforts of sustainable practices within the Capitol Hill facilities.

Extraordinary Services — Going the Extra Mile



The fourth goal of the AOC Strategic Vision focuses on ensuring that every service delivered by the AOC is done in the most effective and efficient manner possible to satisfy customers and maximize agency resources. It is also about serving the visitors and

employees of Capitol Hill in a manner that inspires and informs.

“We want to eliminate the pain-points we have in doing our work, serving each other and serving our customer. And we want to be in the business of delivering wows for everyone that works or visits us, in-person or online,” says Goal Leader Holly Shimizu, executive director of the U.S. Botanic Garden.

Actions within this goal will examine the major challenges within the AOC acquisition process and seek out improvements. Also, strategies will focus on enhancing Web and mobile technologies to allow for better sharing of information with visitors. In addition, this goal will focus on enhanced integration of public programs, taking full advantage of the wealth of knowledge and talent within, and outside, the AOC to build creative and interesting public programs.

“Together we need to look outside the agency and bring in the best practices from across the industry, and we need to look inside for our best ideas and share them across the AOC.”

Serve — Preserve — Inspire

Working together, the AOC will pursue these goals in the years ahead, constantly examining the best way to improve and continue our transformation into a forward thinking, collaborative and innovative organization.

“Ultimately, our success will be achieved by individual AOC employees pulling together as a team and deciding to do things differently to ensure they leave a legacy they are proud of,” says Merdon. “Together we will leave a legacy of service, preservation and inspiration for the American people that we can all take pride in.”

— By Matt Guilfoyle



Scan the above QR code to watch the “Serve, Preserve, Inspire” video.

Delivering Extraordinary Customer Service *One Call at a Time*

Photos by: Steve Payne



Building Services Coordinator Joel White (left) and Electronic Engineering Mechanic Kenneth Reinhardt (below) work hard to ensure client needs are met in a timely fashion.



“People think we’re like firemen, sitting and waiting for a fire,” says Building Services Supervisor Matt Washington, who oversees the AOC Service Center for the House Office Buildings. “The reality is that we’re always looking for more ways to be proactive instead of reactive.”

This approach is also shared by the AOC Service Centers in the Senate Office Buildings and the Capitol Building. All three service centers employ building inspectors who regularly visit member, committee and staff offices to provide proactive service, asking if their customers have any needs or questions.

The inspectors also constantly prowl the buildings to ensure they catch any problems when they’re still small enough to be quickly and easily resolved.

In addition, David Douglas, building services supervisor for the Senate Office Buildings, sends out a weekly

newsletter to all client offices, notifying them of any upcoming work that might affect them and of the services the AOC provides to make their operations more efficient.

In the Capitol Building, Building Services Supervisor Brandon Terry explains that requests to replace burned out light bulbs used to be one of the most common. Now, however, the building inspector ensures he gets into every major suite once a week — before the customers arrive for work — proactively looking for bulbs that are out. “It’s a big job because we have spaces that have chandeliers with 50 bulbs each in them, but we make sure we take care of it,” says Terry.

It’s not just internal customers calling about internal lights, either. “We regularly get calls that the dome light is out,” says Terry.



comes from. “On each side, the AOC provides different services,” Terry explains. In addition, they often get calls with questions about the Senate and House Office Buildings that they hand off to the correct service center.

In the House Office Buildings, Washington ensures that he and his coordinators know not only the building, but also the customers.

Senate Superintendent’s Office employees Craig Smrcina (left) and Piney Milline (below) do their part to keep the historic buildings in excellent condition.



“Our goal is to put a face with each of our names, so that when customers call in, they really know who they’re talking to.”

“We know that our staff ensure that it’s on, and that it’s likely obscured by weather conditions, but we always send someone up to check, just in case it’s gone out.”

Calls like that are a part of serving an iconic public building. “We get asked how many steps lead up to the Capitol, so we have to ask,

“Which side? Which staircase?” Terry explains that for both external callers and internal customers, “The coordinators have to be building experts, know where all the puzzle pieces fit in. They know all the quirks of the buildings.”

One function unique to the Capitol Service Center is keeping track of which side of the building a request

“Our goal is to put a face with each of our names, so that when customers call in, they really know who they’re talking to.” To that end, Washington himself walks the buildings once a month with each building inspector, a practice that the coordinators will start soon.

He also encourages the coordinators to visit customer offices. “Sometimes it is a challenge to visualize what the customer is describing, so we’ll visit their office to make sure we understand the request. This practice improves our knowledge, helps us serve our clients and most importantly builds relationships.”

The satellite offices that are located in the Cannon and Ford Buildings make this on-site service easier. “Customers call us here in the Rayburn Building and are surprised

responses are the rule, not the exception.

For potential emergencies, however, the response is even faster. Normally, calls are routed to each coordinator in a cycle in order to distribute the workload evenly, but any call from an elevator emergency phone rings on all the phones in the service center and displays the location of the elevator the call is coming from. If the call isn’t answered promptly, it rolls over to the U.S. Capitol Police to ensure a timely response.

Seen here surveying the Senate Cupola, William Pessagno opens every door from the 1st to the 4th floor of the Capitol before 5:30 a.m. daily, inspecting 320 rooms, both House and Senate chambers and galleries, and the dome.



Senate Building Services Supervisor David Douglas and Building Inspector Sharon Garavito-Lyons meet with Darla Ripchinsky, chief clerk of the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship, to discuss the temperature and humidity in the hearing room.

when two minutes later someone shows up at their office to look at their situation,” says Washington. “If possible, we answer our phones on the first ring, because the customer is hearing their second ring when it rings for the first time here.” Speedy

In the Senate Office Buildings, Douglas works to ensure a similarly speedy response time. He measures the number of times callers hang up before their call is answered. At the start of 2011, it was at an already low 4.4 percent, but by the end of the

year, the Senate service coordinators had cut that by more than half, to a remarkable 1.46 percent. Continued awareness is a big key to this success.

They achieved that milestone while staying open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and taking 25,869 calls, processing 14,131 work orders and 3,570 special event requests. While these numbers are impressive, they pale in comparison to the over 100,000 keys that the service center tracks to ensure the security of the buildings and all those who work and play in them.

Yes, play, because the Senate service coordinators also provide service to the Senate Child Care Center as well as the Daniel Webster Senate

Page Dormitory and the Robert Taft Memorial and Carillion. No matter the age of the customer, Douglas and his coordinators treat them equally.

“We will do whatever we can to get our customers what they need. The words *don't*, *won't* and *can't* should never be in our vocabulary,” explains Douglas. “We care about them, so we make sure we listen carefully to get our customers what they need to do their jobs.”

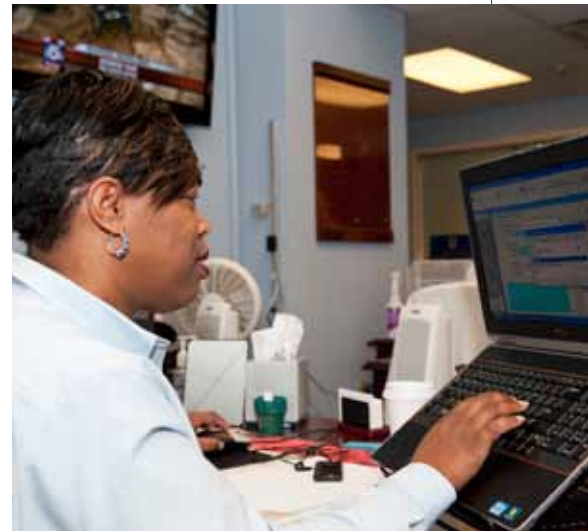
This care is evident to Senate clients as shown in the responses to the annual customer satisfaction

survey. In 2010, the overall rating was 96.8 percent, up from 94.9 percent in 2005, and customers often include comments similar to this one: “The staff are courteous, responsive, helpful, and a pleasure to deal with.... The Special Functions division is great! We have to make many changes in our schedule — something out of our control — and they adapt beautifully.”

Even though responses like this show that service center clients are satisfied across Capitol Hill, Washington, Terry and Douglas are pressing ahead, now

meeting monthly to discuss how they can proactively improve business processes and customer service.

Just as the building inspectors search for wear and tear, defects, and hazards to safeguard the buildings and their occupants, so too do these three building services supervisors and their service coordinators look



House Office Buildings employees Riff Lanier (left) and Monica Neal (above) understand that meeting customer needs is the top priority for the AOC Service Centers.

as far ahead as possible. “We do everything possible to assist callers, building occupants and guests with their needs and questions, including trying to anticipate what they need next,” says Douglas. “It’s important to ensure they leave us with the feeling that we care.”

— *By Franklin Bradley*

“We do everything possible to assist callers, building occupants and guests with their needs and questions.”

Enticing Educational Initiatives



Photo by: Chuck Badal

Tell me and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand.

Native American Saying

U.S. Botanic Garden

“We don’t have pandas.” That’s the challenge that U.S. Botanic Garden (USBG) Education Specialist Libby Rhoads and all of the AOC’s educators and public programmers face as they try to entice course participants to learn more about the Capitol and Grounds beyond what they see on a standard tour.

Rhoads, who began working for the AOC in 2008 as an intern through the George Washington Museum Education Program, is in charge of preparing the USBG’s

CVC Volunteer Marty Schaller (left) shows two young visitors what the workers who built the Capitol wore everyday. USBG Education Specialist Libby Rhoads (below) participates in the USBG Earth Day 2011 cooking demonstration.



Photo Courtesy of: USBG

inspiring range of educational programs that encourage people to investigate plants and the science of plants. The USBG offers a slew of programs ranging from formal classroom events like lectures and horticulture workshops — led by Executive Director Holly Shimizu

A young visitor decorates the journal of her visit to the U.S. Capitol.

and Conservation and Sustainability Horticulturist Ray Mims, among others — to programming for children, including craft activities, science fair prep workshops and the Sprouts Program that introduces 3 to 5 year-olds to plant science. All of these programs tie back to the mission of the USBG, which is to show people how important plants are and how they play a critical role in all of our lives.

Often visitors find themed “discovery” carts in the USBG Conservatory that invite them to delve more deeply into plant-related topics such as sustainability, carnivorous plants and even chocolate. Rhoads works with her colleagues, including USBG Curator Bill McLaughlin, Botanist Kyle Wallick and other horticulture staff to make sure that the information offered on the carts is relevant and reflects the plants that are currently on display. USBG volunteers typically staff the carts and interact with visitors.

To generate interest in botany and plant science at schools, the USBG offers a variety of programs for students as well as teachers. “We want to encourage students to think about plant science and possibly pursue it as a career,” says Rhoads. A teacher night offered last year in conjunction with the DC Environmental Education Consortium attracted 200 teachers



Photo by: Chuck Badal

who were given information on how to integrate plants into their curricula. An online school garden wizard is available to those schools that choose to set up school gardens, and there is even a public plant hotline manned by Wallick and other horticulture staff.

Students may participate in a variety of programs including a two-week Hands-On Plant Science (HOPS) program. The USBG works with DC Public Schools and Beacon House, a non-profit serving at-risk children in the Edgewood Terrace community in Washington, D.C., to host about 80 students from underserved areas each summer as part of HOPS. It’s a half-day program that includes an organic lunch and transportation to and from the USBG.

For preschoolers, the popular Sprouts Program demonstrates to the very young the importance of plants. On their own, students can become

junior botanists using a USBG-supplied backpack filled with tools to facilitate their exploration of the Conservatory.

Capitol Visitor Center

New this spring, the Capitol Visitor Center (CVC) is offering an invaluable resource for young people who visit the Capitol. The CVC’s Public Programs Coordinator Maria Marable-Bunch created the student self-guide entitled, “My Capitol.”

“So many students visit the Capitol between March and June that we had to find a way to serve them collectively — that is how the idea of the ‘student self-guide’ came about,” says Marable-Bunch. “We wanted to enhance their visit to the Capitol and give them a way to link back to the Capitol from their classrooms.” The guide includes questions about the Capitol and the answers can be found on the CVC’s website, visitthecapitol.gov.



Photo by: Chuck Badal

At a CVC workshop, Public Programs Coordinator Maria Marable-Bunch describes resources available to teachers that can be used before, during and after field trips to the Capitol.

For the first time last December, the Visitor Center offered a hands-on educational activity during a week devoted to special activities associated with exploring historic journals. Along with attending lectures and talks about historic journals, visitors could decorate their own journals at a table set up outside of the Visitor Center's North Gift Shop. Over the course of the week, about 300 adults and children decorated their own journals of their visit to the Capitol. "The space and the activity reminded me of sitting around a comfy kitchen table," says CVC Public Programs Coordinator Andrea Lewis, who developed and oversaw the activity.

As a basis for comparison, Lewis provided copies of historic journals written by Quartermaster General Montgomery C. Meigs, who supervised the building of the Capitol extensions and Dome, and Assistant Doorkeeper Isaac Bassett

Along with attending lectures and talks about historic journals, visitors could decorate their own journals at a table set up outside of the Visitor Center's North Gift Shop.



Photo by: Chuck Badal

Reference materials were on hand for visitors participating in the CVC's journal activity.

whose notes during his 64 years working in the Senate provide a firsthand account of the 19th century Senate.

"I was surprised by the number of adults who sat down and started working on a journal of their visit," says Lewis. "They took it quite seriously and felt very comfortable working with us to decorate their journals with pictures of the Capitol."

For teachers, Marable-Bunch worked with CVC Webmaster Jason Hendricks to launch a series of online resources on visitthecapitol.gov, including

classroom activities, lesson plans, pre-visit materials and fun activities students can participate in before or while they are at the Capitol. The materials were well-received by teachers who participated in a workshop the Visitor Center hosted in December in conjunction with the National Council for Social Studies and the House of Representatives. "The teachers were so excited about what they heard and saw that some said they were going to go back to their classrooms and teach the material on Monday morning," says Marable-Bunch.

Like staff at the USBG, Marable-Bunch and Lewis have undertaken a cart program to pique interest in the construction of the Capitol. "People use the cart in so many different

ways, and you hear so many stories,” says Lewis. “They’ll pick up a brick that we use to demonstrate Capitol building materials and start talking about living in brick houses all of their lives.”

Capitol.gov

The newest addition to the array of educational products offered by the AOC is capitol.gov, a microsite created to give visitors an in-depth preview of what to expect prior to their Capitol Hill visit. According to Senior Web Editor Lori Westley, the site, which was launched in October 2010, is used mostly by middle school students and teachers who want to take advantage of AOC’s “behind the scenes” videos, a timeline of the construction of the Capitol’s buildings and grounds, and a variety of interactive features.

“The information on aoc.gov does a great job of targeting the needs of scholars and researchers — but capitol.gov allows us to package this information in a more accessible way for young people who either visit the Capitol or who study government in school,” explains Westley.

According to Westley, who dove into this project as soon as she began working for the AOC in February

“We are continually trying to figure out what students really need from us.”

2010, former AOC Historian Bill Allen was instrumental in preparing the Capitol timeline, and the AOC Curator’s Office contributed to the site through photography, writing and editing. The microsite has been so successful that it won a prestigious “Webby” award for best government site from the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences.

“We are continually trying to figure out what students really need from us,” says Westley. “Our analytics and the blogs of students and teachers show that capitol.gov is often being used during what’s called ‘Web quests.’” Like an online scavenger hunt, a Web quest is created by teachers to get students to research topics online, like Roman influences on design in the United States. Information like this gives Westley critical insight that she will use to refine the microsite to address the needs of its users.

The enthusiasm of Rhoads, Marable-Bunch, Lewis and Westley is palpable as they work to find innovative ways

to share the history, science and art of the Capitol with young and old visitors alike. And although the Capitol does not offer “cute fuzzies,” as Rhoads says, these educational offerings are clearly enticing.

— *By Sharon Gang*

Photo Courtesy of: USBG



Photo by: Chuck Badal





Photo by: Dewitt Roseborough

New Era of Doing Business with **Tony Hutcherson**

Negotiating complex contracts is nothing new to the Architect of the Capitol's new Chief of Acquisition and Material Management Anthony "Tony" Hutcherson. He brings to the Architect of the Capitol more than 32 years of procurement experience working for the Air Force, Navy and White House. As a procurement officer, Hutcherson has procured everything from toilet paper to top-secret items. The fact that he has not taken sick leave since becoming a civil servant in 1999 is a good example of his commitment to his work and to his colleagues, clients and contractors.

Ask Contract Specialist Carmelita Wesley to describe Hutcherson and the word "good" is used repeatedly. "Tony is a good guy. He's faithful. He's a good friend. He has friends all over the world. He's smart and advanced in his field. He's a good, good guy."

Hutcherson is a hard worker but he also likes to inject humor into the job.

Hutcherson is a hard worker but he also likes to inject humor into the job. Jovial, Hutcherson uses the quote made famous by comedian Larry the Cable Guy, "get 'er done" to encourage his team.

What was formerly known as the Procurement Division has been reorganized and is now called the Acquisition and Material Management Division (AMMD). According to Hutcherson, "Without customers, there is no reason for the Acquisition and Material Management Division to exist. You can't tell customers no and let them walk away. We have to explain to them why it can't be done a certain way and then work with them to find a solution."

Only a few months into his job, Hutcherson sat down with *Foundations & Perspectives* to talk about his background and new role. Hutcherson is still adjusting to life at the AOC, but he brings extensive experience and humor to the job.

What should people know about your role as the Chief of Acquisition and Material Management Division?

I lead and manage the division; I'm the "orchestrator," if you will.

How does your division support the mission of the AOC?

We are the agency's procurement arm for commodities, services and construction. A new element of the division is material management, and we hope to be able to soon fill some of the positions in the division that will support that role.

As the Chief of AMMD, what special challenges do you face and how do you plan to handle them?

There is a balance between supporting the customer and executing requirements that conform to laws, regulations and policies. My focus is on customer support, but I have to ensure that at the end of the day I have achieved that with the balance of compliance.

What is your long-term vision for the AMMD?

A fully staffed procurement and logistical function that meets all AOC needs in a timely and qualitative manner.

What qualities do you look for in your staff, and what is your approach towards managing them?

I look for people who share my view of customer support, and I give them as much latitude and authority as they need to successfully perform their duties. I am very much a delegator of authority and responsibility.

What advice would you give to AOC employees who have to work with your office?

To understand that our business practices have changed over the last two years and will continue to change in the future, but know that in the end we will ensure that their needs are met.

What is the AOC doing to promote business opportunities for minority or women suppliers and contractors?

The AOC has a Small Business Set-Aside Program for all projects estimated at \$100,000 or below and a Small Business Subcontracting Program that requires subcontracting plans on all construction awards exceeding \$1.5 million, and architectural and engineering services exceeding \$650,000 (if the prime contractor is a large business). We also have annual goals for awards to small business, small disadvantaged business, women-owned business, veteran owned business, service-disabled veteran-owned business and historically underutilized business zones.

It is easy to assume that your group is responsible for buying things like computers, uniforms and cleaning products. What types of products or services are you responsible for that may surprise our readers?

Procuring busts of Vice President Gore and Vice President Cheney, mural preservation and restoration, and utility tunnel repairs.

What have you enjoyed most at the AOC?

This is a very employee-focused agency, and decisions are always made with the effect on the employee in mind.

“This is a very employee-focused agency, and decisions are always made with the effect on the employee in mind.”

Can you highlight some of the accomplishments your office has made in 2011?

AMMD had one of the highest fiscal year contract obligation rates ever (99.7%), and we also successfully contracted for the AOC Security Programs radio project facility and antenna sites.

— By Shalley Kim

Getting to Know Tony

Title: Chief, Acquisition and Material Management Division

Education: B.S. in Occupational Education from Southern Illinois University

What do you like best about the AOC? It’s an employee-focused agency, with an understanding that the mission doesn’t get accomplished without good folks who are happy to come to work every day.

Favorite movie: Perfect Storm

Last book read: Deliver Us from Evil

Favorite weekend pastime: Sporting events, either high school or college — and sometimes both!

Favorite sports team: University of Virginia Cavaliers

Something your colleagues don’t know about you: I know I don’t look old enough to be one, but I am a grandfather...and have been for over five years!



AOC and Phelps High School Partnership:

Discovering the Joys of Teaching — and Learning

Photos by: Chuck Badal



“Hey, AOC Lady!”

Greetings such as these ring out at Phelps Architecture, Construction and Engineering (ACE) High School in Northeast Washington, D.C., whenever Mary Jean Pajak, management analyst for AOC’s Business Transformation Division, comes to visit. Her efforts have resulted in the AOC being a constant presence at the school since it reopened in 2008, after undergoing a \$63 million renovation and the retooling of its curriculum.

“My husband, who is an architect in D.C., first brought the school to my attention,” says Pajak. “He was volunteering with the local AIA [American Institute of Architects] chapter to create an architecture

curriculum for Phelps, and thought it might be something the AOC would be interested in exploring. I then spoke to Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers about it, and he gave me the green light to pursue a partnership with Phelps.”

The AOC’s first venture with Phelps was to create and teach an architecture class to first-year students in January 2009. The AOC’s involvement has increased over time, with various trades — welding, carpentry, painting, plastering, sheet metal, elevators, insulation, plumbing, heavy equipment, heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration, electronics and electrical work, as well as safety — getting involved in early 2010. At the present time, 28 AOC employees teach 15 short courses at Phelps during the course of the school year.

“It’s been so cool to see how the AOC’s involvement with Phelps has spread to every jurisdiction,” says Pajak. “For three years, employees across the organization have shared their talents and expertise with these young people. I think both our employees and the students get a lot out of the partnership.”



Students watch as Theon Parker (above) illustrates the correct and safe method of joining multiple wires together using wire nuts. Tove Anderson (left) helps a student with his column design.

Olatundun Teyibo, the career and technical education coordinator at Phelps, agrees. “The students really benefit from exposure to real-life skills and experiences,” says Teyibo. “Classes taught by AOC employees are like show-and-tell, but more meaningful — they provide students opportunities to utilize higher order thinking skills and the hands-on activities challenge students to use analytical, creative and practical skills.”



“The students really benefit from exposure to real-life skills and experiences.”

A 12th grade student, who is in the first class to graduate from the newly reopened Phelps, is grateful for the many different experiences the school has provided during his high school years. “I appreciate the opportunities we have here. It’s opened up a whole new world to me.”

For one AOC employee, teaching courses at Phelps today is a lot like a classic 1970s television sitcom, minus the crazy bellbottom jeans.

James Myers, the work leader in the Capitol Power Plant Insulation Shop, graduated from Phelps Vocational School in 1975 and concentrated in auto body and car repair. From noon until 3 p.m. every school day, Myers would spend time working in an auto body shop as part of his education.

At the time Myers was a student, Phelps was also a males-only trade school. “Phelps was very different then — it was very formal,” says



The sampling of courses is designed to help students choose what their major will be the following year.

Myers. “The principal was a former military officer, and he instituted a lot of rules.”

In 1990, Myers came to the AOC and started working in the Library of Congress Paint Shop. Two years ago, he was asked if he would be interested in teaching courses about heavy equipment and insulation at Phelps.

“Since I’m an alumni, it was like that show ‘Welcome Back, Kotter,’ where the teacher comes back to his old neighborhood and the same school he went to in order to teach,” explains Myers. “I’ve lived in Northeast D.C. my entire life and I’m back teaching at the school I graduated from. Sometimes I get flashbacks when walking around the school’s hallways, even though it’s really changed since I was in school here.”

Indeed, the physical look of the school has been transformed and the curriculum updated and expanded. First-year students are required to take a survey class that exposes them to each of the eight majors, spending two weeks with each concentration. The sampling

During the HVAC&R course, students get to practice safe wiring of an HVAC system simulation training board using actual low voltages and HVAC parts.

of courses is designed to help students choose what their major will be the following year. The goal is to prepare students through rigorous study for college or to command first-rate wages in the construction industry after graduation.

“I really like sharing my knowledge with the students and helping them find their calling,” says Myers. “When I was a student, others shared what they knew with me, so it’s a great opportunity to give back and guide the next generation.”

What exactly does the local landmark Ben's Chili Bowl have to do with electrical circuits?

Theon Parker, general supervisor of facility operations at the Library of Congress, happens to know the answer. It's an example he uses to grab the attention of 9th grade students considering the heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration (HVAC&R) field as a course of study. Parker teaches the class six days per year at Phelps.

In order to explain the concept of complete electrical circuits during his lesson, Parker created an example he thought the students would remember and understand. "When I teach, I try to relate the curriculum to something they encounter every day and explain how HVAC&R is a part of their lives from the moment they wake up in the morning," says Parker. This is Parker's third year teaching the HVAC&R presentation to the first-year students. "Some of the older kids I previously taught come up to me in the hall and say they remember all about Harry and Harriet."

The story of Harry and Harriet is an analogy for how complete electrical circuits work. As Parker explains it: "Harry (power) goes off to work in the morning to his job at Ben's Chili Bowl (electrical load). Once he leaves for the day, he must go back home (neutral) — just like an electrical circuit, which must loop back to its home. But let's say that on payday Friday, Harry leaves work

with his check, takes a shortcut and doesn't make it home to Harriet. That's a major problem, similar to an actual electrical short circuit."

When Parker teaches, he's not only helping students learn about HVAC&R systems, he is also trying to convey the skills and characteristics that they need to develop a career. "I've always felt that 'Each One Should Teach One' — meaning that it's my duty to pass my skills on to someone else, like others did with me when I was young," says Parker.

Parker truly relishes the opportunity to teach. He's been a football coach

for 20 years and over the past five years has coached 9th and 10th grade students at Charles Herbert Flowers High School in Prince George's County, Maryland.

"It's a challenge to take a group of individuals at the beginning of the year and mold them into a team," says Parker. "But it's incredibly satisfying to work out a play on paper and then see the kids

Capitol Building Sheet Metal Mechanic Mark Focht works with a student during his sheet metal class.



“When I teach, I try to relate the curriculum to something they encounter every day.”

implement the play on the field, just like you've planned." Parker's not just teaching football techniques on the field, however. He is also teaching life skills, the same skills he tries to include in his courses at Phelps.

Similarly, when AOC Project Manager Eugene Poole teaches the Orders of Architecture class at Phelps, he tries to impart insights beyond what is in the curriculum. During a recent classroom experience with mostly first-year students, Poole encouraged his students to "have a passion for what you do in life — if you don't have a dream, life will pass you by."

Poole then asked each student what they want to be when they grow up. Their answers were revealing:

"Have a passion for what you do in life — if you don't have a dream, life will pass you by."

"An architect."

"An engineer."

"A welder."

"A congresswoman."

The Orders of Architecture course was developed four years ago by a team of architects in AOC Planning and Project Management (PPM), including Project Manager Marilyn Wong-Wittmer. "The course links

the past to the present and future of architecture with knowledge of classical architecture — similar to what we do here at the AOC," says Wong-Wittmer.

The lesson plan is split into three sections: students first hear a presentation about the five orders of

Theon Parker discusses with the students the importance of communication and safety among work team members when working with live electrical circuits.



architecture, showcasing examples from Capitol Hill; then they take a test to measure what they learned; and finally, they complete a hands-on activity where they make their own column design.

“We really see a lot of creativity during the hands-on exercise, from Spiderman creations, to using initials, to incorporating the Phelps panther mascot,” explains Wong-Wittmer. “But the real thrust of the activity is to get the students to think about what they’ve learned, realize that it surrounds their daily life, and then to make it their own.”

During a recent course, Poole gave the students the hands-on assignment with these instructions: “I want to see something with shock value — create something unique and stimulating. Create something that will impress me.”

One student’s column creation in particular stood out for its detail and artistry. It was obvious he had internalized the lesson and put thought into his concept. He titled his drawing, “Striving for Success based on the American Dream.”

An Equal Partnership

In the years to come, Mary Jean Pajak and Olatundun Teyibo hope to strengthen and increase the AOC’s involvement at Phelps. On June 8, 2012, the first class of students will graduate from Phelps ACE High School, an achievement for the seniors as well as for the teachers.



Architect of the Capitol Stephen T. Ayers will deliver the commencement address during this historic occasion.

“I am honored that I was chosen to speak to these accomplished students,” says Ayers. “The future is bright for each of them, whatever career path they ultimately decide to pursue. We hope that this may even include future employment with the AOC.”

For the AOC, one of the strongest benefits of the partnership is that it increases the pool of potential job applicants, especially for highly specialized trades such as plasterwork. And for the students at Phelps, the courses taught by AOC employees help communicate business culture and expectations, as well as important skills they can apply to future educational and occupational pursuits.

Says Teyibo, “Our partnership with the AOC is critical to our school and especially the success of our CTE [Career Technical Education] program.”

Mary Jean Pajak, Architect of the Capitol Stephen Ayers, Phelps Principal Michael Johnson and Olatundun Teyibo continue to work to strengthen the AOC and Phelps partnership.

For Phelps alumni James Myers, “teaching at Phelps is a learning experience for me as well — I’m learning from the students every time I’m there, so we’re learning from one another.” He sums up his and AOC’s involvement when he says: “It’s a joyous and harmonious experience.”

— By Kristen Wandell



Scan this QR code to watch a one-minute video of AOC employees teaching at Phelps ACE High School.



Photos by: Susanne Bledsoe

Office Services Division staff are ready to assist their fellow AOC employees (from left to right): Prophet Jones, Charles Allen, Gregory Smith, Henry McAlpine and Bryon Gurley.

At Your Service: **Spotlight on Office Services Division**

In the new Architect of the Capitol Strategic Vision, one of the Strategic Goals is to “provide extraordinary client services,” and you need not look any further than the Office Services Division for an example of how the AOC is accomplishing that goal. While the goal speaks to direct client support, Office Services staff know that by supporting fellow AOC employees, they are also supporting Congress and the nation’s Capitol.

According to organizational charts from the 1960s, the “Office Service Section” started out as a messenger

service — drivers were primarily responsible for shuttling blueprints to and from the AOC. They were also responsible for delivering the payroll — which was done manually — to the Department of Treasury, and filing and copying all of the AOC’s project drawings and blueprints. However, as more and more tasks were done on computers, the roles and duties of the Office Services staff changed to meet the new requirements.

Today, the Office Services Division staff specializes in providing AOC

employees with the support services they need to do their jobs effectively. What they do is so seamless, some of their AOC colleagues aren’t even aware that they have offices both in the Capitol and the Ford House Office Building. However, the AOC couldn’t perform its daily functions in support of Congress without their able assistance.

For example, do you ever wonder how mail ends up in your inbox? Twice each day, one of the five Office Services staff members picks up the mail after it’s been screened



offsite, sorts it, and delivers it to all of the AOC's jurisdictions. They also process the AOC's mass mailings — taking care of everything including making copies, stuffing envelopes, adding the required postage and dropping off the mailing at the Post Office.

In addition, they ensure that all official correspondence is copied for inclusion in the AOC's archives and is delivered to the intended recipient, whether that means putting the letter in the mail or hand-delivering it to a Member of Congress's office.

Are you in need of office supplies? Simply call or email Office Services, or fill out the supply order form on AOCLink found in the "Office Services Division" section, and they'll have what you need — often by the next business day.

"Over the past several years, we've moved to an online request process," explains Gregory Smith, Office Services supervisor. "So, if you need office supplies, or if your copier needs toner, you can send an email to Office Services and we'll respond and fill your request as quickly as we can. Our customers appreciate the fast turnaround, and this allows us to better track the requests we're getting each day."

Their customers are noticing the improvements. "Their operations have changed significantly in recent years," notes Lauri Smith, AOC budget officer. "They're now more customer service oriented. They were good before, but they're outstanding now. I greatly appreciate the level of service they provide and how helpful they are when we're turning around important documents in a very short amount of time. Office Services is one of those organizations that is often behind the scenes, but without their services and support, the AOC would not function as effectively as it does. Kudos to the staff for providing

such a great level of service that has such a positive impact on the organization."

For the Office Services staff, customer service is just part of the job.

"I subscribe to General George Patton's philosophy when it comes to customer service. He said, 'Always do more than is required of you.' That's what we strive to do each and every day," notes Smith.

Henry McAlpine, a 21-year veteran of the division, agrees. "A lot has changed over the years. Our workload has gotten heavier and we're more dependent on computers and technology. But our mission is always to do what's best for the AOC, Congress and our nation's Capitol."

— *By Eva Malecki*

The Office Services Division staff specializes in providing AOC employees with the support services they need to do their jobs effectively.

Need to reach Office Services?

Call: 202.228.1209

Email: OfficeServices@aac.gov



Photos by: Steve Payne

Doing Good: **Employees Give of Themselves**

Every two seconds in America, someone — somewhere in the country — needs blood. Just one donation can save up to three lives.

In AOC General Counsel, two employees are making a difference and doing their part to help.



For almost 40 years, Deputy General Counsel Kevin Mulshine has been a blood donor. He started giving blood in 1973 when he was a Capitol Hill intern for a Member of the House of Representatives. “Giving blood is something you can spare if you are otherwise healthy — it is something you can literally give of yourself,” Kevin says.

Every few months at the American Red Cross E Street Donor Center in Washington, D.C., Kevin undergoes a process called platelet donation. The process takes Kevin’s blood from one arm and then passes the blood — about a fourth of a pint at a time — through a sophisticated cell-separating machine. The platelets are collected by the machine, which then safely returns all remaining blood components back into Kevin’s other arm. Since the process takes longer than a traditional whole blood donation, Kevin often passes the time by watching movies or TV episodes on a portable video player.

Kevin Mulsbine (left) is proud to help others by being a blood donor. A Red Cross volunteer (right) works at the blood drive sign-in table in the Ford Building.

“Giving blood is something you can spare if you are otherwise healthy — it is something you can literally give of yourself.”

Many physicians often prefer donations such as this because one single platelet donation can be worth 12 to 18 whole blood donations. Recipients of these donations are often patients undergoing chemotherapy or organ transplants and therefore have weakened immune systems.

At the AOC, employees may receive up to three hours of administrative leave for travel and recuperation purposes when donating blood offsite and when compensation is not received.

When General Counsel Secretary Gloria Grinder donates blood, she is often able to do so in the Ford House Office Building, where the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) and the Red Cross team up to host blood drives. “It’s nice to be able to donate in the same building where you work,” says Gloria.

Prior to joining the AOC in 1990, Gloria worked for 10 years as a licensed practical nurse on a medical surgical floor. The job was very physically demanding and when Gloria felt she needed a career change, she opted to work for the federal government. “My experience as a nurse definitely played a part in wanting to be a blood donor,” says Gloria. “It’s a small thing you can do to help others.”

While most people can be blood donors, only five percent of the eligible population actually donates — making Kevin and Gloria true heroes, even if they don’t consider their efforts extraordinary. For those who



might be squeamish about the process, Gloria explains: “For me, it’s never been painful and has always been very easy.”

Gloria adds that she always encourages first-time donors to eat well a few days before and after they donate blood — especially to increase their intake of iron-rich foods — and to drink lots of fluids afterwards.

“If I ever needed blood, I’d feel good knowing that other people did the same thing to help me,” says Gloria. Adds Kevin, “You don’t know who will receive it, but you know it will go to someone who needs it — and that’s a good feeling.”

— *By Kristen Wandell*

Interested in Donating Blood?



Call 1-800-RED-CROSS or scan the QR code to find out about platelet donation opportunities in the DC area.

To find out more information about the CBO/Red

Cross Blood Drive, contact Bob Shackleton at bobsh@cbo.gov or by phone at 202.226.2760.



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Captured on Instagram: Tulips in bloom in front of one of the historic Olmsted Fountains on the East Front. For more photos, latest news and history follow AOC on Twitter: @uscapitol.