Helping Out
Employees Donate Time During Shutdown

Lasting Legacy
Avis Buchanan Had a Big Impact as Union President

Up to the Challenge
Employees Ready to Reach CFC Goals
On Oct. 1, federal employees received word that Congress had not approved a budget and the government was shutting down. Employees went home that day and were barred from performing any official work for the next 15 days.

Many Census Bureau employees used the shutdown to continue to serve the public – volunteering their time to charities, communities and schools.

**Dolly García Jové**, who works as a geographer in the Geography Division, normally spends every other weekend helping to lead food distribution to senior citizens at the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments in Washington. During the shutdown, she was able to increase her time at Martha’s Table, a nonprofit organization that helps low-income and homeless children, families and individuals by providing education, nutrition, clothing and family-support programs.

“It felt good to give back to the community and to do something to be productive, not just sitting at home watching TV,” García Jové said.

On Oct. 14, President Obama also made the trip to Martha’s Table. García Jové met the President and helped him make bologna sandwiches. She stood next to the President as he talked to reporters about federal workers volunteering their time.

“They’re here contributing and giving back to the community, and I think that shows the kind of spirit that we have among all kinds of federal workers all across the country – people who dedicate their lives to public service,” Obama said.

You can see the video of the President’s remarks with García Jové standing next to him on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3avl9yEen5w>.

**Cynthia Hall**, who works in the Equal Employee Opportunity Office as an assistant with the Alternative Dispute Resolution Program, spent her time volunteering as a “lunch lady” at Independent Baptist Academy in Clinton, Md.

“When the furlough began, I figured what better place to spend my time than at the school in the lunchroom,” Hall said. “I have three kids there, and they are always excited to see me in the cafeteria in hopes that they would get a bigger serving of food … I gave them extra veggies.”

**Samuel Glover** of the Geography Division’s Spatial Products Software Branch spent his time in scuba gear. He was helping the Institute of Maritime History’s efforts in looking on the Potomac River floor for the wreck of a vessel lost more than 200 years ago.

Around 1790, a celebration in Alexandria, Va., featured a parade of boats. Among the boats was the Federalist, a 15-foot vessel rigged with masts, sails and fake cannon – a floating model of a naval ship. After the parade, a naval officer tried to sail down the Potomac to Mount Vernon to give the boat to President George Washington. But a storm came up and sank the boat, supposedly, within sight of its destination.
Glover spent four days aboard the Roper trying to find the lost wooden vessel. The crew scanned the river bottom with sonar, and when a potential target appeared, two to six divers would descend in relays to examine it. Sadly, they came up empty every time.

“We didn’t expect to find much more than ballast stones, arranged in the shape of a boat hull. But you never know,” Glover said. “Visibility was absolutely zero, so the examinations were entirely by feel.”

You can follow the Institute of Maritime History’s search for the Federalist and other lost ships at <http://maritimehistory.org/>.

Adria Thomas, a public affairs specialist in the Public Information Office, participated in a question-and-answer panel discussion titled “Why Students Should Attend College?” at Ballou STAY (School to Aid Youth) High School in Washington. She spoke to students ranging from 18 to 25 years old. Ballou is an alternative high school that provides an opportunity for D.C. residents to complete their high school education.

Craig Best, a work-at-home geographer based in Kansas City, volunteered at a couple of schools in Missouri – Prairie Point Elementary in Kansas City and Fairmount Elementary in Independence.

“Since my wife and daughter both work at local elementary schools, I decided to volunteer my time at their respective schools to help out in various ways,” he said. “One day I cut out thousands of SOAR [Show Respect, Own Your Actions, Accept Responsibility, Ready to Learn] slips, which are used to reward students for exhibiting good behaviors. Another day I worked with third grade students needing extra reading help while the next day I was working with kids to learn a new way of doing fourth grade math.”

Best said his favorite experience was helping kindergartners learn how to sound out various letter combinations.

“What made it most memorable was one cute little girl who wanted to be my ‘special helper,’” he said.

Best: OK, everybody needs to write their names at the top of their papers.
Little girl: Our teacher said we don’t have to write our names on the papers that go in our BEAR (Bring Everything Always Ready) books.
Best: If you’re having troubles with the front page, go ahead and start working on the back page and I’ll come help you.
Little girl: Our teacher said we’re not supposed to start the back page until we finish the front page.

“Yes, that day I gave the cute little girl several more opportunities to be my special helper,” Best said. “But the best part was when the cute little girl gave me a hug and thanked me when I left.”
Matt Spence, Joshuah Latimore and Katheryn Brigham volunteered with the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington.

The trio unpacked boxes of donated food and household goods and sorted them into categories – canned food, cereal, baby items, paper towels, etc. They worked for about three to four hours each time.

“I’d been wanting to volunteer for a while, but the weekend schedule for the food bank is always booked up months in advance,” Spence said. “So the furlough was a great opportunity to go during the week. I went twice – first by myself and then with Joshuah and Katheryn. Both times there were many federal workers present. I met people from NOAA and EPA in particular.”

Kurt Raschke of Population Division’s Computer Applications and Processing Staff has been interested in using technology to improve reliability, efficiency and rider experience on mass transit.

More than a dozen transit agencies serve the Washington-Baltimore region, and they have overlapping service areas, conflicting stop numbering schemes and uncoordinated schedules. For transit riders, it can be difficult to piece together journeys because the information isn’t readily available. Every transit agency maintains its own Web presence, publishes its own maps and schedules, and puts up its own signs at bus stops.

Over the past two years, Raschke has volunteered with Mobility Lab – an organization trying to make it easy for users to navigate the region’s multiple transit agencies. During the shutdown, he worked extensively on the OneBusAway mobile app, which will retrieve data from the region’s transit systems.

“We can’t solve all of the region’s transit problems, but we can help improve the quality and quantity of regionally integrated passenger information,” Raschke said.

Mobility One Director Tom Fairchild said Raschke will almost singlehandedly transform the way people will navigate public transportation in the Washington area.

“It has been nothing short of inspirational to witness Kurt’s foresight to recognize this need and dedicated work for implementing the project,” Fairchild said. “I am proud to commend Kurt’s volunteer work on our behalf.”

Mary Bucci of the Geography Division is on the board of the Friends of the Soldiers Home in Washington, and she recruits volunteers from the community to help the veterans. She helped veterans play jingo, which is a version of bingo that works with pictures and facts and helps with memory development.

“Many activities were canceled because the volunteer staff was affected by the shutdown,” Bucci said. “But I was able to get up there for a couple of our events because they are therapeutic and considered essential for the veterans who require more care.”