

THE COUNTY OF OTTAWA  
HUMAN RESOURCES ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR YEAR 2008



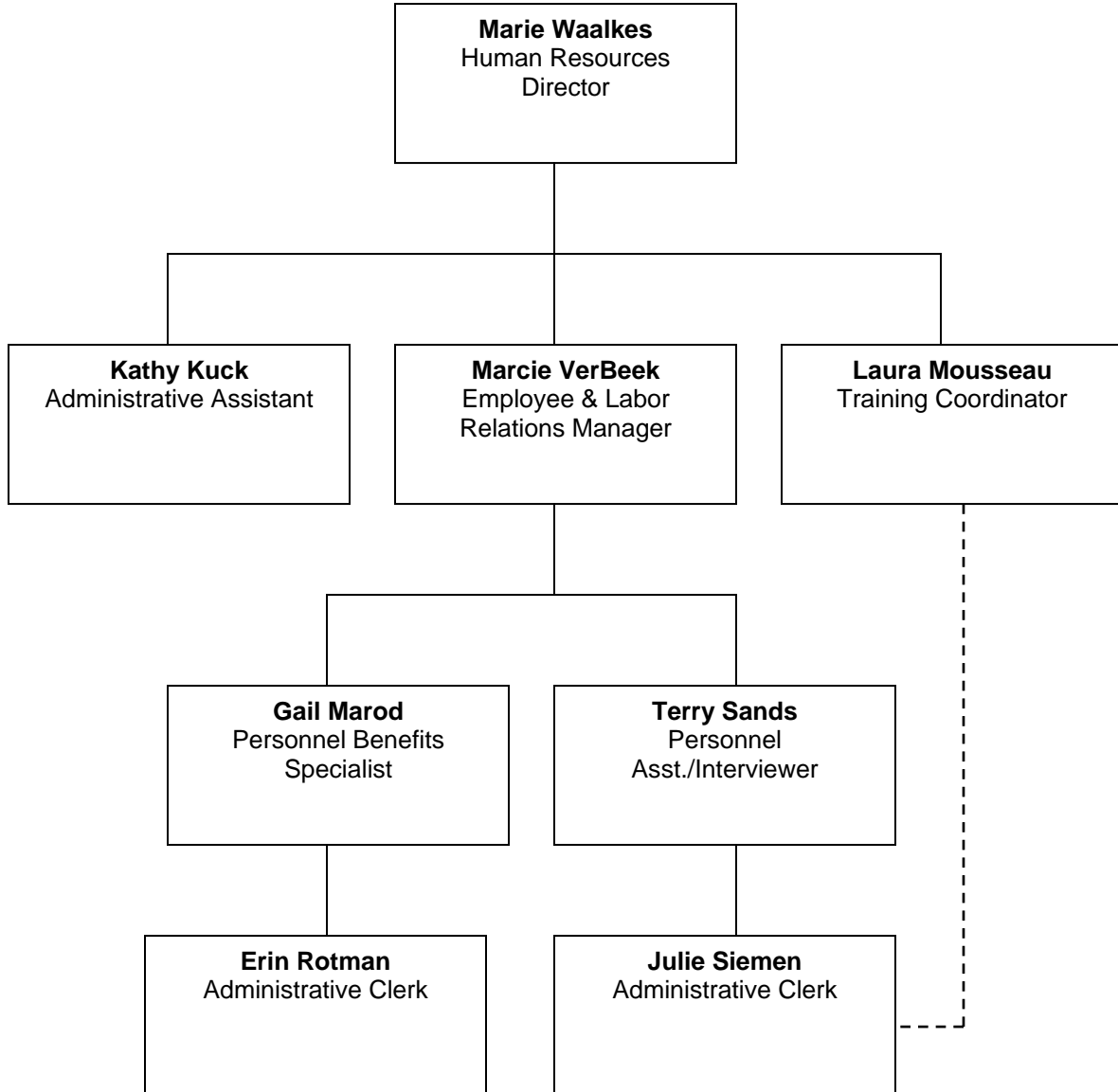
Human Resources Department  
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*The activities and programs of this department are brought to you by the members of  
the Ottawa County Board of Commissioners*

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# Human Resource Department Staff 2008



**2008 HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT'S  
ANNUAL REPORT  
TO THE OTTAWA COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**

**Mission Statement:** The Human Resources Department serves the County of Ottawa by focusing efforts on the County's most valuable asset, its employees. Human Resources does this through recruitment, hiring and retention of a diverse, qualified workforce. The Human Resources Department provides human resource direction and technical assistance, training and development, equal employment opportunities and employee/labor relation services to the County.

**Introduction:**

The current Human Resources staff is responsible for providing the delivery of a full service Human Resources program to and for the County's existing departments and staff. This is no small undertaking considering that the County's work force has 1,174 full-time, part-time and temporary employees comprised of eight different collective bargaining units, non-represented employee groups and unclassified staff.

The following is a list of functions currently being provided by the Human Resources Department: (The list is not in any order of importance.)

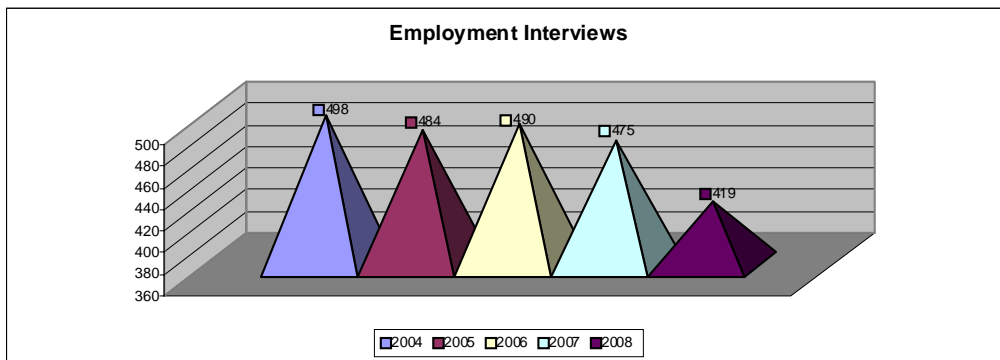
- (1) Employee Selection
  - a. On-Line Application
  - b. Applicant/Employee Development Tool
- (2) Exit Interviews
- (3) Employee Training and Development
  - a. GOLD (Growth Opportunities in Learning and Development)
  - b. Leadership Development
  - c. New Employee Orientation
  - d. Compliance Training
- (4) Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- (5) Labor Relations
  - a. Grievances
  - b. Grievance Discipline Data Base
  - c. Contract Negotiations
  - d. Contract Administration
- (6) Equal Employment Opportunity
- (7) Compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act
- (8) Benefits Administration
  - a. Health Insurance
  - b. Dental Insurance
  - c. Vision Insurance
  - d. Tuition Reimbursement
  - e. 457 Deferred Compensation Plan
  - f. Workers Compensation
  - g. MERS
  - h. Life Insurance
  - i. Salary Wage Continuation (STD/LTD)
  - j. Family Medical Leave Act
  - k. Employee Wellness Program
- (9) Employee Recognition
- (10) Wage Evaluation & Classification Study
- (11) Unemployment Insurance

Many of the functions of the department are difficult to quantify. For instance, within the function of Benefits Administration the department answers numerous employee questions during the course of a year amounting to a significant expenditure of time. However, it is not feasible to keep detailed statistics regarding the numbers, duration or subject matter of such calls. Several functions are more easily quantifiable and are given in the remainder of this report. Following are highlights of the activities in many of the major Human Resources Department's functions for 2008.

### Employee Selection:

The advertising of positions and the receipt of all employment applications is the responsibility of the Human Resources Department. A very detailed procedure for the various departments to follow in the hiring process was developed by the Human Resources Department and is outlined in Policy HR-04 Employee Selection Policy. Human Resources monitors and assures that selection policies and procedures are being followed by the individual departments. In 2008, the On-Line Application process was developed to streamline the application/interviewing/hiring process. Currently, the Personnel Assistant/Interviewer arranges and coordinates the employee selection process with the help of an Administrative Clerk. The department provides computerized typing and data entry tests with automated scoring. Human Resources maintains the "Job Hotline" (1,203 hits in 2008), an automated phone answering system through which callers can learn details about vacant County positions and County employment opportunities appear on the County's website (miottawa.org).

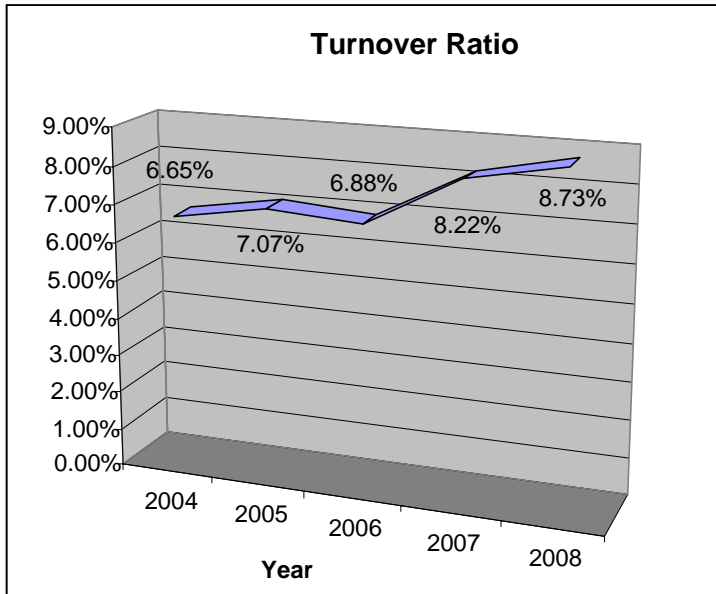
In response to 135 positions posted by the County in 2008, 3928 applications were received and screened. These numbers represent a decrease of 36 positions posted and 549 more applications received. In 2008, the department conducted 419 employment interviews resulting in the hiring of 135 employees. Of those 135 hires, 52 were promotions or transfers of existing employees and 83 were new (external) hires. The graph depicts the interview activity over the last five years.



### Exit Interviews:

In addition to conducting employment interviews the Personnel Interviewer also conducts an extensive exit interview process. Exit interviews are conducted in an effort to gain information that will result in better selection and training practices, improve working conditions, enhance supervision, and in general, further public relations by having the employee leave with a positive view of the employer. The exit interview can also be used to identify possible salary and benefit deficiencies, EEO violations, and other areas of potential legal liability such as sexual harassment.

In 2008, 81 full and part-time employees, inclusive of 18 retirees and 19 involuntary terminations, separated from County employment. As a result, the department conducted 33 exit interviews for an interview rate of 53.23%. The turnover rate for full and part-time employees was 8.73% in 2008. This is an increase in turnover from 8.22% in 2007. Ottawa County continues to represent stability as an employer to our labor force. The Chart below represents the turnover ratios for the past five years.



**Employee Training Activities for 2008:**



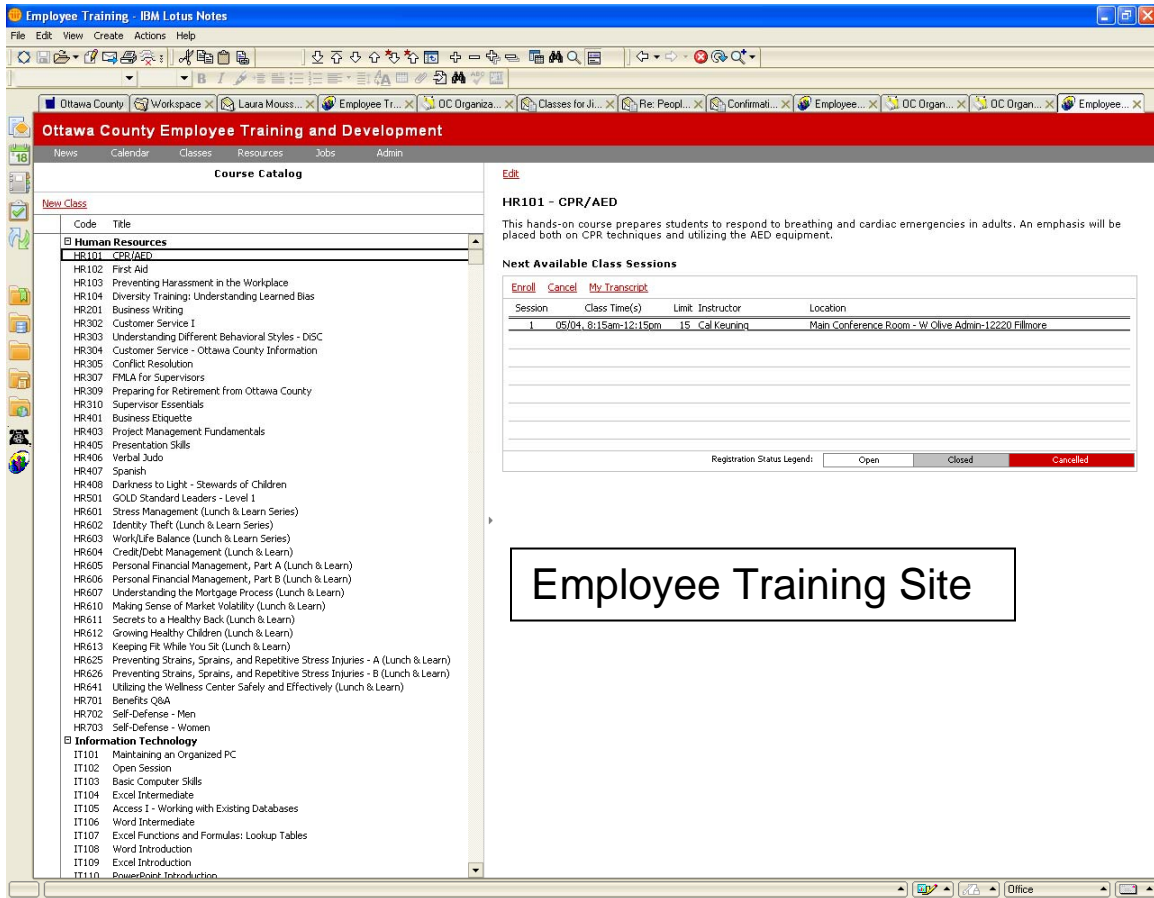
During 2008 Ottawa County began the **GOLD** (Growth Opportunities in Learning and Development) Standard Training Programs. These programs were in direct response to employee surveys regarding the need for solid, meaningful professional development and training opportunities for our employees. The GOLD Standard Training is based upon the theory that employee training and development leads to increased knowledge and skills, increased employee engagement, and increased productivity, ultimately resulting in organizational improvement.

A Training Task Force was formed with representation from all areas of the county structure to assist in designing, evaluating and marketing the new training program. This group met monthly throughout 2008 and helped move the new initiative in the right direction. They have provided ongoing ideas and training needs, attended training sessions to assist in evaluating courses and instructors, helped to redesign the orientation process and continually relayed training information to their staff members.

One of the first goals of the program was to create a leadership development program. Two groups of Ottawa County supervisors completed the GOLD Standard Leaders program in 2008. This is a three month program including learning sessions and discussion groups centered around key skills identified for Ottawa County leaders. We have made ongoing adjustments to the training throughout the course, including adding more specific Ottawa County case studies and condensing the timeframe to allow for better continuity. In 2008, the move was truly made from offering a handful of classes, mostly compliance training, to a full and comprehensive employee development program.

Growth Opportunities in Learning and Development	<b>GOLD Standard Training</b>			
	<hr/>			
	<u>Spring Session – General Offerings</u>			
	35 Classes			
	320 Employees			
	<u>Fall Session – General Offerings</u>			
47 Classes				
392 Employees				
<u>Department Specific</u>				
20 Classes				
272 Employees				
<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;"><u>TOTAL</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">102 Classes</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">984 Employees</td> </tr> </table>		<u>TOTAL</u>	102 Classes	984 Employees
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In December 2008, representatives of the Human Resources staff and Training Task Force visited a variety of county locations during Employee Learning Week. During this time, information was presented on all of the training opportunities available, Quick Reference materials were distributed, questions were addressed, and additional training needs were discovered.



## Employee Training Site

In early 2008, an online presence for the Employee Training and Development program was created. After many months of working closely with the IT department, the first phase of the Employee Training portal went live. This allowed employees to access course schedules, course descriptions and materials, and enroll in classes online. Customized enrollment procedures were created for each department.

Another positive effect of this new program has been the organizational improvements that have come about as a result of classroom discussions. During the course of our first Customer Service class, it was quickly determined that our employees were not always being given the complete tools that they needed to provide the excellent level of customer service that was desired. This issue was addressed by creating a Customer Service committee that assembled an Employee Quick Reference Guide, as well as an additional course on Ottawa County General Information.

Revamping the New Employee Orientation program was another item on our initial list of 2008 objectives. Again, with extensive input from the original needs assessment, a survey of all 2007 new employees, and the Task Force, a more extensive orientation program was developed with more of an emphasis on training and onboarding. It includes a full day of general information, more uniform processes in the departments, more flexibility in start days, and a personalized development plan. This program will begin in mid 2009.

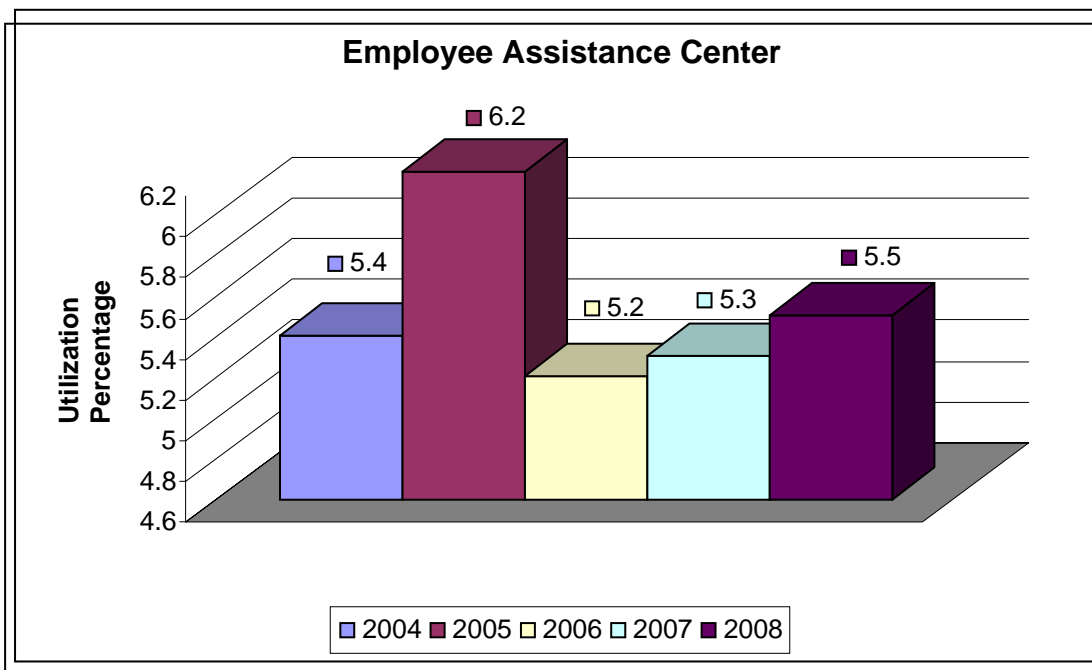
**Employee Assistance:**

Employee Assistance Programs (EAP's) are designed to help employees and often their families recognize and overcome personal problems that are interfering with the employee's work performance. EAP's are designed to reach performance problems that cannot be remedied by training, education, or other employer-controlled factors. Examples of the many personal problems that an EAP may deal with are alcohol/drug abuse, emotional problems and marital issues. An effective EAP may help control employee turnover, absenteeism, and other costs associated with personal problems such as health care. Even though the employer pays for the service and may make referrals to the program, all information is held in strict confidence between the employee and the EAP. Ottawa County's EAP provider is the Employee Assistance Center (EAC).

EAC also offered six on-site training classes; Working with Difficult People, EAC Orientation, Stress Management, Work Life Balance, Conflict Resolution.

EAC visited an Ottawa County Department on two different occasions offering their Critical Incident Stress Management services. Attendance was voluntary and well attended.

The chart below reflects the utilization percentage over the last 5 years. The last 5 years the utilization percentage has been at or above the national average of 5.0%.



**Labor Relations:**

In 2008, the Human Resources Department negotiated and entered into one (1) Letter of Understanding (LOU). This LOU was in response to an identified need for additional staff in the District Court, and was an innovative resolution with the Union agreeing to allow non-union employees to assist with the workload for a limited duration. There were no employee grievances filed. All eight Collective Bargaining Agreements expired at the end of 2008. Negotiations began with the units prior to the end of the year and all but one was completed within the first 60 days of 2009.

**Equal Employment Opportunity Claims:**

No claims were filed under EEOC.

**Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Compliance Activities:**

No requests for accommodation under ADA were made during 2008.

**Benefits Administration:**

In 2008, the average number of active employees enrolled in the County Health Plan was 875. There are 48 retirees enrolled under the age of 65 and 11 over the age of 65 in our health plan. There are 3 dependants under the age of 65 on COBRA.

The County's cafeteria/flexible benefits style health plan went into effect in 1997. The Ottawa County Health Plan consists of two managed care "network" plans. The plan is designed to offer greater flexibility of benefits to employees while taking advantage of discounts on the cost of medical services provided to employees.

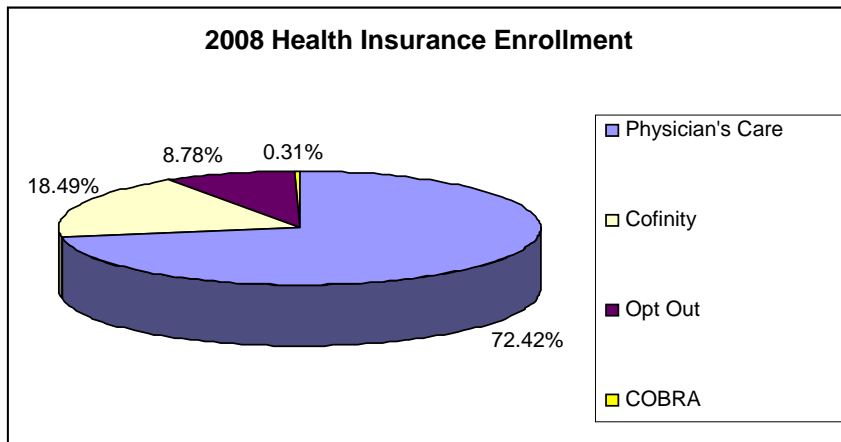
There were a couple of health benefit changes. A new prescription plan benefit was introduced to the employees. Certain over the counter (OTC) drugs were added at a lesser co-pay (\$3.00) to save money for both employee and employer. Physician recommended immunizations are covered under the Routine Preventive Health benefit but not charged to the annual maximum benefit. The annual maximum benefit was also changed from a \$300.00 charged benefit to a \$300.00 paid benefit per year.

One facet of the plan flexibility is the availability of employee-paid upgrades to the dental program. Currently 573 employees participate in the enhanced dental program.

Through the use of Section 125 Flexible Spending Accounts, 310 participants, an increase of 12 participants, are enrolled in the medical flex spending and contributed \$293,322.00 and 28 participants contributed \$95,000.00 for dependent care in 2008, which reflected a decrease of 5 participants.

Automatic withdrawal for premium payment of retiree health was introduced in 2000 and currently 78% percent of the retirees utilize this service.

Below is a summary of current health plan enrollment.



In response to Federal regulations and Governmental Accounting Standards Board No. 45, regarding how units of government are to account for their unfunded Other-Post-Employment-Benefits (OPEB), the decision was made to charge retirees age 65 and older the full actuarial cost of their health care. This step was undertaken in order to coordinate retiree health benefits with Medicare eligibility and reduce the unfunded liability. In an effort to educate the county retirees of the change in the insurance rates and provide alternatives to the higher health insurance costs, Human Resources researched information on other health plans and companies available.

Other employee benefits and their associated costs for 2008 are as follows:

Life Insurance-----	\$ 91,980.75
Vision Plan-----	\$ 119,845.73
Unemployment-----	\$ 46,634.98
Long Term Disability-----	\$ 155,332.12

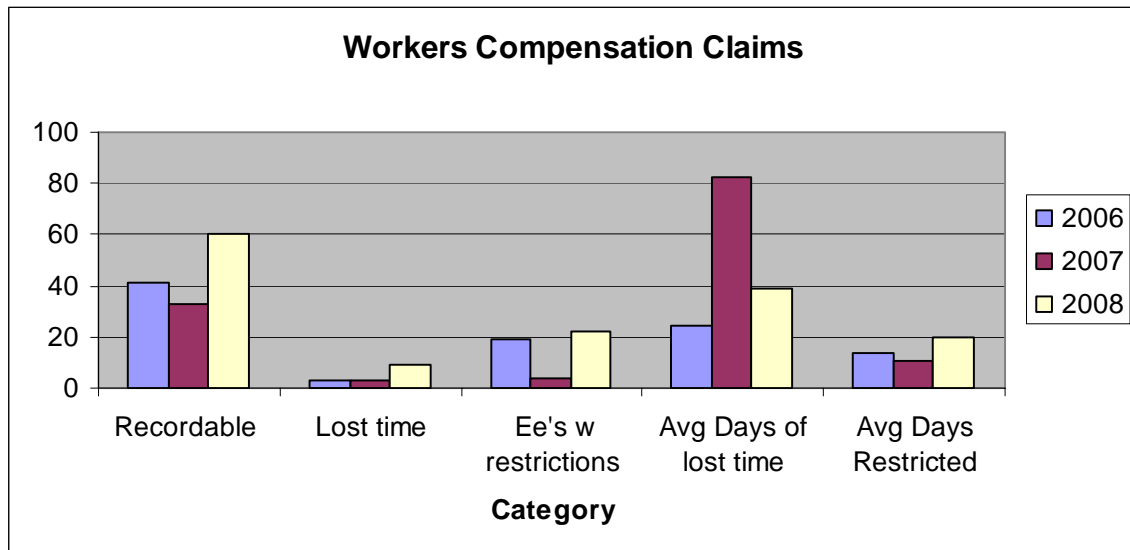
Tuition Reimbursement (HR-13 Tuition Reimbursement Policy) - The County has supported and maintained a Tuition Reimbursement Program to allow eligible, interested employees financial support in encouraging them to participate in furthering their education outside of work hours. The Tuition Reimbursement Program follows the IRS guidelines for the taxable nature of the reimbursement and, therefore, tuition is only approved for courses that will provide an employee with training directly related to maintaining or improving the skills required by their current position.

In 2008, 32 employees participated in the Tuition Reimbursement Program, completing 95 classes at a cost of \$80,526.56. This is \$10,284.44 less than the 2007 reimbursement costs.

457 Deferred Compensation Plan - In 2008, Great West Retirement Services enlisted 55 new participants and reports 676 accounts with balances. The PERT program enlisted 6 new participants and reported 120 accounts with balances. There are 597 employees actively contributing, which represent 64% participation. This falls above the high end of the participation percentage industry wide of 50% - 60%.

Employee Wellness Program - The County's commitment to employee wellness has evolved along with the changes in employee health plans. The County continues to demonstrate that commitment by operating two (2) state of the art fitness facilities for benefited employees, spouses and retirees. In 2008, the labor management committee continued the process of analyzing the current employee health plan and reviewing cost management strategies for the future, including disease management and employee wellness.

Workers' Compensation – Sixty-six (66) total claims were reportable according to OSHA in 2008, which included nine (9) lost time claims and twenty-two (22) claims with work restrictions. The average number of days away from work per lost time claim was 39.1. Claimants with work restriction averaged 20.09 days on restriction.



Year	Recordable	Lost time # of EE's	EE's w Restrictions	Avg Days Away	Avg Days Restricted
2006	41	3	19	24.33	13.58
2007	33	3	4	82.6	11
2008	60	9	22	39.1	20.09

Employees submitted 62 applications eligible for Family Medical Leave Act, including intermittent leave in 2008.

Recent additions to the FMLA are the Military Family Leave Entitlements which allow 1) up to 12 weeks of leave for employees to address certain qualifying exigencies such as attending military events, arranging for alternative childcare, addressing certain financial and legal arrangements, attending certain counseling sessions, and attending post-deployment reintegration briefings, and 2) a special leave entitlement that permits eligible employees to take up to 26 weeks of leave to care for a service member who has a serious injury or illness incurred in the line of active duty.

#### Employee Recognition:

Since 1988 the County has conducted an employee recognition program that consists of an annual Service Awards Banquet held each year in January. The banquet recognizes employees who have reached employment milestones of five (5), ten (10), fifteen (15), twenty (20), etc. years with the County. Each such employee and a guest are treated to a delicious meal at the banquet and the employee receives a pre-selected gift in recognition for their service to the County. The Human Resources Department takes great pleasure in organizing this event on behalf of the Board of Commissioners.

On January 17, 2009, 200 people attended the Service Awards Banquet honoring 123 awards recipients and 18 retirees from 2008. The total cost for the banquet was \$17,904.96. Also throughout the year 75 lapel pins were distributed recognizing the employment milestones of 10 years and more.

### **Wage & Classification Study:**

In 2008, after Rye & Associates notified the County that he was no longer conducting large scale wage studies, the County took the opportunity to review the different methodologies and vendors that conduct these types of studies, and the Board of Commissioners approved our contracting with West Michigan Compensation Consultants.

Information meetings were presented around the County to employees regarding the 2008 Wage & Classification, introducing the consultant and explaining the "new" system the County was developing. The reason we held these meetings was to continue the open process that was established in the last wage study in an effort to give employees as much information as possible.

Liz Hawkins, with West Michigan Compensation Consultants, was present at the meetings to talk about the upcoming study we would be undergoing, including the methodology that will be used. Information was also available on The Front Page so that all employees had the opportunity to access information regarding the study. Included on The Front Page was the power point presentation that Liz Hawkins discussed along with a listing of questions that were asked at the various meetings. Liz has extensive education and graduate work in the area of economics. She also brought to us an extensive history working in the public sector and with wage and compensation systems. Also, with Liz and WMCC, we will be provided with the tools and information to continue to conduct these reviews on an on-going basis, and eventually be in a position where we would not have to hire an outside consultant.

During 2008, the study began, with Job Analysis Questionnaires being completed by employees, followed by interviews with the consultant. During this time, an Evaluation Team was developed, consisting of county employees representative of the workforce, who were trained in the evaluation process. During the later part of 2008 the evaluation team worked diligently on point factoring every classification in the County with the exception of the Sheriff's Office 312 Eligible employees and the command Non-312 Eligible.

As 2008 came to an end, the team was still in the process of completing the evaluation phase of the study and in mid-2009 the study will be completed.

### **Unemployment Insurance:**

Twenty five (25) past employees collected unemployment benefits in 2008 for a total of \$46,634.98. 5 were laid off, 2 had a reduction in hours, 6 were terminated and 12 were laid off from other employers. These figures do not include the 19 involuntary terminated employees who could have applied for benefits or 7 past employees who voluntarily resigned and attempted to collect benefits. There were 5 other employees with monetary determinations that were appealed and the county prevailed.