Do we really value our jobs?

A question for all in Plant Operations. Do we really value our jobs?

Douglas W. Fasing, Manager of Grounds and Waste Management, expressed an obvious, even taken-for-granted truth when he said recently "Job security is a concern for all Plant employees."

In a free flowing discussion of the issues of job security and the concern about outsourcing of work by the University, Fasing asserted that "What we do about our security concerns and how we respond to the link between employee self-interest and customer expectations can be influenced by the value we place on our jobs in the first place."

Fasing proposed a scenario in which the employee, on showing up for work as usual, is told that his job no longer exists. The work the employee has been doing has been outsourced, and the employee is presented with her final check and a suggestion to "have a nice life." A shocking scenario, Fasing noted, but not so far fetched. "In the private sector," he asserted, "it has been played out many times." Thinking seriously about how our lives would be impacted if we were to find ourselves unemployed, Fasing says, is a good way for us to think about what our jobs should mean to us while we have them.

The value we place in our jobs, Fasing points out, should relate to the value others (customers or clients) place in the quality of the services we provide. If true, Fasing observes, do we have an inherent right to demand job security if we are unwilling to guarantee the quality and output of our job performance?

Fasing asserts that we are often reminded that each of us must take personal responsibility for our conduct, and this extends to every facet of our lives. "At work, it implies that we have the capacity to make choices about what we do. It is not difficult to make good choices if we value our jobs and if our personal values include service to others." Despite this, Fasing says, we all recognize that we occasionally do things by choice that are counterproductive to ourselves and to our customers.

Some things we do in work settings that have negative consequences, Fasing points out, include: excessive absenteeism and tardiness, the choice of doing nothing or very little to complete work assignments, withholding job performance because of "grudges" about foremen, managers, and other staff members, spreading rumors and criticizing others. "Each of these examples," Fasing points out, "is the result of a personal choice to act in a negative way." The problem is that negative behaviors are sold to customers along with our positive, value adding behaviors. If customer perceptions are negative because of our behaviors, we demonstrate that we don't place much value in our jobs.

A strong counterforce to the tendency for outsourcing our jobs, Fasing notes, would be an equally strong commitment to serving our customers. "It is within every department member's circle of influence," Fasing says, "to choose cooperation over conflict, and team work over going it alone." Our division and department mission and vision statements, and Plant's guiding principles, form an excellent basis for governing ourselves so that we may make positive value adding choices in everything we do at work.

A significant majority of Plant Operations staff, at all levels, Fasing notes, perform in value adding ways every day. Yet, uncertainty about the future and concerns about security are expressed often. "Honesty would compel us to admit that there is much room for improvement."

Continued on page 4...

"DACUM" takes hold in the division

One of the outcomes of a DACUM session is apparent here—walls filled with scraps of flip chart paper, each bearing a significant task or duty of the job being analyzed. Here, Leslie Smith looks up from his job of trying to fit it all together.

More photos on page 5
Sometimes the tasks seem to pile up. Everyone wants their classrooms remodeled in the summer. When the rains come steadily, the grass grows faster than we can deal with it. The winter mess makes it impossible to also do all the regular cleaning in the building. And it seems that everyone wants their vehicles, checks, reports, parking, and training at the same time. It would be great if the work could be spread evenly like soft butter. But that isn't a common life experience.

For many in Plant Operations, the workload will hit some new peaks in the next several months. July first, we will replace our old mainframe Plant information system with AEC FM's product, a client-server system. Some people will have computers who never had one before. On the same date, the University's general ledger and purchasing modules for M-Pathways will go live. In the long run, both systems will give more and better information to everyone who needs to have it. In the short run, we will have pain and stress. Added to this are the uncertainties of the new budget system (successor to VCM).

The first stress from the technology changes is being felt by those who will need to make the systems work individually and together - especially those in Plant Administrative Services. But every department is being brought into the whirlpool of activity. Trainers have been trained. They are training those who need to test the equipment. Then we will be training 200 others who will need to use the system. As we approach July 1, we will be running two systems in parallel; problems will be encountered requiring immediate solutions to prevent missing the start date, some data will be erroneous, and, at best, we can expect a moderate level of chaos.

As that is proceeding, we are completing a half year of negotiations and discussions leading to acceptance of responsibility for maintenance support to the University Hospitals and their clinics. This means becoming acquainted with new territory, with the requirements of the Joint Commission for the Accreditation of Hospitals Organization (JCAHO), with new people, and with the MAXIMO facility management system which is just coming into use there.

A stable overlay on this is the fact that, as an average, Plant Operations Central Fund and Administrative Services departments have reduced the numbers of managers and supervisors to less than 2/3 of the level existing in 1991. This means that many of those who are being trained on FM are doing new and probably more things, and the rest are trying to pick up some of the former duties of their bosses. In both cases, not only are people stressed with change in work, they are also spending time in training for their changed roles.

All this is to remind all of you that the rest of this calendar year will probably be one of the more difficult ones in the history of Plant Operations. We will need to be especially careful to keep our eye on the ball supporting these we serve. At the same time, we need to remember that nearly everyone is experiencing change and overload. So, while each internal customer needs to be assertive in seeking to get the service needed from other parts of Plant Operations, I urge you to do it with consideration for the stress that these changes and work overloads are creating. And finally, overlaying all of this is my request that managers, supervisors, and others having information that others need give special attention to communicating this information promptly, completely and accurately. It is critical that understanding be universal during times of change.

James E. Christensen, Director of Plant Operations

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Buildings' Karen Galpin practices what she'll soon be teaching to others.

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A report from the Business Office on the AEC-FM System

Operations is planning to go into production with a new AEC FM System at the start of the next fiscal year. Senior Programmer/Analyst Diane McDonald advises that the system will replace the current PDF (Personal Information File) system, and is a client/server based, fully interactive system that Plant Operations will use to keep track of work orders, estimate and schedule jobs, process all labor and materials changes against them, collect and transmit human resources and time information to Main Payroll. It will also be used to calculate and transmit billing information to Finance, schedule preventive maintenance work, and control the distribution of keys.

The FM software has already been functionally tested, McDonald notes, and any problems identified for correcting. Specifications for most of the modifications to the system have been laid out in order to interface with the new Propeol General Ledger and the old payroll system and also to coincide with the way Plant "does business". It was possible to reformat and directly convert much data from the PDF system to the new system, which would otherwise have had to be entered manually.

Most recently, the business office has been defining its Standard Operating Procedures, which include how work will flow through Plant and the new system; the new coding schemes which will be used for identifying types of work, priorities, work statuses, account numbers, etc., which will be responsible for which functions; some of the standard reports which will be needed, and what the business rules will be regarding the entry and access of all of the data. These Standard Operating Procedures are being documented, and will become part of the business office user manuals and the online help available with the system.

Representatives from the various departments in Plant, McDonald stresses, have given much time, effort and valuable insight to the success of this project. These representatives, and their departments, are: Utilities and Maintenance: Tim Kennedy, Steve Bubba, Sharon Garff, Cindy Scherdel, Dale Scherdel, Tim Toelleman, Jessica Blythe, and Mary Gaul; Building Services: Karen Galpin; Parking: Karin Clarke, Grounds: Dawn Schultz, Business Office: Anna Balluff, Kim Biecy and Lori Arends; Director's Office: Valerie Amo, McDonald advises that having completed the process of defining Standard Operating procedures, the Plant business office has been conducting training sessions and testing procedures, as well as setting up the courses to be offered and identifying the testing criteria. Daily testing began in April.

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Bob Moine, programmer analyst II, during a one-to-one training session with an AEC consultant.

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Karin Clarke, Parking Services, and Dawn Schultz of Grounds and Waste Management, share some learning points during the AEC train-the-trainer session. Clarke and Schultz make up a part of the cadre of Plant staff members who are teaching others the fine points of the new AEC computer system.
The Plant Academy has inaugurated the first of a series of training modules, which ultimately will become part of a more comprehensive training program for supervisors and managers.

Beginning the first quarter of 1998, Jim Christenson, director of the division, as well as managers of the departments and their respective lead teams, attended the Leadership Communication: Vision 2000 workshop. Leadership Communication: Vision 2000 provides strategies for communicating change in the departments, and for building commitment to Plant's and the individual department's mission, vision, guiding principles and strategic goals.

Also being offered this quarter is Managing the Transition from AEC to Plant Operations and Reinventing Appraisals. Managing the Transition from AEC to Plant Operations addresses the reasons behind Plant's decision to change its facilities management system (from PB to AEC), suggests strategies for managing individual transitions to the new technology, and raises awareness about the need to manage the human side of change.

Reinventing Appraisals is the first stage of a performance management and appraisal system that will be used with all administrative staff members. The program provides a step-by-step approach on how to plan and review individual performance—including how to determine "key result areas," goals and performance standards.

The Academy is currently developing additional modules for this year. They are: Coaching, Feedback and Facilitation, Communication Skills Development, Teamwork, and Decision Making and Problem Solving.

Members of Plant's lead team (left to right) Doug Fasting, Nate Horine and Sue Krieger, and PAC team member Anna Tobias, during the Plant Academy session, Leadership Communication: Vision 2000.

The Plant Operations lead team developed the Academy because it firmly believes that on-going education and training are vital for developing "best in class" employees and leaders at every level of the division.

For information about Plant Academy programs, contact J.A. (JJ) Bandeauille, program manager Plant Academy, 647-8007.

Greenfield Village
Preferred customer cards available

A limited number of Preferred Customer Cards for discounted admissions to the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village are available for Plant Operations staff members simply by calling Plant Personnel. By presenting the card at the time entrance tickets are purchased, staff members, their family and guests can save 15% off the regular price of admission. That translates to a two dollar savings off the regular adult ticket of $13.50 and a one dollar discount on a child's (ages 5-12) ticket of $7.50. The discounts are available every time one visits the museum or village:

Every year thousands of people visit the Henry Ford Museum and Greenfield Village to view such national treasures as Thomas Edison's Menlo Park laboratory, for example, and Henry Ford's birthplace. This year's special weekend events include Civil War Remembrance (May 23 & 24), Motor Muster (June 20 & 21), Colonial Life Festival (June 27 & 28), Salute to America Concert (July 2-4), Celebration of Emancipation (August 1 & 2) and the Old Car Festival (September 12 & 13).

For your Preferred Customer Card, call Betty Alberts at 764-2472. Don't miss out on a chance to see 200 years of American history at the world's largest indoor-outdoor museum.

Time Capsules

Cabinet maker Mark Carpenter stands by a mock-up of a time capsule that will be placed inside the walls of the Lurie Bell Tower on North Campus by graduates of the College of Engineering. Every year, a graduating class will fill a capsule with memorabilia and seal it until the class's twentysth-fifth reunion, when it will be opened. The capsule will then be used by another class, to remain sealed until it convenes for its reunion.

One of the Plant Academy's inaugural offerings is Reinventing Appraisals. This session was well attended by frontline and administrative staff from Utilities and Maintenance Services.

Another look at the Lurie Time capsule shows how it will fit into the walls of the tower. The 0-ring on the work bench will lock it securely in place until time to open it. The capsule walls were all crafted in the cabinet shop.

3
Work Safe/Be Well team inaugurates safety visits

Over the next year, members of the Work Safe/Be Well (WS/BW) team will visit shops and work areas, to ask you what you think about the Plant Safety Program, look at your working conditions and to ensure that safety materials are readily available. This is all part of a new project called, "Safety & Health Assistance Visits." The WS/BW team is interested in seeing how well safety policies have been implemented, whether or not they are effective, and what workers and supervisors think of them.

A key element in any good safety program is workplace evaluation and correction of potential hazards. The "Safety & Health Assistance Visits" are ways to increase the number of "eyes & ears" looking at safety. It also gives WS/BW team members a chance to look at different workplaces, to learn how they can best serve the interests of the division.

The visits are broken down into three parts. First, WS/BW representatives will meet with the supervisor and ask about written safety programs, Material Safety Data Sheets, safety postings, and the monthly safety talks. Copies of important written materials will be given to the supervisor in case they aren't available. Next, a walk-around inspection of the shop or work area will follow, to look at chemical storage and labeling, aisles, exits, fire extinguishers, first aid kits, and the availability of personal protective equipment. Third, WS/BW team members will talk to a few workers and ask them about their training in using hazardous materials, use of personal protective equipment, and attendance at monthly safety talks. Most important: WS/BW seeks feedback from workers and supervisors about what they like or dislike about the safety program, where the program can be improved and about any safety-related issues or concerns.

To close out the visit, the supervisor and team members will agree on any recommendations for improvements. These will be put in writing for tracking purposes and a copy given to the supervisor. Someone from the team will return later to make sure the recommendations have been implemented.

The WS/BW team hopes that its visits will help foster a feeling of concern for safety among everyone in Plant Operations. It's not there to find fault or to place blame, the goal is to make safety a high priority in everyone's mind.

Plant Department joins hands in a special project

Rick Minton, Plant Operations plumber, learned that Plant Operations people are able to call on each other for support. When Rick's mother died last year, a circle of family and friends planned to provide a special memorial in her memory. The memorial also became a tribute to Mildred Beverly, the mother of Rick's wife Sharon, who died following year. The Beverly and the Minton families made plans to show their love for their mothers by building a cross to be presented to the New Jasper United Methodist Church, with memorial funds available for this purpose.

Rick's father Roy Minton, who enjoys woodworking, started the project and before long Sharon's brother Rick became part of it. Rick is a Plant Operations plumber who also enjoys carpentry. The project eventually involved Plant Operations carpenter Steve Hackbarth, whom Rick called on for his special skills. Working after hours, the two were able to utilize some of Plant's specialized equipment to complete the cross, using beautiful solid pieces of maple and cherry wood.

The Plant Department's "imprint" on the cross which was finally presented to the New Jasper United Methodist Church is a testament to the ability of Plant's members to respond in a worthy cause.

Jobs...continued from page 1

Fasing observes that "Customers care very much about what we do for them." They have expectations about our job performance, they expect the department to solve problems for them. Students, faculty and other University staff cannot perform at their best without the quality services we provide for them. Fasing points out that customers express their positive impressions (see newsletter "In appreciation") but they also notice and comment when we don't do as well. "We shouldn't be surprised," Fasing says, "when a customer decides to take the business elsewhere." Fasing proposes a formula which can apply at all levels of Plant Operations that might ensure our being chosen as service provider by the customer. "We can choose behaviors consciously that work to serve our self-interest as well as the interests of our many customers. As members of Plant Operations, cross functional cooperation is essential to filling the needs and requirements of Plant's customers." Within the units cooperation, synergy and teamwork, Fasing points out, cannot be achieved "if we are riven with internal conflicts and dissension." Each of us has the power to eliminate these negatives from our daily work lives if our individual values include respect for others and common courtesies in our interactions.

To demonstrate that we deeply value our jobs, Fasing asserts, "we will have to prove it constantly in the form of a standard of excellence in performance." In a rapidly changing work environment, and in the face of a growing trend in higher education toward outsourcing of services, Fasing cautions that if we value our jobs, we will rid ourselves of those things that stand in the way of creating a positive and secure future.
Creating partnerships: an example from the contracting group

General Foreman Paul Guttman, and skilled trades members of his contracting group, are helping eight graduate students in the College of Architecture and Urban Planning to learn what it takes to renovate a combined classroom-computer site in the School of Public Health. Guttman and architects from Facilities Planning and Design have formed a unique partnership with the students, faculty from the School of Public Health and the College of Architecture and Urban Planning, to give the students practical, hands-on experience in the assessment and redesign of the troublesome area. The space, which has been used for about ten years as a classroom and computing site—when that was never intended—has outived its double-duty usefulness. So, it'll be up to the students to develop a better configuration of the area.

The idea for the collaboration evolved last fall. The need to improve the space coincided with the desire of Anselmo Cantora, visiting assistant professor of architecture, to provide his winter term students with a realistic learning experience, one that would literally take them from the problem statement, to the design and actual construction of the project. Ultimately, this would include working under the tutelage of Cantora and the tradesmen in Guttman's contracting group during the renovation of the area and the construction of the furnishings.

An additional benefit—the students would be able to see just how easily their designs could be implemented, how practical they were, and what it took, from the perspective of the person performing the work, to make the design a reality.

A committee consisting of Guttman, Cantora, Robert H. Gray, associate dean for research and facilities at the School of Public Health, A. Melissa Harris, interim associate dean of the College of Architecture and Urban Planning; Marshall Lloyd, architect in Facilities Planning and Design; and others from the School of Public Health and the Information Technology Division, guided the work of the students. It also comprised the students' "customers" who helped them to identify several design issues like: what are the special lighting and lighting control needs of a dual purpose classroom, what spatial arrangements best address the conflicting needs of individual and group users of the room, what are the best storage and security arrangements—ever how can the space accommodate possible scheduling conflicts between instructors and general users of the computing areas. Lloyd will guide the students in the preparation of the construction documents which provide the basis for estimating and completing the project.

Guttman estimates that the construction of the project will begin in July and last until early October. The students themselves will participate in the construction activities, working side-by-side the tradesmen in the contracting group.

"This project is really about responding to the needs of the people who use the space," Guttman says, "and at looking at outdated technology and use of space that no longer fit the requirements of the students and faculty." One might add that it's also about how faculty, students, and staff can forge symbiotic relationships to provide rich and rewarding professional and educational experiences for everyone involved.

Paul Guttman, general foreman contracting group, and trades members of the contracting group, will help the students gain hands-on experience this summer, when they join the contracting group during the renovation of the space.

"DACUM" ...continued from page 1

John Bjorge, sometimes called "Mr. DACUM" by members of the Plant Academy Coordinators (PAC) team, leads staff from Building Services during a DACUM session. DACUM, which stands for "developing a curriculum," enables employees to identify the core duties and responsibilities of their job, and the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to accomplish it satisfactorily. The DACUM can then be used by individuals to assess their training and development needs.

Steve Brabb points to just some of the work his trades group accomplished during a DACUM session. Several trades shops have already completed DACUMs for their crews.
RALPH CHEATHAM, APPRENTICE, PLUMBING/STEAMFITTING

Ralph Cheatham says his work history began with training to become a welder at Manpower in the South. Upon completing his training, he worked in the area shipyards, building aircraft carriers.

Ralph came to the U of M Plant Operations Department in 1983, when after a visit to Michigan, he decided to apply to Building Services and got a job as Custodian. He worked 12 years for Building Services until joining the EWOCS program (Employees Working out of Classification,) as a Maintenance Mechanic I. As a Maintenance Mechanic III, he was recently selected to be an apprentice in Plumbing/Steamfitting. Ralph is glad, he says, to be working again in the areas of welding and water. As part of his four-year apprenticeship, Ralph will continue his studies at Washtenaw Community College, taking courses in subjects such as math and science. His apprenticeship enables him "to learn more about plumbing functions every day." He points out that he had to become licensed in order to be able to maintain the pool at the U-M Intramural Sports Building. "Accepting a new challenge every day," Ralph points out, is something he feels is "an important part" of his life. He believes his willingness to change "keeps the window of opportunity open." Ralph is also a licensed cosmetologist in the Washtenaw County area. He is married and has three sons, ages 18, 12 and 6.

BOMI graduates gather

Maintenance mechanics from Utilities and Maintenance Services, their foremen and Richard Robben, director of UBSD, gathered at a reception in the Kipke Conference Center on April 23rd to celebrate the mechanics' completion of the Building Operators Management Institute (BOMI) courses, and their promotions to Maintenance Mechanic III. The intensive two-year BOMI program covered a broad array of building maintenance subjects, ranging from math, plumbing, electricity, building control systems, and boilers to refrigeration.

The graduates were congratulated by Director of Plant Operations Jim Christensen who commended them for their perseverance and commitment to continuous learning. The need to keep current on one's knowledge and skills, he noted, is critical if Plant expects to meet and exceed the changing needs and expectations of its customers.
IN APPRECIATION

We're always happy to let you know how much your efforts are valued!

A recent newsflash is the subject of the following from Plant Director James Christenson to Energy Manager William Verge. "Congratulations and thanks to the team for again sharing a great idea for the benefit of others." Renew America and the National Awards Council for Environmental Sustainability has selected the Plant Energy Department's Renewable Energy Conservation Account to receive a Certificate of Environmental Achievement. The award is based on an "update" the Energy Management Division Team provided to Renew America last September, of the earlier project submitted to the DOE. In addition to the certificate, the Plant energy department's project will be listed on the Renew America "Environmental Success Index" website in the energy efficiency category.

To Larry Lange and the Contracting Group, from Frank Marciniorwitz of Facilities Planning and Design. "Our installation of the photovoltaic panel system in Art & Architecture was acclaimed one of the best installations seen by United Solar Systems Corporation. United Solar Systems Corporation was the company that provided the equipment to be installed at Art & Architecture. Their specialists came to examine the installation of the system before it was turned on. They were impressed to see that someone had taken a lot of pride in the installation of their system. Please thank all who were involved."

(These were Electricians Ken Schiller and John R. Miller.)

From April D. Abdella, Administrative Associate in the College of LSA, kudos to the Plant Contracting Group and Architectural Trades who participated in the project to prepare East Hall for the building dedication. "Given the complexity and time constraints of the project, all work was completed in an efficient and professional manner. Thank you for your hard work and assistance in making this project a success." Those working on the project: Stephen Brown, Jeff Wootlah, Nick Dininoff, Keith Dietrick, Frederick Ramsey, Ken Lynn, Sam Manzelmann, Dunne Miller, Timothy Bredemitz, Steven Hanab, Fred Wenner, Raymond Summers, Karl Lietzau, Kevin John, and Neal Goodman.

A letter from Jane Reading-Boyle of Grounds & Waste Management to Foreman Dustin Briggs, expresses appreciation for assistance we received from electrician Lance Brown. "We have had one problem after another with the refuse compactor at the Mason Loading Dock. Lance demonstrated persistence in tracking down the source of a series of problems and offered a long term solution. As soon as he came up with the more permanent solution he arranged his schedule to devote the necessary time necessary to do the work. Please pass on our gratitude for his concern and good work."

A letter from Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Robert A. Kasdin to Foreman Fred Rojas. "... Last weekend I traveled to the Media Union to check on the progress of the vanishing of the mural. The efforts of you and your colleagues in constructing the tent were terrific and made the crucial difference in our ability to complete the work. Thank you."

A note from then interim Associate Vice President for Business Operations Paul Spradlin, to Manager Rich Robben says, "... just want to take this opportunity to let you know how helpful Tom Methy has been to Business Operations in making sure we are getting the 800 MFL system in place. His expertise and advice have been critical in this endeavor to both myself and DPS. Thanks."

From Beverly Brickler, Business Office Operations Supervisor, to Mike Karas, Service Foreman II. "Thank you for giving us Mike Ryan for dispatching. He is a pleasure to work with. He never complains about anything he does for us.... He manages his time efficiently... he is always cheerful and courteous no matter how hard the task is. He represents a true team player and always tries to please his internal and external customers. He makes all of our jobs easier and more effective."

OVER THE YEARS IN THE PLANT EXCHANGE

Since the first issue of The Plant Exchange in 1990, many members of the department have been featured in your newsletter. Some familiar faces are shown below.

PLANT SICK TIME USAGE CONTINUES ITS DOWNWARD SPIRAL

The average number of hours of sick time usage by Plant staff members declined for the fourth consecutive year. Dramatic drops were recorded between 1996 and 1997 especially among members of the Technical, IUOE and Office job families, as overall absenteeism due to illnesses and injuries continued to fall. The four year "snap shot" of sick time figures appears below.

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Nothing routine about this
Grounds operation

A recent dramatic scene on North Campus involved a female mallard and her ten newborn ducklings, and by happenstance, Grounds Department members Jeanette Grimley and Donald Boke. The incident had all the elements of a front page news story and there was an Ann Arbor News photographer on hand to cover it.

As Betsy M. Smith of the School of Art and Design described the incident to Plant Director Jim Christenson, “When the ducklings’ mother settled her brood in the School’s courtyard, an attempt was made to move the family to the Music School pond. We inadvertently ‘herded’ them all onto a sewer pipe that runs under Bonita’s Bluff.” Fortunately, Smith noted, “A wonderful rescue operation was performed by one of our faculty members, Sherri Smith, who is a past president of the local Audubon Society, and two Grounds Department members, Jeanette Grimley and Don Boke, who were in their truck nearby... they could not have represented Plant Operations better. They were friendly, efficient, and tireless. We thank them, as do 12 local ducks.” ☺

ThePlantExchange
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