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Chow Time! It's time for some cowboy cookin', gaucho grub, chuck wagon chow, and ranch-style rations... See page 3.

It's Time for a Tax Tutorial

Around these parts, he's known as the Tax Man. If your receipts are a jumbled mess in a shoebox, or you don't know a W-2 form from a can of WD-40, he can help.

Tom Dalton, associate dean in the School of Business Administration, has been a certified public accountant for 20 years. He teaches tax preparation courses, offers tax seminars to students on financial aid and, for the past five years, has hosted a Tax Boot Camp to teach new accountants how to turn records and receipts into professionally prepared tax returns.

This year, just in time for tax day, Dalton has offered to host a question-and-answer session for employees who have general tax questions. The meeting will be at 5:30 p.m., April 10, in Olin Hall, Room 130.

Dalton, who has worked at USD for 11 years, says he often has friends and colleagues pop into his office with questions about what they owe to Uncle Sam, and says he loves to talk taxes.

Some of the most common questions, Dalton says, are whether a child still qualifies as a dependent, whether income from scholarships is taxable, and whether certain items can be deducted. He's also frequently asked the mother of all questions: Will I be audited?

"Some people don't want to be audited, and are willing to forego a chance at getting more money so they'll never get audited," Dalton says. "Some people want to get as much money back as possible and don't care about getting audited. It's a risk-return tradeoff."

The accounting whiz says the average person has less than a 2 percent chance of getting audited, but he also points out that some money-saving strategies are automatic red flags for the Internal Revenue Service.

Writing off auto or home-office expenses as part of a business can be risky, Dalton says. It's a myth, he adds, that a magnetic sign on the door of a vehicle magically transforms it into a write-off. He suggests people who legitimately use their cars for work keep all related receipts as well as a running log detailing the use.

He also cautions people from assuming that just because their computer is in a spare bedroom that makes the room a home office. A home office can't be used for anything other than work, and the IRS follows that law to the letter.

(Continued on page 2)
SEA Snippets

Parking was again the key issue at the March meeting of the Staff Employees Association. The SEA sent a letter to President Alice B. Hayes opposing a recent parking proposal that would eliminate designated staff and fringe parking spots and raise parking fees over the next two years. The proposal would hike fees to $235 for faculty/staff permits next year and $270 the year after, and to $500 for reserved parking next year and $660 the following year.

SEA members acknowledged the need to raise fees, but objected to the magnitude and rate of the increase and the possible elimination of less expensive fringe parking.

"Previously, those employees who could not afford the current $120 on-campus parking permit had an option to pay a lower fee to park in the lower (fringe) lot," said the letter. "Since this type of pass will be completely abolished, those employees no longer have a viable low-cost parking option on university grounds."

The SEA suggested transferring some of the burden of funding tram services — used mostly by students — to housing and residence life budgets, and creating a subsidy benefit similar to the health care subsidy benefit to assist employees who can’t afford parking fees. The letter proposed that if increases occur, that all permit classifications be increased proportionately or equitably.

In other news, the SEA reported that the employee picnic is scheduled for June 20. To volunteer with the planning, contact Cristina Ruffo in the human resources department at ext. 6611.

Calling for Staff Volunteers

Staff members interested in serving on the Institutional Review Board, formerly known as the Committee on the Protection of Human Subjects, should contact Jo Powers at ext. 4553. The committee meets monthly to review research on campus involving human subjects. Before offering to serve as a representative, it is recommended that staff employees study federal standards governing the IRB, which can be reviewed by logging on to http://ohrp.osophs.dhhs.gov.

Tax Time (Continued from page 1)

"I had a colleague who was defending his client in an audit because the home office was in question by the IRS," Dalton says. "It was a legitimate office, and my colleague brought in photos, but because a photo showed a suitcase in the closet, the IRS ruled the room was used for personal use and not exclusively as an office."

FACTS ABOUT TAX

☑ In 2002, the average person worked from Jan. 1 to April 27 to pay off his or her yearly tax burden.

☑ Earners within the bottom 50 percent of the nation’s average adjusted gross income pay 4 percent of the total federal tax, while people in the top 50 percent pay 96 percent.

☑ In 1998, only 23 percent of audits resulted in a change in tax compensation.

☑ The number of words in the Internal Revenue Services tax code in 1955 was under 500,000. In 2000, the tax code had 1.7 million words.

Over the years, Dalton says he’s had to correct a lot of misconceptions about taxes. The one that boggles his mind the most is the idea that the government requiring people to pay taxes is unconstitutional.

"I hear it all the time from reasonable, intelligent people," Dalton says. "All I can say is if someone tells you this, turn around and run, because the Supreme Court has upheld that it is constitutional."

When it comes to how long people should keep old tax returns, Dalton says three years is the absolute minimum, seven years is prudent and forever is the safest bet — because there is no statute of limitations on where, when and why of tax-related expenses.

"Even if all you do is keep a paper bag in which you toss receipts you think might be important later," Dalton says. "They can be sorted out at the end of the year."
Mail Center (Continued from page 1)

through the Internet,” says Danny Marines, operations manager, who has worked at the mail center for 17 years. “But I don’t think it’s overwhelming.”

Marines, who says the core staff has worked for the center for an average of 10 years, never tires of the day-to-day work.

“Mail clerk Lisa Smith sorts the day’s mail.

“It’s one of these jobs where 10 years later you wonder, ‘How can that be?’” Marines says. “But it’s been worth every minute of it. It’s an attitude you choose, and we feel we’re doing something very important for the campus.”

The mail center staff works six days a week, including half-day Saturdays. While the center doesn’t insure packages or offer express mail services, it can certify mail and send overnight deliveries. It also can advise departments on the most inexpensive options for bulk mailings.

On a typical day, the telephone rings non-stop with questions from students, administrators and faculty, and the loading dock fills with incoming packages from the U.S. Postal Service, Federal Express, UPS and other vendors.

The busiest times are the beginning of the school year, Christmas, mother’s and father’s days and Valentine’s Day, says Pamela Avila, who works the service window with a smile. After more than two years on the front lines, Avila has seen her share of odd shipments, including live specimens such as rats, chicks and salamanders for science faculty, the motorcycle and even a package of meat sent to a student from out of state via first-class. The package, which wasn’t in a cooler or labeled perishable, went undetected until it started to reek.

“Nothing shocks me,” Avila says, “We’ve shipped out skateboards, scooters and surfboards. Nothing’s much of a surprise anymore.”

A sign on the wall reminds staff to respect each other, smile more, pay compliments to people, take time to be pleasant and treat others how they wish to be treated. Alex Barnes takes the advice to heart while on his daily delivery and pick-up rounds, which include the president’s and public safety offices, and greets everyone by name.

“I have to work harder to be unfriendly,” Barnes says, as he pushes a dolly with boxes of mail. “It takes me 20 or 30 minutes to make my deliveries. I can do it in 10 to 15 minutes if I fly through, but the idea is to do it as quickly as possible — and as politely as possible.”

The Alcalá View wants to hear from directors, managers or department heads with news to share. To participate, send an e-mail to Krystn Shrieve at kshrieve@sandiego.edu or call her at ext. 4934.

Mail Center by the Numbers

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>170,000</td>
<td>Pieces of outgoing mail in February</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$57,000</td>
<td>Postal cost for outgoing mail in February</td>
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<td>Stamp sales at the window in February</td>
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<tr>
<td>5,625</td>
<td>Average number of incoming packages per week</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>Average number of customers per day at the front window</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Number of full-time employees</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Number of student employees</td>
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</table>

Getting Ready for a Close Up

Barbara Ferguson, graphic designer in the publications department, wishes to thank Paul Landi, a maintenance mechanic who has worked at USD since 1994, for his vital assistance in providing materials for a last-minute photo shoot.

“We had a problem that needed to be solved,” Ferguson says. “It was late in the afternoon, he could have just gone home, but he stayed and found a solution for us. It was above and beyond the call of duty.”

If you or someone you know deserves to be put “In the Spotlight,” send an e-mail to Krystn Shrieve at kshrieve@sandiego.edu or call her at ext. 4934.

Lookin’ for some Cowboy Cookin’?

It’s a party at the Ponderosa! Show your appreciation for your support staff members by taking them to lunch on Administrative Professionals Day. A staff appreciation luncheon will be held at 12:15 p.m., April 23, at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. For the first time ever, the event has a theme, so round up yer pardners, dust off your cowboy boots and get ready for a rootin’, tootin’ good time. The down-home meal will be prepared by banquets and catering. Seating is limited. To reserve a spot, call ext. 4560.

It’s a Date!

APRIL 23

In the Spotlight

If you or someone you know deserves to be put “In the Spotlight,” send an e-mail to Krystn Shrieve at kshrieve@sandiego.edu or call her at ext. 4934.
Social Issues Conference
The annual Social Issues Conference will be held April 3 and 4 in the Hahn University Center. The theme of the conference is “Freedom in America? War, Peace and Justice,” and the keynote speaker is author Howard Zinn. The conference includes workshops on cultural issues and a luncheon with Father Roy Bourgeois, founder of the School of Americas Watch. For more information, log on to www.sandiego.edu/csl.

Marriage Retreat
A day of reflection for newly married couples, co-sponsored by the Office of Alumni Relations and the Center for Christian Spirituality, is scheduled for 9:30 a.m.-5 p.m., April 5, in Salomon Lecture Hall, Maher Hall. $45 per couple preregistered; $50 at the door. For more information, call ext. 4784.

University Ministry Events
A penance service will be held at 7 p.m., April 7, in The Immaculata. The Lenten Twilight Retreat will be held from 5 to 8 p.m., April 8, in the faculty/staff lounge in Founders Hall. Based on his book, Christian Meditation: Your Daily Practice, Father Laurence Freeman, OSB, will discuss prayer and how to incorporate it into one’s life. For information on these events, call ext. 4735.

Easter Baskets Fund-Raiser
The American Humanities Student Association is seeking donors to sponsor Easter baskets for more than 100 children at Monarch High School, the Toussaint Teen Center and New Alternatives, a local foster family agency. Sponsorships are $12 per basket, and baskets will include candy, personal items, toys, school supplies, a coloring book and crayons. For information on how to sponsor a basket(s), call Tricia Bertram-Gallant at ext. 2907 before April 10.

Symphony Concert Honors Hayes
A USD Symphony concert dedicated to President Alice B. Hayes is set for 7 p.m., April 24, in Shiley Theatre. It will feature student soloists and works by Mozart, Chopin, Vaughan Williams and other favorite composers of the president. The program repeats at 8 p.m., April 25, and 2 p.m., April 27. Tickets are $8 general admission; $6, students, seniors, USD faculty and staff; free to USD students with ID.

Indian Festival
The second annual USD American Indian Festival and Marketplace brings together American Indian artisans and performers to share their talents. It features an art show and marketplace, as well as American Indian singers, dancers and storytellers and will be held April 26 and 27 at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice. For information, call ext. 4698.

Child Center Taking Applications
The Manchester Family Child Development Center is accepting applications for the 2003-04 school year. If you have a preschooler who will be at least 30 months old by September 2003, you are invited to tour the center, on the east end of campus, and fill out a waiting list application. For information, call the center's director, Jacqueline Corey Kennedy, at ext. 4620 or e-mail her at kennedyj@sandiego.edu.