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The Pragmatist addresses topics relevant to Pragmatics employees and clients. If you would like to contribute, please contact Nicole Cox at coxn@pragmatics.com.
Pragmatics Sponsors a Refugee Family from Afghanistan

Last summer, the image of a dead three-year-old boy on a beach in Eastern Europe shocked the whole world. As the human race, we are not civilized enough to prevent this tragedy from happening. We all share in the responsibility for this human tragedy. Like many of us, I could not see the tremendous suffering endured by millions of refugees, including young children and women, without doing anything to alleviate their situation. Therefore, I decided to sponsor refugee families from countries torn by war, terrorism, and other acts of violence.

We worked with Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Arlington to identify eligible families. During this process, we learned that the U.S. government takes, on the average, 18 months to screen and vet applicants. I am very happy to inform Pragmatics staff and management that we have sponsored the Najib family of seven: a husband, a wife, and five small children, who arrived in the U.S. from Afghanistan in late February 2016.

The father, Najib, was a translator and accountant for the U.S. Army in Afghanistan who speaks and writes English very well; his wife does not speak English and is currently attending English lesson classes. Najib is a very well-motivated individual who had financial training in Kabul. His current goal is to study for his CPA certification. We offered Najib a job in accounting, and he has been a Pragmatist for about two months.

When they first arrived, Catholic Charities found lodging for them in Woodbridge, which is too far from Reston. Fortunately, our Vice President of Finance, Yihong Sun, found them an apartment about four miles from the office. Our goal is to provide the family with the basic necessities of life (job, housing, car, insurance, food, etc.) so Najib can focus on his work and studies until such time when the family can stand on its own.

To all Pragmatics staff, when you have a chance, please stop by the fourth floor of our headquarters in the finance division and welcome Najib to America. At the same time, please offer any help you can to make the family’s transition easier. I thank you in advance.

“I believe we represent the best values of America by extending a helping hand to the very unfortunate people in the world.”

I believe we represent the best values of America by extending a helping hand to the very unfortunate people in the world. Through our actions, people in other countries appreciate America more and try to emulate us, rather than fight against us. The Najib children are very bright. Who knows, one or more children or grandchildren could become a Steve Jobs or an Elon Musk.
Pragmatics Holds Annual State of the Corporation Meeting

The annual Pragmatics State of the Corporation Meeting provides employees the opportunity to hear about the company’s successes, activities during the year, and our plan for the year ahead. The 2016 meeting was held at corporate headquarters in Reston, Va., on May 13. Approximately 130 employees gathered on site, with 64 others joining the meeting from multiple off-site locations via Skype.

CEO and Founder Dr. Long Nguyen welcomed employees. Chief Operating Officer Joe Brock and Chief Business Development Officer Richard Silver then presented information about:

- Company overview: the Pragmatics vision, core values, mission, and core competencies
- Significant accomplishments of the past year: improved client delivery, quality practices, program growth and retention, infrastructure investments, education and training, college recruitment, employee engagement, PragmaticSERVES activities, and more
- Strategy and vision for the future: federal market environment, growth, and progress

Dr. Nguyen concluded the meeting, which was followed by lunch and a questions and answer session. Employees enjoy this annual opportunity to catch up on company news and interact with other staff members.
Pragmatics Honored By Washington Business Journal

In the April 1 issue of Washington Business Journal, Pragmatics again appeared on the list of “Government Technology Contractors.” Pragmatics has appeared on the list since 2011 and ranked 33 out of 50 companies on this year’s list.

Joe Brock, Pragmatics COO, said, “Pragmatics is pleased to rank among the top government contractors in the Washington metropolitan area for a sixth consecutive year. We feel privileged to support a large and diverse customer base across the National Capital Region. Our inclusion on this list underscores Pragmatics’ commitment to delivering enhanced IT solutions that meet our government clients’ ongoing challenges. Our talented employees continue to develop and deliver industry-leading solutions and to anticipate our clients’ future needs.”

The company was recently selected as one of Washington Business Journal’s Family-Owned Business Award honorees as well. Pragmatics was one of 15 companies chosen to receive this award, which was new in 2016. The publication selected the winners from a competitive pool of nominations, and Pragmatics was recognized for its overall excellence, innovation, ethics, and philanthropy.

CEO Dr. Long Nguyen, who established Pragmatics in 1985, said, “Pragmatics is pleased to be named one of the Washington, D.C. area’s top family-owned businesses. This recognition is particularly gratifying as we enter our thirty-first year in business. We consider all of our employees to be part of the Pragmatics family, and their contributions to our innovation and excellence, high ethical standards, and philanthropic activities have been an integral part of our continued success.”

Pragmatics and the other award winners were honored at an event at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel in Washington, D.C. on March 17.

The company also appeared on Washington Business Journal’s 2016 list of Minority-Owned Businesses. Pragmatics was ranked at 3 out of 25 companies. To qualify for the listing, firms in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area submitted data including 2015 metro-area and total revenues and number of employees. The final rankings were based on the total revenues reported by the companies. Pragmatics first appeared on Washington Business Journal’s list of Minority-Owned Businesses in 2015.

Dr. Nguyen said, “Pragmatics is very pleased to rank among the top minority-owned businesses in the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area. I am grateful to have been one of the many immigrants embraced by the American people — America is a unique land of opportunity for those willing to take risks and work hard. I am proud that Pragmatics is one of the companies included on this list.”
Pragmatics Part of OCC Web Development Team Selected as Webby Award Honoree

Pragmatics announced on April 28 that it was part of a Web development team selected as an Official Honoree in The 20th Annual Webby Awards in the Web: Employment category. The Webby Award, presented by the International Academy of Digital Arts and Sciences (IADAS), is the leading international award honoring excellence on the Internet. IADAS is a 1,000-plus-member judging body comprised of leading Web experts, Internet professionals, business figures, luminaries, visionaries, and others, including former Webby winners.

Pragmatics was part of the team that assisted the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency (OCC) in developing and delivering an innovative presentation of job recruitment information on a new career sub-website (http://careers.occ.gov). The synergistic and creative collaboration between Pragmatics and the OCC resulted in an outstanding site for visitors and potential job seekers.

Pragmatics transformed website features and capabilities, enhanced the look, and provided users the ability to more easily find and use specific information about the agency, its employees, and potential careers. The website is based on a "mobile first" approach to ensure device independence and appeal to recent college graduates — the next generation of financial and regulatory professionals.

Pragmatics COO Joe Brock said, "Pragmatics is proud to be part of the Web development team that helped the OCC design, develop, and implement the careers sub-website. The recognition from IADAS validates the success of our efforts as part of the OCC team, and we look forward to continuing to enhance and expand the Website capabilities. I commend our Pragmatics team for their outstanding work."

WashingtonExec and citybizlist published this news.

Pragmatics One of the Winners of the Rheumatoid Arthritis Data Challenge

On May 16, Pragmatics announced that it was the second-place winner of the Rheumatoid Arthritis (RA) Data Challenge. This is the first year the annual Washington, D.C. Health Datapalooza has hosted this code-a-thon competition. Pragmatics was one of the nine teams selected to participate in the challenge. The Pragmatics team was led by Chief Solutions Architect Jared Spigner.

The competition, sponsored by Optum, Academy Health, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Executive Director for Innovation, challenged participants to find innovative ways to improve patient outcomes by leveraging existing non-governmental health data. Spigner, with clinical guidance from Pragmatics Chief Medical Informatics Officer Dr. Ben Nguyen, led the development of a deep learning predictive and evolutionary model that provided insight into patient medical persistence. Pragmatics’ award was announced on May 10 at this year’s Health Datapalooza.

Dr. Nguyen said, "The RA data challenge was a great opportunity for Pragmatics to showcase our technically sophisticated and innovative approach to analyze existing data to improve patient outcomes."

WashingtonExec and citybizlist published this news.
In the Spotlight: Reynetta Forrest

“Reynetta, are you learning something new?” For the first year of my employment with Pragmatics, that was the question CEO Dr. Long Nguyen always asked when he saw me. Even though I was still learning about the company, I realized “learning something new” would become a very important aspect of my career.

I began my employment with Pragmatics in 2003 as a Document Specialist at the Defense Information Systems Agency (DISA). Since then, I’ve had the opportunity to earn several certifications and support multiple efforts such as achieving CMMI® Level 5 and the Contractor Purchasing System Review Certifications. Currently, I work as a Technical Writer/Editor and a Configuration Management Specialist supporting the JFW, JOPES, and GCSS-J DISA contracts.

My job offers me the privilege of working with teams consisting of extremely talented and intelligent individuals; consequently, they keep my job very challenging. The company’s priority is to hire people not just for their skill sets, but for their ability to blend into this work culture, which strives for excellence.

As Vice President of Education (VPE) for the Pragmatics Toastmasters Club (PTC), I’ve had the privilege to work with people — previously petrified to speak in public — and watch them grow into confident and effective speakers. PTC has also helped me to grow, not only as a leader, but as a mentor.

To maintain a work-life balance, I sing in a professional group that has performed at the White House, Kennedy Center, and various venues throughout the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area and abroad. We’ve even been invited to sing at the Vatican next year!

So, my answer to Dr. Long's initial question was and is, “yes, I am learning something new.” I expect to continue to say “yes” for many years to come!

Pragmatics Exhibits at MODSIM and Sea-Air-Space 2016

On April 26, Pragmatics exhibited at MODSIM World 2016 in Virginia Beach, Va. Mike Sousa, Director of Audiovisual, Networking and Learning Services, was one of the demonstrators for the Technology Showcase. Sousa joined other industry leaders in demonstrating the latest MODSIM technologies.

From May 16-18, Pragmatics exhibited at Sea-Air-Space 2016 (SAS) in National Harbor, Md. SAS is the largest maritime exposition in the U.S.; Sousa and other attendees displayed the latest information and technology in the field.
Acquiring a Security Clearance

By Kyra Byron

In the government contracting industry, having a Secret clearance is often a necessary part of the job. If you have never obtained one before, it can be a daunting and nerve-wracking process. Pragmatics’ security team helps to make the process as smooth and painless as possible.

The process begins when a company determines an employee or candidate for employment requires a personnel security clearance to access classified information to perform their duties.

The Facility Security Officer (FSO) or designee initiates the clearance process using the Office of Personnel Management’s (OPM’s) Joint Personnel Adjudication System (JPAS). Once all applicant information is in JPAS, the Pragmatics Security Management Office (SMO) receives a JPAS notification with account user instructions and a personal identification number (PIN) for the employee. The FSO provides the PIN number and instructions to the applicant so they can access the application form via OPM’s online application system. Once the applicant completes and digitally signs the release forms, the FSO reviews the security clearance package for completeness and provides the employee with written notification that the information they provided will not be used for any other purposes. When the package is approved by the FSO, he or she submits it to the Personnel Security Management Office for Industry (PSMO-I).

The next step in the process is submitting the applicant’s fingerprints. Fingerprints are required for initial investigations and should be submitted through the Secure Web Fingerprint Transmission portal immediately after the clearance application has been released to the PSMO-I. The PSMO-I then checks the applicant’s form for completeness before forwarding the information to the investigation service provider.

After the application has been reviewed, a certified adjudicator conducts a background investigation. The investigation determines whether the applicant is eligible for access to classified information under national security standards by speaking with the applicant and their references.

After the investigation, PSMO-I determines whether the application is eligible for an interim clearance. If the individual is working on a classified contract and needs to obtain a clearance before they begin working, the employee can work with an interim clearance in most cases.

According to the Office of Management and Budget, OPM handles more than 600,000 security clearance investigations and 400,000 suitability investigations each year. In June 2015, OPM discovered that the background investigation records of current, former, and prospective federal employees and contractors had been stolen by hackers. Since then, the average investigation timeline has increased, typically from 90 days to potentially years.

For more information on security clearances, contact Kyra Byron at byronk@pragmatics.com.
Social Media and Mental Health

Love it or hate it, social media has become part of our society. It’s now normal for people to use social media to stay connected, find out the latest news, and relieve boredom. Smartphones enable us to stay connected practically everywhere we go.

Social media was created as a way to connect with friends, family, and like-minded people. It gives us the ability to connect digitally with old acquaintances, find new friends, and join social communities. Many people find friends, support groups, new ideas, activities, and positive role models on social networks, all from the comfort of home.

However, some research suggests there might be a downside to social media; finding a correlation between daily use of social media and mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem. Not enough research has been done yet to show if social media actually causes poor mental health, or if sufferers use it as a way of coping.

Studies also suggest that social media causes individuals to compare themselves to their peers and public figures. It is worth noting that most people only put the best of themselves online and leave out any negativity.

So what can we do to decrease potential health risks involving social media? Besides cutting social media out of your life and missing out on the funny memes, cat videos, and party invites, we can simply cut back.

Toastmasters Hosts Open House

On May 20, the Pragmatics Toastmasters Club hosted an open house. Potential members were present to experience a meeting firsthand. The President of the Pragmatics Toastmasters Club, Todd Godfrey, welcomed members and guests and introduced the speakers for the event.

By using a favorite aspect of a meeting, Table Topics, members and guests were encouraged to speak on an impromptu topic. Movie theater tickets and free memberships were given out as door prizes.

The Toastmasters Area 41 District Director, Ying Zhang, was on hand and spoke about her progression within Toastmasters. Several other members also gave prepared speeches for the meeting.

The Pragmatics Toastmasters Club provides a supportive, positive learning, and fun experience in which members are empowered to develop communication and leadership skills, resulting in greater self-confidence and personal growth. If you are interested in joining Toastmasters, please contact Reynetta Forrest at forrestr@pragmatics.com, or any other member.
Pragmatics Attends AFCEA NOVA’s 36th Annual Black Tie Tribute to Warriors

Pragmatics was a sponsor of the 36th Annual Black Tie Tribute to Warriors held by the Armed Forces Communications and Electronics Association’s (AFCEA’s) Northern Virginia Chapter on February 13. COO Joe Brock, Senior Vice President and General Manager Mike Yocom, Business Development Manager Adrienne Ward, and Director of Health IT Matthew Morris attended the tribute, held at the Sheraton Tysons Hotel.

The event honored service members currently undergoing treatment at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda. The event helped to raise the spirits of the honorees and their loved ones, as well as recognize their enormous sacrifices.

COO Brock said, “Pragmatics proudly supports this annual event, one of the many ways we recognize our veterans and wounded warriors each year. I am honored to attend this tribute each year, and I look forward to continuing this tradition in the future.”

Pragmatics Holds Annual Food Drive

Pragmatics held its annual food drive to benefit Food for Others, a nonprofit organization that distributes food to families in need in northern Virginia.

Pragmatics employees donated 423 pounds of food and $500 in monetary donations to the organization. The donations will support Food for Others in helping unemployed and low-income families.

PragmaticSERVES thanks everyone who donated to this cause. To donate or learn more about Food for Others, visit their website at http://www.foodforothers.org/.
Pragmatics Sponsors George Mason’s Vietnamese Student Association Culture Show

On April 16, PragmaticSERVES sponsored the George Mason University Vietnamese Student Association (VSA) annual culture show. This year, the culture show consisted of a skit, traditional and modern dance, a presentation highlighting the organization’s philanthropy projects of the past year, and a presentation of all the companies that sponsored this year’s show.

VSA is a national organization whose goal is to promote the Vietnamese culture through philanthropy, sporting, and social events. To learn more about VSA, visit their website at http://www.gmu.edu/org/vsa/index.html.

PragmaticSERVES Donates to Robotics Team

PragmaticSERVES recently donated to a Virginia elementary school robotics team to assist them in participating in the VEX IQ World Championship. The team — Rising Phoenix — consisted of five fifth-graders and one third-grader. Rising Phoenix was ranked 10th worldwide and fifth in the United States for driving skills, and sixth worldwide and second in the United States for programming before entering the championship.

The competition took place April 21-23, with nearly 150 teams competing from 14 countries. Rising Phoenix received the Design Award, ranked fifth in programming skills, and placed 13th in the team match final.

VEX Competitions are designed to challenge students in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) concepts. For the competition, the student teams were tasked with designing and building a robot to play against other teams in a game-based engineering challenge. To learn more about VEX Competitions, visit http://www.vexrobotics.com/competition.

PragmaticSERVES Sponsors Jubilee Foundation Roast

On May 5, PragmaticSERVES sponsored the Jubilees Foundation’s Shoot for the Stars Roast of David Falk. The event consisted of a dinner, silent auction, and roast of sports agent Falk. Falk was comically criticized by some of his close friends at the charitable fundraiser. Pragmatics CBDO Rich Silver and Senior Vice President and General Manager Mike Yocom attended the event.

The Jubilee Foundation helps to provide opportunities and support for adults with intellectual and other developmental disabilities. To learn more about the Jubilee Foundation, visit http://www.jubileemd.org/.
Training News

By John O’Keeffe

'Tis the Season for Pragmatics’ Annual Compliance Training

As a government contractor, Pragmatics is required to conduct essential Defense Security Service annual compliance training to maintain a high security posture.

Pragmatics will conduct the annual security refresher in August. All employees participate in refresher training, and employees who hold clearances complete extended training. This year’s training will include cybersecurity awareness.

During September we will conduct timekeeping and ethics annual refreshers for all employees. These are two separate training modules, accessible via the SkillPort learning management system.

Be sure to check your Pragmatics email for notices regarding these mandatory training sessions.

Take Your Training with You

If you have access to the Internet, you can access SkillPort training! SkillPort now offers a mobile app for Apple or Android devices (available from the Apple Store/Google Play). Log in to the SkillPort app with your Pragmatics credentials to take advantage of world-class training tutorials.

For details about any of these training opportunities, contact Training Manager John O’Keeffe at okeeffej@pragmatics.com or at (703) 890-8384.

PM Graduation and Wedding News

PM Graduation

Three Pragmatics employees graduated from PM training class in March. Leslie Turner (left) and William (Bill) Nightingale (right) joined COO Joe Brock following the graduation. Matthew Morris (not pictured), also graduated from the class.

Wedding

Pragmatics congratulates TEAPSS Administrative Assistant Anna Smith on her recent marriage to Steven Graham. The April 22 wedding was held in Riviera Maya, Mexico, with 86 friends and family. The happy couple are planning their official honeymoon for next year.
New Employees

Pragmatics welcomes the following new employees who joined the company from January 1 - May 31:

CHARWAN ALLEN  WILLIAM FANARAS  DOUGLAS LOWARY  ANNA SMITH
KIRAN ANNAMREDDY  DAVID FELTS  JAMES MAO  MICHAEL SMITH
OBINNA ARIRI  MARK FENLONG  AMEER MILLING  AARON STAFFORD
DIANE BAKER  MATTHEW FRAZIER  DERMOT MITCHELL  MICHAEL STURM
RON BANDY  SEMARJA FREEMAN  JASON MOSELEY  MONICA RAYNOR
RAJENDRA BAPAT  TIM FULCHER  JOHN NGUYEN  DORA TANN
MARIO BLANCAS  MEENA GANTELA  LARRY OWENS  DEREK TAPSCOTT
BRIAN BRILHART  PAUL GELENCSER  HIREN PATEL  BENJAMIN TETENBAUM
ERNEST BRYANT  VANDANA GOYAL  CATHERINE PAUL  DAVID TODD
RICHARD CHEN  FRANK HAN  ANDREW PRATT  GERARD TODD
ADITYA CHENNADI  MAURY HARRIS  ADAM REIDENBACH  KURT VAZ-ANTROBUS
SEONG CHO  ALEX HOEY  EMMANUEL RIDDLE  MATTHEW WALLACE
KRISTINA CHYLINSKI  MARCUS HOUSTON  MICHAEL RODRIGUES  MING WANG
EILEEN CILIBERTO  NOOSHA HUSSAIN  KIM SAWYER  DOUG WATT
LOGAN COMPTON  TROY IOANNOU  ADAM SCHMITT  TANYA WATTS
JUSTIN CUNNINGHAM  JEANINE JACOB  DANIEL SHIFERAW  BRAD WATZLAVICK
JASPER DU  CYNTHIA JAMERSON  ALLEN SHIN  JEFANTHI-FLORA
ROGER EDGE  DAVID JENNINGS  KEVIN SIMMONS  WESLEY
VALERIE FAIRCLOTH  NGUYEN-VU LIEU  ALVERTIS SMITH  ERIC WESTERVELT
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