

Creative Services, Inc. Celebrates 30th Anniversary
Launches Updated Website with Expanded Online Functions

In 1976, Alan T. Sklar became partner in a private investigation firm that would soon emerge as Creative Services, Inc. under his sole control and leadership. Headquartered in Mansfield, MA, CSI offered a broad range of services to attorneys, insurance companies, corporations and financial institutions including surveillance, claims adjudication, theft investigation, undercover operations, and due diligence inquiries. Recognizing the need to proactively address causation and prevention, Sklar assembled an expert staff adding security consulting and loss control programs. In 1988, the Background Screening Division was formally established, and in 2004, CSI opened a dedicated Nuclear Screening Operations Center in Chapin, SC to more efficiently manage the progressively specialized needs of an industry it had been serving since 1985. Today, background screening is CSI's primary concentration, with strategically designed screening support and security consulting services complementing its screening programs.

"It is an exceptionally gratifying accomplishment," says Sklar of his company's longevity. "I attribute it to understanding our clients' business, identifying their needs, and hiring individuals who embrace investigative thinking and superior customer service." The decision to refine the company's focus on background screening evolved from necessity, for both CSI and its clients. Despite CSI's longstanding advocacy of screening, companies were reluctant to commit to the concept and investment due to conflicting priorities and budgetary constraints. Now, applicant screening is endorsed and even mandated as a result of the changing landscape. Consequently, the background screening industry has itself become increasingly regulated. "The greatest changes and challenges to the business have been in the areas of consumer protection compliance and information technology," reflected Sklar. "It requires constant vigilance to remain current with legislative developments and preferred client delivery systems. We have always kept abreast of guidelines to safeguard our clients and have sought out reliable informational resources. We are now concentrating on enhancing our internal capabilities, integrating innovative software systems and partnering with providers who deliver state-of-the art, value-added services."

CSI's revamped website is easier to read and navigate and clearly identifies the company's expanded service offerings. Several sections are devoted to client and consumer education, in line with CSI's commitment to this function. Summaries of government acts related to the employment process are supplied along with links to the complete texts, relevant agencies and articles. The "Consumer Resources" section provides applicants with information to assist them in understanding and participating in the screening process. Clients and applicants are furnished with downloadable versions of standard employment and Fair Credit Reporting Act (FCRA) forms and notices. CSI is also finalizing improvements to its web-based client access applications, expected to be fully operational in late Spring 2006. In addition to assimilating the most up-to-date security enhancements, CSI's software program will make it easier to submit applicant information and grant greater flexibility in ordering specific background component searches. It will both simplify and expand options for retrieving, reviewing and archiving results. Daily status reports in easy-to-read HTML can be generated along with "real-time" management reports to monitor turnaround times and criminal hit ratios.

CSI is currently exploring a software integration program that would automate Unescorted Access Authorization (UAA) processing for its nuclear industry clients. The program would simplify Fitness For Duty (FFD) testing, facilitate Personal Access Data System (PADS) information exchange and incorporate a wide range of compliance and management capabilities associated with the nuclear screening process. CSI serves over 25% of the country's nuclear plants, plant operators, plant units and licensed contractors. With two thirds of US nuclear plant capacity located in the eastern half of the country, CSI's South Carolina Nuclear Screening Operations Center provides a convenient location for Nuclear Energy Institute (NEI) auditors who travel to this location to conduct their mandatory annual audits.

Technological advancements aside, Sklar believes that “the core of our business is the quality of the information obtained and how it is communicated to the client. Our emphasis on investigative technique and customer service is not misplaced. We have clients who have been disappointed with the “cookie cutter” service of larger, more automated firms that lack flexibility and personalization, and yield less meaningful, even inaccurate, results.” As testament to that sentiment, 90% of CSI’s business has been conducted with repeat clients, several relationships spanning decades. Its client base has increased over 20% each year since 2000, with new clientele being drawn from non-nuclear energy, medical and bio-technical industries as well as from higher education institutions and staffing agencies. International background screening is on the rise as a product of global expansion as is the demand for integration of screening programs with Human Resource Information Systems (HRIS).

As founding member of the National Association of Professional Background Screeners (NAPBS), CSI is looking forward to participating in their accreditation process slated to begin later this year. This proactive organization has set forth rigorous compliance standards that will benefit CSI, its clients and the industry as a whole.