

*The 38th Annual*

# *Civil Servant*



*of the Year*

# *Awards*

*2015*



The Federal Executive Board of Minnesota  
presents

*The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual*  
*Civil Servant of the Year*  
*Awards*

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*The 38<sup>th</sup> Annual  
Civil Servant of the Year  
Awards Luncheon*

Program

Opening Ceremony.....*Cliff Van Leuven*  
*Chair, Federal Executive Board*

Banquet

Keynote.....*Chris Coleman*  
*Mayor of St. Paul*

Awards Ceremony & FOLD Graduation.....*Alyssa Bryan*  
*Acting Director, Federal Executive Board*

Presentation of Top Honors.....*Alyssa Bryan*  
*Acting Director, Federal Executive Board*

Closing.....*Alyssa Bryan*  
*Acting Director, Federal Executive Board*



## *About the Awards*

This program honors outstanding Minnesotan Federal employees who have demonstrated exceptional performance and dedication as public servants during Calendar Year 2015, both in the workplace and in the community.

We should all be proud of the many contributions to American society that these individuals have performed in service to the Citizens of the United States of America.

*Awards booklet printing courtesy of Long Term Care Insurance Partners*



# *Policy Board 2015*

**Cliff Van Leuven, *Chair***  
**Transportation Security Administration**

**Dr. Michael Dutcher, *1st Vice Chair***  
**Food and Drug Administration**

**CDR Jane Moraski, *2nd Vice Chair***  
**Joint Reserve Intelligence Center**

**John Scott, *Treasurer***  
**Veteran's Affairs**

**Col. Todd McCubbin**  
**U.S. Air Force Reserve, 934th Airlift Wing**

**Sharon Lubinski**  
**U.S. Marshal's Service, District of Minnesota**

**Jon Lovold**  
**USDA APHIS**

**Scott Sweetow**  
**Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco & Firearms, St. Paul Field  
Division**

**Diane Rosen**  
**DOI - Bureau of Indian Affairs**

**Daniel Kammann (Standing)**  
**General Service Administration**

**Richard Thorton**  
**Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation**

**Diane Langer (Ex officio)**  
**Federal Aviation Administration**

**John Anfinson**  
**National Park Service**

**Capt. Richard Henderson**  
**U.S. Naval Reserve**

**James Stark**  
**Department of the Interior, U.S. Geological Survey**

**Tom Melius**  
**Fish & Wildlife Services**

**Nancy Libersky**  
**Small Business Administration**

**Jon Langenfeld**  
**U.S. Postal Service**

**Mary Newcomb**  
**Internal Revenue Service**

**Dexter J. Sidney**  
**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development**

**Chester Slipek (Ex officio)**  
**Farm Credit Administration**

**Derrell Turner**  
**DOT - Federal Highway Administration**

**Michael Johnson**  
**Social Security Administration**

**Col. Charles Rodke**  
**MN Air National Guard, 133rd Airlift Wing**

**Sam Schuth**  
**Corporation for National and Community Service**

**Barry Bahl (At large)**  
**Veterans Affairs Medical Center, St. Cloud**

**Col. Daniel Koprowski**  
**U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

**Dan Luna (Ex officio)**  
**Commerce/NOAA, National Weather Service**

**Patrick Kelly**  
**Veterans Affairs Medical Center, Minneapolis**

**Colleen Landkamer (Ex officio)**  
**USDA Rural Development**

**Gary Olsen**  
**DHS Customs and Border Protection**

**Kim Graves**  
**Veterans Affairs, Benefits Regional Office**

**Vikki Soukup**  
**Veterans Affairs, Debt Management Center**

# *Blue Ribbon Panel 2015*

**Bill Raker**

U.S. Federal Credit Union

**Mike Surface**

HIWAY Federal Credit Union

**Estelle Arnaud-Battandier**

Canadian Consulate

**Dave Kelley**

American Red Cross

**Shelly Schafer**

Office of U.S. Senator

Al Franken

## *Federal Outreach & Leadership Development Program Cohort*

**Kris Pich**

VA Debt Management Center

**Nicole Haselberger**

VA Debt Management Center

**Melinda Howe**

DHS Citizenship & Immigration Service

**Jaime Renner**

Corp for National & Community Service

**Thomas Wesley**

USDA Animal Plant Health Inspection Service

**John Brown**

Air Force 934th AirLift Wing

**Corey Stoglin**

DOL Wage & Hour Division

**Steven Moe**

Minnesota National Guard

**Jason Virkus**

Air Force 934th AirLift Wing

**Heidi Wiest**

Federal Aviation Administration

**Lindsey Liddell**

DOS Mpls Passport Agency

**Margo Schroeder**

Air Force 934th AirLift Wing

**Jennifer Rechtferdig**

Minnesota National Guard

**Bridget Katz**

USDA Rural Development

**Donna Zanger**

Fish & Wildlife Services

**Stephen Millen**

Federal Mediation & Conciliation Service

**Tina Gauthier**

Housing & Urban Development

**Timothy Facile**

Food & Drug Administration

**Courtney Tiegs**

Food & Drug Administration



The Federal Executive Board of Minnesota  
presents the

*2015 Finalists*

*for the*



*Civil Servant of the Year  
Awards*



**Ryan Noel**

Chaplain Assistant NCO

MN Army National Guard

SGT Ryan Noel distinguished himself through superb administration of the Minnesota Army National Guard’s Strong Bonds program. In his first year of employment as a federal technician, SGT Noel facilitated an audit of the program with no recommendations for improvement cited as a result of his efforts. In addition, the Chaplain’s Office at National Guard Bureau noted Minnesota as a “Top Ten” state for Strong Bonds planning, preparation, and execution, and assessment. His excellence in execution resulted in 17 successful Strong Bonds events for nearly 500 participants whose personal and relational resilience was positively impacted in support of the Adjutant General’s priority to provide a “Competent and Ready Force” to our state and nation.



**Nathan B. Ellison**

AF-16 Hydraulic Specialist

148th Fighter Wing

SSgt Ellison volunteered to be the point of contact for the College of St. Scholastica’s Thanksgiving Day Buffet. This event provides over 5000 needy individuals and families with a holiday meal on our nation’s blessed day. SSgt Ellison gathers the names of 148th members who are willing to provide over 500 hours of community support by preparing the food or delivering the meals to people who cannot travel. He is a member of the 148th Bulldog Enlisted Council. Within his service for the BEC, SSgt Ellison worked on a home of a family who could not afford remodeling expenses. He helped repair, paint and upgrade the home, giving over 50 hours to the project. SSgt Ellison exudes the motto “Serving Our Country; Supporting Our Community!”



**Jonathan Highness**

Regional Cognizant Security Authority (CSA)

Chief of Naval Operations, N2N6 Intelligence Protection, Special Security Office  
Navy

Mr. Jonathan Highness epitomizes the finest example of 21st century leadership, innovation, and resourcefulness. He is the leading security authority for all Naval Intelligence assets in his vast 19-state region. He leads and mentors dozens of joint military and multiple government agency Security Professionals. His proven mission success led to an increase in his area of responsibility, which doubled to over 2,000 personnel, while maintaining the highest level of excellence. He leads and integrates National Intelligence Community partners (Military, Federal, and Industry) by coordinating inter-agency use of 60 Operational Intelligence facilities. Additionally, he is an active leader in his local and church communities. Mr. Highness’ inspirational leadership directly contributed to greater mission success, increased awareness of national security, and ensures greater protection to our nation.



**Brad Moffett**

Electronics Engineer

Defense Contract Management Agency  
(DCMA)

Mr. Brad Moffett is an exceptional Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) Twin Cities engineer, responsible for the latest General Dynamics defense systems, weapons, and advanced warfighting equipment. Brad’s performance, unmatched during his 10-year tenure with DCMA, ensured the Department of Defense received what it paid for, from initial design to final production. During 2014, Brad accomplished eleven cost proposal technical reviews supporting F-18 and B-1 aircraft, resulting in \$2.8 million in savings. Additionally, he mentored engineers and industrial specialists conducting technical support to negotiations and progress reviews. Brad volunteered to serve as Engineer Supervisor for 30 days during a critical time, earned five customer Letters of Appreciation, and an On-the-Spot Award. Brad’s professionalism and dedication reflect great credit on himself, DCMA, and Department of Defense.

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## Rebecca Virnig

Cost-Price Analyst

Defense Contract Management Agency  
(DCMA)

Ms Rebecca Virnig exceeded all expectations as a Defense Contract Management Agency (DCMA) cost/price analyst Keystone. She distinguished herself as an extraordinary professional, able to handle a complex workload and tackle any acquisition challenge. As an intern, she performed in-depth evaluation analysis on 32 pricing cases totaling \$309 million. Rebecca received numerous accolades from multiple defense Mission Partners praising superior work that enabled productive and cost-effective negotiations. Simultaneously, she performed cost monitoring duties for United Health Care System, a workload indicative of much more senior analysts. Additionally, Rebecca positively impacted office morale as the unit's Friendship Fund Committee President responsible for organizing fundraising activities and providing for employee well-being. Ms Virnig's dedication and motivation reflect great credit upon on herself, DCMA, and Department of Defense.



## Jill Belanger

Human Resources Specialist (IT)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS),  
U.S. Customs & Border Protection

Jill coordinates the work in the area of information systems to help revise/improve the systems platform (HRBE) which is used for a variety of tasks in Human Resources. HRBE documents all pre-employment requirements such as qualification reviews, assessment tests, medical exams, drug tests, structured interviews, fitness tests, polygraph exams, and background investigations. HRBE is used to keep track of the thousands of applicants in process for our law enforcement positions and maintain records on completion of requirements. Jill also pulls data from HRBE for reports to track progress toward goals and metrics. Jill works with all the different staffing technical areas to create changes in HRBE which streamline and improve our work processes. Jill is very much a change agent for our office.



## Mary Her

Human Resources Specialist (IT)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS),  
U.S. Customs & Border Protection

Mary's contributions have been substantial. Even when she gets general directions, she provides complete outcomes. She creates reports for departmental requirements, aids her teammates, and does whatever is needed. Mary's independence and creative solutions have helped to streamline the work and accurately report on workload statistics in a variety of reports sent to all levels of management. Mary independently did extensive research for a process improvement project. Her excellent recommendations improved the process so that it required only 25% of previous staff time. She became the Lead on Process Improvement and provided leadership and training on LEAN methods. Mary developed the first performance measurement and workload tracking measure for one of our branches. This helped to improve performance and created clear rewards for excellent performance.



## Jeremy Olson

Senior Import Specialist

Department of Homeland Security (DHS),  
U.S. Customs & Border Protection

Jeremy Olson deserves to be recognized for the outstanding dedication and professionalism he has displayed as a Senior Import Specialist with the Area Service Port of Minneapolis. Jeremy is always willing to learn and extend himself to help management, his co-workers, and the importing public. This past year, he volunteered to take on additional responsibilities in another work unit when the office was short staffed, all while seamlessly executing his regular duties. Jeremy has always been dedicated to helping the import community overcome various challenges with a professional attitude. He takes the time to research issues and provide detailed solutions to problems. Jeremy has a great work ethic, continually exceeds expectations, and is a positive asset to this agency.

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### Jeffrey Powers

Agriculture Specialist (K-9)

Department of Homeland Security (DHS),  
U.S. Customs & Border Protection

U.S. Customs and Border Protection Agriculture Specialist Jeffrey Powers was instrumental in finding a pest which was not previously intercepted in the United States. Powers and his K9 partner Lolly found a passenger with fresh lavender coming from France in July 2014. The fresh plant material was seized and found to be infested with live insects. Powers knew that this pest was a unique find. He used the resources at his disposal to identify the insect. After submitting the insect to USDA identifiers in Chicago, he learned the identity of the insect. It was a *Merrifieldi spicidactyla* Chretien. This interception may have saved the United States from another invasive insect getting established and causing damage to our agricultural commodities and natural resources.



### James Baltazar

Senior Management Analyst

Department of Housing Urban Development (HUD)

James spearheaded the creation of the first HUD mobile application to search nationally for federally subsidized housing opportunities, homeless resources, HUD field offices, and USDA rural housing properties. This program was publically recognized by HUD's Secretary Julian Castro recently. James also worked with the U.S. Small Business Administration to create a national website and mobile application to connect small contractors, including Section 3 and Minority/Women/Disadvantaged Business Enterprises, to bid opportunities through locally-funded HUD grantees. Both projects will be released in 2015. James was also selected to participate in the Emerging Leaders Program, a competitively selected training program for HUD's high performing employees to develop effective leadership skills.



### Rachel Coleman

Senior Account Executive

Department of Housing Urban Development (HUD), Office of Residential Care Facilities

Rachel Coleman exemplified excellence in FY14 with her leadership in two significant special projects. Ms. Coleman took a lead role across program areas to transform HUD's Previous Participation process from an administrative burden to a risk-based, user friendly process. These changes will benefit clients across multiple program areas. She also took the lead to coordinate logistics for HUD's 232 training involving 200 participants. In addition to providing information to participants and sourcing all the meeting requirements, she resourcefully arranged for excellent space in the Minneapolis Central Library, and even featured music from a local artist during breaks. These efforts reflected well on both HUD and Minneapolis. These efforts raise the bar of excellence in government, and benefit HUD and HUD's clients.



### Paul Pooler

Fire Ecologist

Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs

Paul Pooler serves both BIA Midwest and Great Plains Regions as Fire ecologist. Paul is also in demand as a firefighter nationally, and serves as a Lead Fire Investigator, providing critical support in criminal arson investigations and fire prevention efforts. Paul has also led ecological restoration efforts on Indian reservations throughout the two Regions with a focus on smaller, under-served reservations, in some communities being recognized as the face of the BIA. In addition, he has stepped in to contribute to the development statewide spatial fire management plans in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota to put the Midwest Region in the vanguard of utilizing cutting-edge technology. In spite of his formidable workload Paul maintains good humor and supports his comrades, who look up to him.

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### Marion Valeske

Legal Admin Specialist

Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Great Lakes Agency

Mrs. Valeske, Legal Administrative Specialist has demonstrated exceptional excellence beyond expectation, working with families that have lost resent family members. This work is emotionally draining, that is compounded substantially when a staff of six was reduced to three. To further challenge Mrs. Valeske two of the members of her team suffered illnesses, which resulted in the team being her. As the only probate staff on the case load Mrs. Valeske never once complained and eagerly accepted the challenge with the satisfaction of knowing she was accomplishing a greater mission to those in need. Single handedly she completed 260% of the case load expected from any one employee. Performing beyond expectations in excellence was the key to ensuring the agency met its case preparation for 2014.



### Bryan Braun

Civil Engineer Technician

Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Midwest Region

Bryan is consistently one of those “Unsung Hero” type federal employees, always setting a good example, never asking for recognition – just rolling his sleeves up and working hard to represent and provide the best services possible to the Tribes. Bryan dedicates significant personal time and resources to obtain current design/survey training material. This past fiscal year, Bryan has provided exceptional customer service to the Tribes on 10 significant transportation projects for 7 tribes including surveys, designs, and construction inspection – always resulting in successful projects and delivery of services. Also, Bryan is the lead survey equipment/training coordinator - ensuring our complex survey equipment is always up to standard and allowing our 4 MRO Roads offices to maintain consistency providing the most qualitative and efficient services possible.



### Jill Graves

Contact Representative

Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Minnesota Agency

Jill began her career with the Bureau of Indian Affairs 12 years ago. Jill is always willing to go the extra mile with a high degree of skill and loyalty to all who request her assistance. This past year she completed a detail in Administration, assisting our Agency Superintendent and Regional Director. Jill’s excellence in commitment, attitude and loyalty has been witnessed in her work of organizing, coordinating and attending Regional budget meetings, providing assistance and working closely with the Midwest’s tribes on Budget Formulation, and her continued support of arranging travel. Jill willingly, and always with a smile, continues to assist the Agency with these and many more collateral duties. Jill’s spirit, leadership, professionalism, and commitment are most deserving of this award.



### Karie Reishus

Accountant

Department of the Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)

Karie Reishus has used her considerable private sector experience with big data in large companies such as Schwans and U.S. Bank to promote quality financial management within key U.S. Fish and Wildlife programs. Ms. Reishus serves as the management accountant for the Midwest Region’s Science Applications and External Affairs programs. In this role, Ms. Reishus works directly with leading edge scientists and communication professionals in providing a full suite of financial analytics. She also applies business analyst tools (i.e. process diagrams and responsibility assignment matrix) with continuous improvement teams to enhance financial processes throughout the Midwest Region.

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### Michael Brindel

Administrative Assistant

Department of the Navy, Navy Recruiting  
District Minneapolis

Mr. Michael Brindel diligently performed his duties as Defense Travel System (DTS) Facilitator, Transportation Agent, DTS Administrator and Transportation Clerk producing superior results. He flawlessly managed agency travel allocation of \$180K; processed 500 travel vouchers and conducted DTS user interface training for 200 personnel with zero discrepancies. His efforts facilitated the timely execution of Navy Recruiting District Minneapolis' travel requirements and directly contributed to the accession of over 1,200 enlisted and officer candidates into the United States Navy. Additionally, he assumed the critical duties for the vacant District Government Vehicle Coordinator position. His administrative expertise ensured 100% accountability of 140 Government Leased Vehicles and proved vital to the effective planned maintenance which extended the life-cycle of the vehicles.



### Robert Alexander

Airway Transportation Sys Spec (ATSS)

Department of Transportation (DOT),  
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Robert Alexander is a highly motivated and dedicated Airway Transportation System Specialist working at the Minneapolis Air Traffic Control Tower, one of the busiest in the country. He is responsible for the maintenance and certification of critical navigational and communication systems that ensure the continued safety of the flying public in collaboration with the Airport Commission and the airline partners. Robert is highly respected by his coworkers and customers. He is also active in his community. Robert serves as the Vice Chairman of Northwood Church Leadership Team leading their annual retreat which has blossomed to over 60 participants. He is a pillar of the church providing much needed guidance and counseling to those in need, an example of his willingness to better his local community.



### Sean Fortier

Frontline Manager

Department of Transportation (DOT),  
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Sean improved the Military Operations Specialist Position by leading the development of procedures for, and managing the training of Minneapolis Enroute Center(ZMP ARTCC) personnel regarding: the Special Use Airspace (SUA) Coordination and Organizational Tool; ZMP Global Hawk operations; Special Interest Flight Operations; Weather Coordinator duties; Mitigation of low altimeter impact to SUAs; Restricted Area airspace handling procedures; and standardized SUA coordination procedures. Sean's dedication and collaborative approach to finding solutions for known procedural gaps is unparalleled and has had a tremendous impact on safety at ZMP ARTCC. The leadership and follow thru exhibited to his peers and workforce set the standard for managers.



### Carl E. Rydeen

Assistant Terminal District Manager

Department of Transportation (DOT),  
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Carl exemplifies community service through his volunteer efforts, using his love of aviation as a way to 'pay it forward.' Volunteering for Young Eagles, providing free flights to student's ages 8-17. He uses his personal aircraft, time and fuel. Other examples include: flying a neighbor and their child to a halfway house for drug intervention; flying a local student to the twin cities to attend college two days a week; flying members of the Franciscan Sisters of Little Falls to the Minneapolis airport to catch a flight for a mission trip; and taking aerial photos of the Little Falls Arts and Crafts Fair. He runs the scoreboard at high school hockey games and is active in his church. Carl's commitment to community is admirable.

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**John Shelerud**

Air Traffic Control Specialist

Department of Transportation (DOT),  
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Mr. Shelerud is a true professional. As an Air Traffic Controller at Minneapolis Tower, John routinely goes out of his way to help the pilots, his fellow controllers, and the management team. John is known to go above and beyond, including skipping breaks to accomplish training or provide support to fellow controllers. John was a subject matter expert for the terminal environment for the implementation of Enroute Automation Modernization (ERAM), visiting many facilities countrywide, ensuring the workforce understood the implementation process. Outside of his duties as a controller, John served on the Executive Council for Minnesota Aviation Education Camps, utilizing many hours of his own personal time in planning meetings, developing the camp web-site; and as budget chair, keeping the camps fiscally efficient.



**Ann Stegmaier**

Administrative Officer

Department of Transportation (DOT),  
Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

As the sole Administrative Officer for the Minneapolis Flight Standards District Office, Ms. Stegmaier constantly and consistently exceeds expectations. Ms. Stegmaier displays a high degree of honesty, loyalty, integrity and persistence. She is committed to the organization's goals and takes pride in a job well done. Ann clearly understands that our Agency operates in a fast changing environment, and as such, she must adapt, adopt and persevere, which she does flawlessly. Ann's strong functional knowledge of the FAA and her interpersonal skills enable her to effectively manage the daily demands of the entire office. She is clearly the glue that holds the office together. It is a privilege and an honor to nominate Ann Stegmaier for the 38th Annual Civil Servant of the Year Award.



**James McCarthy**

Traffic Operations Engineer

Department of Transportation (DOT),  
Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)

Jim has contributed greatly to improving Minnesota's transportation system through his efforts at advancing innovations in traffic operations. He has championed the use of non-traditional interchanges, the use of shoulders by buses and the use of Intelligent Transportation System technologies to provide real time travel information to the public. A strong advocate for pedestrian safety, Jim has promoted the use of both innovative intersection designs and new technologies to enhance safety for motorists and pedestrians alike. Jim has been recognized for his expertise in traffic operations and traffic flow theory. He has served on national committees responsible for developing the highway capacity analysis procedures and shares his knowledge through the many training classes he conducts both in Minnesota and nationally.



**Trenton Kolden**

Loan Specialist

Department of Veterans Affairs

Trenton Kolden embodies the spirit of the Community Award. He volunteered to be the St. Paul Regional Office Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) coordinator. Based on the committee's efforts, employees donated more than \$22,000 to charitable organizations. He also volunteered to represent VA at a Minnesota Assistance Council for Veterans event for Veterans and their families affected by homelessness. A fixture at the Minnesota State Fair Veteran's Appreciation Day, you'll find Trenton answering questions and canvassing the crowd. In the fall, he coordinated with local chapters of the Disabled American Veterans and organized fellow employees to rake leaves for four families of Veterans needing assistance. Trenton is also an active member of the Anoka American Legion assisting with bingo and coordinating Color Guards for various events.

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## Jean Orzechowicz

Management Analyst

Department of Veterans Affairs

Ms. Orzechowicz provides the foundation for Pension Management Center (PMC). She performs the work of multiple Management Analysts in a division of over 350 employees, during extended absences of her coworkers. She regularly dedicates additional hours to ensure reports are published timely, data is pulled accurately, and the operations of the office continue uninterrupted. Specifically, during a five-week period last year she selflessly worked 60 additional hours. Ms. Orzechowicz manages multiple duties, projects, and timelines with exceptional results. Additionally, she ensures PMC management staff stays on task with their assignments and meet their deadlines. Ms. Orzechowicz's personal initiative, professionalism, and selfless dedication to duty reflect great credit upon her and uphold the highest traditions of the VA.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

## Nathan H. Wallerstedt

Project Manager

Dept. of Defense (DOD), U.S. Army Corps  
of Engineers (USACE), St. Paul District

Mr. Wallerstedt continually exceeds expectations both at work and in his personal life; he is strong leader dedicated to helping people, and stepping up anytime something needs to get done. Mr. Wallerstedt's leadership, dedication and commitment have directly improved the lives of thousands of people living in the communities of Roseau, Minnesota by reducing the risk of catastrophic flooding and Minot, North Dakota by leading efforts to repair damaged levees and pushing for implementation of a permanent solution. On an individual basis, Mr. Wallerstedt's commitment and dedication as a coach and mentor directly impacts lives of each and every team member of the "Black Diamonds" ski team which is associated with the special Olympics. Mr. Wallerstedt has a desire to see other people succeed.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

## Aaron W. Buesing

Hydraulic Engineer

Dept. of Defense (DOD), U.S. Army Corps  
of Engineers (USACE), St. Paul District

Aaron was selected to be the lead hydraulic engineer for the \$1.7B Fargo-Moorhead-Metro Flood Risk Management Project (FMMFRM). FMMFRM is the largest project in the history of the St. Paul District. For the last four years, Aaron has provided technical review and direction on the project. His commitment to this project has meant working significant amounts of overtime and delaying the use of his annual leave. Aaron's ability to lead and facilitate has allowed FMMFRM to keep moving toward safe and reliable flood protection. Aaron has a strong sense of community and believes in using his skills and abilities to help others. He serves on the finance committee of his church and volunteers many hours in support of his son's school and church activities.



**US Army Corps  
of Engineers**

## Monique E. Johs

Secretary

Dept. of Defense (DOD), U.S. Army Corps  
of Engineers (USACE), St. Paul District

Monique Johs is an outstanding civil servant. She is a highly skilled secretary that is called upon to train others and leads an administrative team that supports emergency deployments for natural disasters, including the June 2014 Minnesota floods. Her technical skill is enhanced by authentic caring and generosity towards others. At work, Monique has mentored and trained a deaf employee, helping to bring that employee to the full performance level. She was a driving force in organizing a sign language course that was attended by over 30 employees. Those employees not only learned simple sign language, but gained a greater understanding of deaf culture and the challenges of communicating in a hearing impaired environment.

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## Dawn M. Linder

Contract Specialist

Dept. of Defense (DOD), U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), St. Paul District

Dawn is the consummate professional. During her 37-year career with the Corps of Engineers, her considerable technical and business competencies have had a tremendous impact throughout the St. Paul District. Her interpersonal and problem-solving skills, teamwork, integrity, and customer service are self-evident and these characteristics have led her to her current appointment as a warranted contracting officer. Dawn has been an exceptional role model and leader for the Contracting Division as well as a diligent and caring teacher and mentor. She has provided leadership, expert advice, guidance, and uncompromising service to the St. Paul District throughout her career. As the District expert on architect-engineer contracts, she is an invaluable asset to not only Contracting but the Engineering and Construction Division, the District, and the Region.



## Carlos Cox

Deputy Assistant Federal Security Director

Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

Deputy Assistant Federal Security Director (DAFSD) Carlos Cox led multiple initiatives at the Minneapolis – St. Paul International (MSP) Airport this year that resulted in a more secure and customer friendly experience at MSP with approximately 11 million passengers in 2014. He oversaw efforts to use risk-based security by using technology and human processes to screen more passengers, more efficiently, in less time, and with fewer resources. As a result, MSP has become one of the top airports in the country with regard to customer satisfaction in security as shown in Airport Service Quality and airline-specific customer satisfaction surveys. His leadership rallied employees to support change while providing world-class security and world-class customer service.



## Ann-Marie Dippong

Transportation Security Officer

Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

Anne-Marie Dippong joined TSA in 2004 as a Transportation Security Officer. Since that time she has taken on increased roles to oversee our payroll operation for over 850 employees in Minnesota. When our former payroll specialist unexpectedly resigned, Ann-Marie quickly assumed the role as the lead payroll specialist based on her experience on the payroll team. Surprisingly, payroll operations have improved! Ms. Dippong completes all of this very significant volume of work without complaint and does not seek attention while performing as a Transportation Security Officer screening passengers at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. Her professionalism and willingness to volunteer for increased responsibility is humbling. She has the admiration and respect of our workforce and we are blessed to have her on our team.



## Paul Serreyn

Frontline Manager

Department of Transportation (DOT), Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

Mr. Serreyn served as the SUPCOM Chair for Minneapolis Center representing the Frontline Supervisors' Team. Paul is highly regarded among his peers, his employees, and upper management for his dedication, expertise, and professionalism. He successfully created a vision, raised performance to a higher standard and directed accomplishment of organizational goals/objectives. Paul's involvement in the LDPI (Front Line Managers Professional Standards) Program ensured the success of this program for the Agency. Paul consistently demonstrates the caring and commitment that is critical for our organization to fulfill our mission. It is through the positive efforts and leadership of people like Paul that we will ensure that the FAA continues to be the best at what we do.

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### Keelan Sweeney

Transportation Security Inspector

Dept. of Homeland Security (DHS), Transportation Security Administration (TSA)

Keelan Sweeney serves as a Transportation Security Inspector – Surface (TSI-S) for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). In this capacity, he has excelled at all aspects of inspection and outreach responsibilities and is a subject matter expert in his field. Mr. Sweeney has demonstrated his commitment to “Excellence Beyond Expectations” by redesigning the nationwide initiative Baseline Assessments for Security Enhancement (BASE) for the TSA Surface Program. His personal effort and commitment to the program has produced a product that has singlehandedly redirected the TSA Surface Program into a cooperative, risked based program. Mr. Sweeney is recognized as an individual capable of identifying an opportunity of improvement and successfully implementing change on a grand scale.



### Deborah Olson

Revenue Officer/Technical Reviewer

Dept. of Treasury, Internal Revenue Service

Deborah Olson is nominated for Civil Servant of the Year in the categories of Professional and Skilled/Trades. Deb has an immense institutional knowledge of the IRS and various Collection Programs. With this vast knowledge, Deb is a natural teacher for new advisors, her peers and customers. She is able to effectively discuss the variety of complicated Collection enforcement and lien issues with internal and external customers. Deb has received commendations on her testimony from the Department of Justice and is the go-to person for IRS Counsel and DOJ. Deb contributes to a positive and collaborative work group environment. Without hesitation, Deb assists a peer who has limited mobility and is homebound. She does all of this while being the primary caretaker for her aging parents.



### Timothy G. Philips

Compliance Officer

Food & Drug Administration

Mr. Timothy G. Philips has served as a Compliance Officer (CO) with the Food and Drug Administration’s (FDA) Minneapolis District for nearly fifteen years. In addition to his regular duties during calendar year 2014, Timothy managed a preliminary injunction case, and also concurrently managed consent decree negotiations with another medical device firm. Timothy volunteered to take on additional work to aid understaffed FDA District Offices. On numerous occasions Timothy volunteered to provide training to District employees, FDA employees from other Districts, University students, and industry groups. CO Timothy Philips is worthy of consideration for the FEB Excellence Beyond Expectations Award. He consistently volunteers to go above and beyond his routine duties and serves as a role model for other Federal Employees



### Trish R. Wood

Consumer Safety Technician

Food & Drug Administration

Trish Wood demonstrates excellent technical abilities along with FDA knowledge to support the Minneapolis District Office. Trish provides others with assistance in using the various computer programs including the features, shortcuts, and reviewing of documents. Her knowledge has helped many increase their knowledge and efficiency when using these programs. Trish has taken on additional duties such as maintaining her supervisory group’s trainings records, which is an important part of the Investigations Branch Quality Assurance Program, maintains the deadline list, electronic inventory check in/out of equipment, and conducts recall audit checks. Trish provides feedback to processes and forms when she notices there are possible efficiency increases or errors present in the forms. These actions show her commitment to improving the District Office and Agency operations.

*2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Kristopher B. Lemm

Automotive Inspector

J4, Director of Logistics, Combined Maintenance Activity, Camp Ripley

Throughout 26 years of military service and 20 years of Federal service, SFC Lemm has exemplified “the citizen soldier” and what an impact one individual can have on a community. SFC Lemm is a lifetime member and current commander of VFW Post 893. He’s been active member of the American Legion for the past 23 years, Secretary of the Browerville Veterans Club, and active member in his local church for over 50 years. Serving a tour of duty in Basrah, Iraq, with the 34th Infantry Division only strengthened SFC Lemm’s sense of duty. Whether he proudly carries the colors for a high school sporting event or serving as a team member for a military funeral detail, SFC Lemm represents our organization with honor and pride.

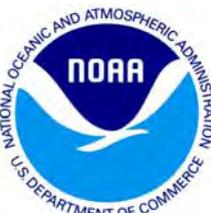


## Ryan Hoffman

Public Health Technician

Minnesota Air National Guard

MSgt Ryan Hoffman established a new Periodic Health Assessment process for the Air National Guard to emulate. Under his direction, the 133rd Medical Group performed an unprecedented 820 assessments, 518 lab draws, 321 immunizations, 205 dental exams, 159 audiograms, and 65 post deployment health assessments in two days. Directing this process, he prepared 87 Medical Group members to staff this initiative. His efforts catapulted the 133rd Airlift Wing’s medical readiness rate from 71.2% to 89.6%, ranking fifth nationally, #1 regionally (May 2014) and ensured the health of America’s warfighters. The National Guard Bureau (NGB) requested after action reports outlining the success of this process and is investigating implementing nationally. Further, MSgt Hoffman was recognized by NGB leadership as an engaged leader, deliberately developing all airmen.



## Chris Franks

Meteorologist

NOAA/NWS

Chris Franks is an outstanding public servant who made many contributions to our agency, country, and profession. Chris recognized the importance of our local federal community being involved with those who needs are not always met. On his own time he organized a school supply drive where the office collected 14 bags of supplies or 4500 items for 4 schools. Chris produced a professional looking poster for FEB use, collected and organized those supplies, and personally delivered supplies to one of the schools. He also organized the office FEB Food Drive in recognition of Dr. Martin Luther King. The office collected 3,011 pounds of food, which was 65% greater than the previous year and we collected \$485 in cash donations (Enough donations for 4,147 meals).



## Nancy Brezina

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Nancy Brezina is a dedicated employee that goes beyond her assigned duties to get the job done. In addition to her own workload, she takes it upon herself to complete extra work assignments for her team. When a team member is out, she independently recognizes when they need assistance and voluntarily helps. She is committed to completing her assignments correctly the first time and produces a high quality work product. Nancy makes a significant contribution to achieve team and agency goals. She displays a positive attitude and promotes encouragement to others, which creates a productive work environment. She handles day-to-day challenges effectively and adjusts to multiple demands in a professional manner. Nancy is a valued employee to the Social Security Administration.

*2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Leona Hambrecht

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

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Leona served as an informal mentor to several newly hired and promoted coworkers. She made time each day to teach and share her knowledge. During this hectic and transitional time, Leona maintained her commitment to quality and outstanding public service. She showed unwavering dedication and initiative by completing accurate work and getting her newly hired and promoted coworkers trained and working accurately and efficiently.



## Kelly Hansen

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

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Mr. Hansen is an excellent Claims Rep who has a high degree of integrity and concern for the public. He takes pride in his work and is always willing to go the extra mile to ensure public satisfaction. Mr. Hansen also serves as a computer specialist for the staff and he consistently demonstrates a positive professional attitude with his peers and the public. We are very pleased to have him represent our office and the Agency as the Civil Servant of the Year.



## Patricia Hulet

Service Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

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Providing outstanding customer service is central to everything Patricia does on a daily basis as a Service Representative. Whether she is working with the public or with her co-workers, Patricia can be relied upon to provide confident and knowledgeable answers. She has excellent technical skills and is able to explain policy and procedures to the public in a clear and concise manner, always ensuring they understand. Her dedication to task and commitment to excellence is important to the success of the Austin Social Security office and the overall mission of Social Security.



## Amy Kimmes

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

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Ms. Kimmes has been an acknowledged leader in the Duluth district during her career with SSA. Her ability to interact clearly with the public and other agencies is exemplary. Amy is compassionate in providing outstanding and timely service to the public. Her capacity for learning and assimilating complex material allowed her to master various workloads while training others. Her knowledge of SSA's program has gained the respect and support of her colleagues. Ms. Kimmes embodies this award and is truly deserving of the designation of civil servant of the year.

2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Amanda Oney**

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Amanda Oney exemplifies the true meaning of public service. As a claims representative in the Marshall, MN field office, Amanda is on the frontlines assisting the public daily on everything from celebrating a retirement, to assisting those suffering the loss of a loved one. Amanda provides professional and courteous service no matter the complexity of the situation. Because of her attention to detail and her love of research, Amanda also serves as a technical resource to her co-workers. Amanda mentors newer employees and continually shares her knowledge with her experienced co-workers, while maintaining her own workload. Amanda Oney’s internal motivation and desire to help others is a shining example of a Civil Servant of the Year.



**Jaclyn Papiboune**

Area Operations Analyst

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Jaclyn is an outstanding Area Operations Analyst. Her determination in analyzing and sharing the wide array of agency statistics in a simple, well directed manner has vastly improved SSA’s service to the public in Minnesota and Northern Wisconsin. Jaclyn’s ability to share this data in an understandable format has improved the managerial skills in our offices. Never one to back down from a challenge, she serves as our lead in developing Microsoft SharePoint pages to share resources and data region wide. She is our lead in the marketing of SSA’s online suite of customer services. In addition to these duties Jaclyn tracks our overtime allocations and usage. She is a passionate team member who is flexible and supports all aspects of our administrative office.



**Patrick Sperry**

Enumeration Specialist

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Patrick is a dedicated public servant who believes in providing the best quality of service. The Twin City Social Security Card Center serves 400-500 people per day and he often stays late to help serve visitors remaining after office hours. He is a mentor to new Enumeration Specialists, and is very willing to share his expertise with those around him. His strong technical ability and approachability make him a go-to person for technical advice. He imparts his solid work ethic and efficient habits to new employees, nurturing and coaching them to become independent and self-reliant. He volunteers for extra duty and is willing to share his wealth of knowledge with his co-workers. He is a great asset to the Twin City Social Security Card Center.



**Lauhn Thao**

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Lauhn Thao is a true professional, skilled Claims Representative and team player. He exhibits a quiet a positive attitude and proves to be a very positive role model for his peers. He positively affects his team-members to have an impact on the overall Team cohesiveness. Lauhn has a true “can do” attitude. He has very quickly acquired technical proficiency and excelled in providing outstanding, compassionate and caring service to the public. Through his work as a member of the award-winning St. Paul eServices team, Lauhn has touched the lives of many Minnesota residents, by conducting outreaches on SSA online, presentations, workshops and other public venues.

*2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



**Paul Webster**

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration (SSA)

Paul works with the St. Cloud District’s Retirement, Survivors, and Disability unit, and exemplifies the meaning of teamwork and high-quality public service on a daily basis. Recognized throughout the office for his professionalism with the public and support of his team, Paul routinely provides unsolicited assistance to his colleagues by covering the general inquiry phone line, taking interviews, or assisting visitors when he sees the lobby filling with clients. It is common to overhear Paul asking a colleague or supervisor where he can pitch in if he finds himself with an open time slot due to an appointment cancellation. His helpfulness to others is matched only by his humility, never seeking recognition or praise from those around him.



**Debra Peterson**

Administrative Officer

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS)

Debra Peterson provided exceptional administrative leadership for a suite of complex Fish and Wildlife Service programs, including Endangered Species, Environmental Contaminants, Conservation Planning Assistance, the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative, and the National Wetlands Inventory. Debbie effectively managed a multi-million dollar base budget for each of these programs and reviewed and processed tens of millions in grants and reimbursable agreements. She provided expert, professional guidance to field-based administrative personnel spanning eight states, and even completed much of the field based work, when several administrative positions were vacated. Despite a huge workload and many long workdays, Debbie never wavered in her positive, helpful attitude. She ensured the Ecological Services program fulfilled its mission and served as a wonderful role model to a cadre of other administrative professionals.



**Justin Weingartz**

Property Manager

U.S. General Services Administration

During 2014, Justin went above and beyond to ensure in his duties to ensure the success and positive outcome of the renovation project and the B.H. Whipple Federal Building. In addition to providing exceptional support to all agencies returning to the building, he also showed exceptional dedication to ensure the project completed successfully. As contract a contract and a temporary appointment expired, Justin stepped in and assumed those two additional roles on the project team to ensure the project ended on schedule and on budget. He did all of this with a smile and the highest level of professionalism. His support and dedication to the Whipple Federal Building community is unparalleled and greatly appreciated.



**Max Jelle**

Human Resources Assistant (Military/OA)

United States Air Force Reserve, 934th Airlift Wing

Mr. Max Jelle is a gifted Force Management Human Resource Assistant for the Department of Defense. His strong administrative ability has resulted in the 934th Airlift Wing maintaining a 103 percent manning rate during extreme budget constraints. Dedicated to exceptional customer service, Mr. Jelle personally counseled 57 military members on the process of retraining and professional development. Mr. Jelle’s strong attention to detail decreased retraining time by 20 percent. Continuing his passion for process improvement, Mr. Jelle streamlined military hiring requirements, reducing the civilian hiring process by two weeks. A selfless team player, Mr. Jelle ensured his data management was accurately completed each quarter ensuring the organizations top 5 percent ranking within the command.

*2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Phillip P. Kvamme

Propulsion Flight Chief

United States Air Force Reserve, 934th  
Airlift Wing

Phillip Kvamme volunteered to step into a supervisory position in a section desperately in need of competent leadership. Phil immediately set about changing the culture of the section by empowering its workers to take ownership of the process. His collaborative approach achieved immediate results. He took a process that was producing an end product in excess of 24 days and reduced it to 19. The end result was an increase not only in aircraft availability and quality but also in morale and teamwork. The permanent hire leaned heavily on Phil to learn the new processes and benchmark the improved team communication and cooperation. To date the section has been on a steady upward climb due primarily to the innovative and exhaustive efforts of Mr. Kvamme.



## Michael P. Pierce

Aerospace Ground Equipment Supervisor

United States Air Force Reserve, 934th  
Airlift Wing

Michael Pierce displays vast knowledge as an Aerospace Ground Equipment Supervisor. He has the ability to evaluate a process and devise a plan to make it better. On a new Hydromite test set, Michael determined a shutoff valve should be installed to eliminate hydraulic fluid waste. This discovery amounted in saving the Air Force \$140,000 annually. Michael has also submitted 71 technical orders changes with 100% approval rate saving 250 man hours in task completions. His abilities also came through when he discovered a design flaw on the new hydraulic test units. Both the manufacture and item manager implemented his change on 200 units saving the Air Force \$150,000. Michael trained airmen on diesel valve timing, saving the Air Force \$35,000 on engine replacement cost.



## Andy Regal

Services Specialist

United States Air Force Reserve, 934th  
Airlift Wing

Mr. Andy Regal is an exceptional leader for the Department of Defense. As a result of his vast professional knowledge, Mr. Regal, a GS-09, was selected to backfill the GS-11 Sustainment Chief position for five months. Supervising 100 employees, Mr. Regal provided daily operational management for two Service Clubs, a fitness center and lodging facility. His outstanding organizational skills contributed to an "outstanding evaluation" during the 2014 Air Force Club audit. Dedicated to continuous improvement, Mr. Regal overhauled the organization's Human Resource section. His strategic vision led to the expeditious hiring of six employees for critically hard to fill positions. A talented resource manager, Mr. Regal successfully executed a budget of \$380,000 for feeding and lodging operations during calendar year 2014.



## Margo M. Schroeder

Unit Program Coordinator

United States Air Force Reserve, 934th  
Airlift Wing

Margo Schroeder is the 934th Airlift Wing's protocol point of contact ensuring that all aspects of distinguished visitors and ceremonies are executed in accordance with Air Force governing guidance. As a member of the Wing's Automated Time Attendance and Production System, she performs audits ensuring that 323 time cards are in compliance. She is always looking for ways to improve herself and help make the Wing a better place to work. Margo is a member of the Air Force Smart Operations for the 21st Century. She facilitates rapid improvement events, develops ways to streamline processes and increase proficiency. Margo is currently involved in the Federal Outreach and Leadership Development, improving her leadership skills. The efforts of Ms. Schroeder aid in the effectiveness of the Wing.

2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



## Tom Van Heel

Information Technology Specialist

United States Geological Survey, Minnesota Water Science Center

Tom Van Heel, an Information Technology (IT) Specialist for the USGS Minnesota Water Science Center, has a work ethic, capability, and dedication to efficiency that is remarkable. IT needs of the Center are complex due to the variety of equipment needed for data analysis, mission critical use in harsh outdoor conditions, and constant updates required by vendor software for field instrumentation at two USGS offices in Minnesota. Yet IT support is outstanding. Tom's unfailing helpfulness is delivered with a wry sense of humor. If something is not working, it's almost a personal affront to Tom, who takes quick action to resolve. He is rarely stumped by a problem, but if he can't solve it immediately, he digs in until a solution is found.



## Gail Anderson

Rural Carrier

United States Postal Service

Gail starts her days before work at the local coffee shop. Not only for that morning cup of Joe, but to help the owner who finds it difficult to find staff that time of day. On the route Gail always goes out of her way to make sure her customers get the best. She fills her evenings serving on the city council, as president of the Booster Club and the Lions Club, secretary of the Sacred Heart Parish Board, treasurer for Catholic United Financial, is a member of the church choir and heads up many fundraisers in support of these groups.



## Cathie Clausen

Labor Relations Specialist

United States Postal Service

Cathie Clausen volunteers her time as a court mediator in Anoka County. She has been doing this for several years. She serves in a conciliation court atmosphere hearing many domestic, family and small business types of disputes. Her role is to get people to come together to make agreements while maintaining an objective viewpoint. Cathie has been recognized for her efforts by her peers and professionals in the court system. While the work can be demanding, she moves forward with grace. She is an inspiration to her friends and community.



## Daniel Cloutier

Letter Carrier

United States Postal Service

In the relatively short time (10 months) that I have supervised at the Forest Lake Post Office, Dan has repeatedly demonstrated his strong work ethic, honesty and sheer willingness to step up to the plate and be that stellar employee. One day that I remember specifically is a day when someone had called in sick. We had a lot of mail. The district wants us to get carriers back off the street by 1700, but with all things considered I didn't think it was possible. But that day, even though Dan had taken extra and had a lot of mail, he managed to take the additional 15 min. pivot, to get all mail delivered and back in time.

2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Michael LePree**

Customer Relations Coordinator

United States Postal Service

Michael was instrumental as a member of the Twin Cities Postal Customer Council. He prepares the quarterly newsletter, attends monthly meetings, and is the go-to guy for events catered to the mailing community. In addition, he is the catalyst for helping other PCC's in Northland learn how to propel their PCCS's to new successes and, if need be, get started from the ground up. Besides the PCC, Michael has been a member of the Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce to help keep the Postal Service positively visible. Michael is a member of Emerge, an outreach program that helps individuals needing a second chance in life. Michael takes the lead during our informational sessions for new Mpls CCA applicants prior to interviews.



**Larry Savage**

Postmaster

United States Postal Service

Larry Savage has served the Postal Service for over 32 years starting as a part-time clerk in West Salem Wisconsin and advancing through the organization in numerous positions and locations. He has been a city carrier for 11 years and a Postmaster for over 11 years. He has also volunteered to be the Officer-in Charge for various cities when there was a need for a temporary manager to operate a postal facility in towns such as Roberts and Black River Falls Wisconsin and Wabasha Minnesota. During this time he also was an officer in the Army Guards and Reserves, recently retiring with 30 years of military service at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.



**Bradley Spooner**

Rural Carrier

United States Postal Service

Brad has given so much back to his community and to his work over the years. He has been a first responder and volunteer firefighter for over 24 years. He donates blood regularly, knowing the need for his blood type. His helpful nature and work ethic are also evident in his willingness to help out his fellow employees and by providing the best service to his customers and fellow employees. As a Driver Safety Instructor, he willingly puts in the extra time needed to make sure the new employees are well trained and ready to go to meet the needs of their offices. He is an asset to the postal service.



**Audrey Toso**

Rural Letter Carrier

United States Postal Service

Audrey is a wonderful individual who willingly helps any one at her job. She has a pay it forward mentality. She does all the gardening at our post office. She plants and weeds this facility's grounds. She does a seasonal display at our entrance that is impertinent to the time of year. She does all the cards for fellow employees when occasions arise, also. She has a wonderful disposition with her fellow peers at work. She has helped most here with edit books, labels, etc. She went to help a fellow peer reroof their house. She stops at nothing to help. She will pay for the person behind her at the McDonalds drive thru as a pay it forward.

*2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Andrew Amoroso

Deputy District Director

United States Small Business Administration

Andrew (Andy) Amoroso has been instrumental in the continuing success of the district office, and has been influential with the growth of small businesses throughout Minnesota. Andy's federal government career started over 41 years ago, the past three years he has served in a senior management capacity as Deputy District Director. He leads, inspires and continually develops a high performance team. He has become highly admired throughout the state with his keen ability to maintain a viable network of collaborative partnerships with small business stakeholders. Andy is very passionate about his job and always gives 200% of his time and effort in helping small businesses and making sure that his Team receives the highest leadership professionalism possible.



## Rodney Sebastian

Risk Management Specialist

USDA Risk Management Agency

Rodney Sebastian changed lives in the global community by using what he knows about agricultural to connect people. Rod traveled to Burundi, Africa to ride bicycle on a charity bicycle ride, and took with him agricultural information on a thumb drive he had from his local agricultural work. While in Burundi, Rodney met a community development worker who was trying to grow food for the local population. A couple of days later, the man came back to thank Rodney for providing this useful information which he was able to use immediately. The worker did not know this kind of agricultural information was available to solve food production problems. Rodney's connecting people helps the global community become a friendlier place.



## Deborah Parker

Regional Administrative Program Manager

USDA Rural Development

At USDA Rural Development (RD), Deb Parker has served as Deputy to Minnesota's State Director and is currently the Administrative Program Manager for twelve states. Deb is recognized for her creative thinking, analytical skills, and a willingness to share her expertise as a coach and mentor. For example, she redesigned work practices in RD's Guaranteed loan program to end reliance on paper files, manage workflow across organizational boundaries, and better serve RD's customers. This system was adopted as a best practice nationally. Deb leads by example and is never too busy to help a colleague with a tough problem. Deb is a graduate of the University of Minnesota's Policy Fellows program for civic leaders.



## Melinda R. Dornbusch

Biological Science Laboratory Technician

USDA-Agricultural Research Service

Melinda Dornbusch consistently demonstrates outstanding productivity, creativity, and skill in research supporting the laboratory's goal of reducing crop losses due to plant diseases. She is highly skilled in plant tissue culture and has produced alfalfa plants expressing novel genes for increased disease resistance. She is generous with her time and has trained graduate students and visiting international scientists. She developed sophisticated assays for measuring gene expression and quantifying pathogens in alfalfa plants. She is skilled in isolation of pathogens from plant material and in culture maintenance and preservation. Her work was key to establishing a collection of alfalfa pathogens for use by researchers nationwide for breeding disease resistant plants. These accomplishments and her professional can-do attitude make her highly deserving of this award

2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Jane Johnson**

Research Soil Scientist

USDA-Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

Dr. Jane Johnson, Research Soil Scientist with the USDA-Agricultural Research Service, managed a productive research team. In 2014, she accepted opportunities to serve at the local, regional and national levels in addition to her research. Locally, she served as secretary on the safety, health and environmental management committee (SHEM). Regionally, she served as the Midwest Area Outreach, Diversity and Equal Opportunity committee chair and editor for the committee newsletter. Due to a critical leadership vacancy at Headquarters, Dr. Johnson accepted the invitation to serve a three-month detail as Acting National Program Leader for Soils and Air with the Office of National Programs in Beltsville, MD. In addition to these extra responsibilities and time away from the office, Dr. Johnson maintained a high quality research program.



**Thomas Steger**

District Conservationist

USDA-Natural Resources Conservation

Tom has exemplified leadership throughout his 30 year career with NRCS. In 2014 he volunteered to be part of a national work group to examine how the agency can re-commit and re-invigorate its conservation planning activities, taking a leadership role at a national conference in Indianapolis. Tom also offered to be a pilot office for the agency in Minnesota testing its new Client Gateway web based platform where the agency's customers will be able to conduct business and interact with office staff remotely. Tom took on these additional duties in addition to being a key training office for the agency, adding two new employees and serving as their mentor.



**Sidney Bell**

Logistics Chief

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Sid continually exhibits brilliant leadership in his role as Logistics Chief. He executed the largest logistics budget in our six state network, including a complicated telecommunication contract for eight sites, ensuring greater productivity and continuous service. His direction as the network logistics emergency responder demonstrated continuity of operations capability for VISN 23 during all real world events/exercises. His commitment to environmental practices yielded sustained annual medical equipment refurbishment and computer equipment repurposing for schools. When crucial medical equipment ordering times became excessive he implemented a resourceful strategy utilizing little-known contract structures and ensured uninterrupted supply chains. Sid demonstrates the embodiment of quality leadership, not only through his unfailing performance as a facility and network leader, but his commitment to improving service to our Veterans.



**Alicia Beranek**

Registered Nurse

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Alicia is the backbone of the mental health team at the Chippewa Falls CBOC. Before each appointment Alicia meets privately with the patient assessing their needs and answering their questions. Alicia has made connections across all the mental health teams offering wide, eclectic treatment options in PTSD, Military Sexual Trauma and substance dependence. Alicia serves on several committees being asked for by name because of her reputation as a leader and her skills as a nurse. Her clinic was selected to pilot the first telehealth project bringing mental health care directly into patient's homes. This was a very successful program and the beginning of the push over this last year for the VA nationally in delivering home health care to mental health patients.

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## Noreen Brandt

Health Benefits Advisor

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Noreen works as part of the intake staff that includes direct contact with veterans discussing some personal financial information. Her ability to obtain information from difficult individuals at the same time leaving them with a positive feeling of the experience is one to emulate. Her respectful, patient, calm and peaceful demeanor are some of her great personal qualities. She offers a detail explanation to veterans as to their eligibility status for health care. Noreen takes the time to assist everyone including co-workers, other staff employees, veterans and their families. Noreen has taken on the role as Lead Advisor in her work area when the position was vacant. Her positive attitude towards purpose of the Veterans Administration is a great reflection on this facility and agency.



## Joshua Bush

Telehealth Technician

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Josh, a young veteran himself, endeavors to provide first class service to all of the veterans who enter the clinic. Josh started in Rice Lake as a Health Tech and became the Super User for all of our lab functions. When our Telehealth Tech left, Josh took on those roles in addition to his own. He eventually applied for and accepted the position, but over several months he continued to room patients, works the front desk, and handles all of the telehealth functions at great personal stress. To this day, he continues to pitch in wherever he can and wherever he can. He is an asset to our clinic and our veterans and is one of those employees who are irreplaceable.



## Dave Clendening

Pipefitter

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Dave is an exceptionally talented and knowledgeable craftsman who has been pivotal in identifying and resolving a myriad of mechanical issues in our facilities. Dave has spearheaded several key projects from diagnosing the problems, to developing the solutions, ensuring proper building codes were met, ordering parts and materials, developing construction plans and schedules and supervising execution of the projects. It was Dave's superior knowledge and skill that has made Building 70 more reliable for patient care. I estimate that these corrections saved well over \$150,000 in maintenance and repair costs compared to contracting. Add to that the energy savings and the improved comfort of our patients and staff. Dave's performance was in keeping with the highest standards of craftsmanship and a credit to the VA.



## Claudine Fasching

Medical Technologist (ASCP)

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Claudine has exhibited exceptional performance for the VAHCS Laboratory. In conjunction with VA Opiate Safety Initiative, Claudine collaborated with the Laboratory Clinical Director to introduce two new testing analytes, Buprenorphine and Norbuprenorphine using mass spectrometry technology. She wrote procedures, trained the staff and troubleshoots extensively. Additionally, Claudine mentored three new employees and carried her workload. As a laboratory community service, Claudine represents the VA at the American Society for Clinical Laboratory Science – MN as the state treasurer and has been on the organizing committee for the Clinical Laboratory Collaborative, the largest laboratory education and instrumentation exhibit conference in the state. She is the exemplary, flexible, enthusiastic employee who continually contributes to the organization and lives the mission and the "I CARE" values for our Veterans.

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## Jessica Hanson

Licensed Practical Nurse

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Jessica brings an enthusiasm to the work area like I've rarely seen and always has a smile for every veteran she serves. She greets each veteran with a smile and makes them feel as if they are the most important person in the world. Likely her most underrated trait is her ability to make everyone else work better – whenever someone else seems to have a complaint, Jessica will remind them it's not as bad as they think, and off they'll go with a smile on their face and a load off their shoulders. She is also working toward her RN degree in her spare time. She is also very active in the Autism community, volunteering time and effort to help people afflicted by the disease.



## Lorinna Klaus

Administrative Support Assistant

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Lorinna is an outstanding employee who is the glue that holds the Specialty Care Service Line together.. With all of the changes and loss of support staff to the service, Lorinna has graciously added to her workload to provide coverage throughout all of the divisions to ensure the quality care to the veterans. She has demonstrated the mission statement of the VHA, honor America's Veterans by providing exceptional health care that improves their health and well-being. She has willingly took on the extra projects and became the go-to person for the VCL setup, educating, tracking and scheduling of this new complex system. Lorinna is dedicated to our service line, compassionate to her co-workers and always willing to accept increased responsibility to accomplish the mission.



## Sara Lässig

Social Worker

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Sara's collaborative and complementary style allows for the best kind of teamwork in finding the most appropriate outcomes for our veterans. Sara always keeps the patients sense of dignity the center of care and she works tirelessly to help Veterans achieve their wishes through their end of life journey. Her Hospice and Palliative Care can provide complex challenges, yet Sara's creative "big picture" thinking helps make all of us better care providers. She is one of those "go-to" persons for new projects. Sara is incredibly kind, gracious, and she has gentle, sensitive, appropriate humor that provides comfort and a sense of ease for patients, families, and the entire interdisciplinary team. These qualities shine while navigating through such complex and at times incredibly difficult experiences.



## Bonnie Marsh

Physician Assistant

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Bonnie has worked with our service for over 27 years and is exceptionally talented in the operating room as well as inpatient management. With participation in Cooperative Study Program #588, comparing endoscopic versus open vein harvesting technique, her expertise, technical skills and leadership in cardiac surgery has been recognized at the national level. She is the primary person to take on this new clinical challenge and has demonstrated a deep commitment to excellence in complex postoperative management and facilitates interdisciplinary communication. As our most experienced Physician Assistant, Bonnie is also noted for her calm and supportive teaching of both students and fellows and has dedicated her entire career to the care of veterans.

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### John Mason

Housekeeping Aid

Veteran Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

John performs his daily tasks with a very high level of excellence and stays with a job until it is completed. He is dependable, respectful, caring, transparent and honest. He is a union steward and is available to provide guidance for his co-workers, with patience, kindness and confidentiality. He is a mentor and a coach for co-workers throughout each work day. He truly cares about patient access and is one of our top of the line terminal room cleaners and bed makers. John also works as a mentor in a community drug and rehabilitation group. John has the highest standards and leads by example which makes a difference with each and every person that comes in contact with him.



### Paula Neal-Wilcox

Chief, Veterans Cross-Servicing Resolution Division

Veterans Affairs (VA), Debt Management Center

Ms. Neal-Wilcox demonstrated exceptional expertise and leadership in her roles as Chief of Operations for the Veterans Cross-Servicing Resolution Division, Acting Deputy Director for Operations and Management Project Lead for the DMC Phone Center Upgrade. During this period, her enthusiastic drive and leadership were instrumental in the establishment of the Veteran Cross-Servicing Resolution Division. Ms. Neal-Wilcox led the implementation of the new phone system for the Veteran call center, completing the effort in December 2014. Ms. Neal-Wilcox's efforts resulted in improved customer service as we assist our Veterans in finding compassionate payment solutions. As a community leader, she was the Assistant Director for the church Christmas party and was an Art Adventure leader for her children's grade school.



### Steve Roberts

Budget Analyst

Veterans Affairs (VA), Debt Management Center

In 2014, Mr. Roberts distinguished himself through sustained superior performance and noteworthy contributions ensuring a seamless continuation of knowledge transfer to DMC employees. He volunteered his leadership to ensure his fellow DMC education teammates would be thoroughly trained before he retired. Mr. Roberts single-handedly built a complex training program covering VA education regulations which encompassed seven different GI Bill Programs, spanning the period of 1955 to present day. Mr. Roberts' selfless leadership included commitment to team accomplishment and doing the hard right over the easy wrong. He could have focused on retirement, but instead chose to make a difference in the lives of Veterans by passing on almost a ½ century of acquired knowledge.



### Jorgeana Williams

Budget Analyst

Veterans Affairs (VA), Debt Management Center

Mrs. Williams is a Budget Analyst in the VA Debt Management Center. In her daily role, Gina takes on any tasks and diligently completes them in an exemplary manner. She mentors less experienced employees, reflecting extraordinary patience, molding them into high performing team players. This special patience and leadership is deeply imbedded in her personality and gives insight into her contributions to young people. As foster parents, Gina and her husband have opened their home for over 15 years, caring for more than 15 children of various ages, providing the nurturing, trusting environment that allowed them to flourish. Gina epitomizes the VA core values of "I CARE" – Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence in everyday life making a difference to her organization and foster children.

2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



## Vernon Anderson

Supervisory Financial Administrative Specialist

Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Benefits Administration

Vernon Anderson provides exemplary leadership to the Finance Section of the St. Paul VA Regional Office. While this section underwent a major reorganization, he developed a plan to evenly distribute work, while at the same time executing a comprehensive training plan and ensuring work was accomplished on time with superior quality. Under his guidance the Section assumed all finance and payroll operations for the Dakotas Regional Office. They completed more than 11,000 payments to Veterans under the Vocational Rehabilitation program and processed 400 payments for special adaptive housing and automobile modifications for disabled Veterans. Staff made decisions on more than 6,000 debt waiver requests from Veterans and responded to more than 5,000 inquiries from Veterans. His leadership resulted in this outstanding performance.



## Deborah Muller

Nurse Educator

Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Deborah has been an employee for 32 years with the majority of her service in the role of a Nurse Educator. She leads, coordinates and manages multiple programs for nursing as well as at the facility level. Deborah continues her leadership in nursing as the chair of the Minneapolis VAMC Nurse Professional Standards Board (NPSB). She continues as the facility administrator of the Nursing VALOR program and is an active member of the Minneapolis VAHCS Compliance Committee. Deborah has taken a leadership role as the coordinator and instructor for the National Coaching/Mentoring Core Training program and guides mentors as they incorporate this new model into their practice. She provides outstanding service to the Employee Education Department, to the VA Nursing profession and to the organization.



## Glennon Park

Acting Director of Emergency Department

Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Dr. Park has served as the Acting Director of the Emergency Department (ED) since 2012 accepting new and challenging administrative responsibilities. He is known to be calm, compassionate, humble and a caring provider who is always putting the patient first and who is always looking for ways to improve. He has demonstrated a collaborative and collegial approach to managing the ED and improving services. Under his leadership, the ED has made great strides in re-engineering processes to become more efficient, effective and patient centered. Dr. Park is also an excellent teacher for physician trainees, nursing and other staff members. A colleague's recent comment sums it all up. "If there is one provider in this medical center who could be cloned, is should be Glennon".



## Rhonda Plautz-Linner

Occupational Therapist

Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Rhonda's loyalty to our veterans has been unmatched throughout her 30-year career in providing consistent rehabilitation care that maintains each of the VA Core values for Integrity, Commitment, Advocacy, Respect, and Excellence. She is incredibly humble about her dedication and loyalty, often volunteering in her community, at health fairs and city health care events and in the mentoring of students. She is a team player utilizing the interdisciplinary approach to assess and manage complex disabilities thereby contributing towards the goal of effective rehabilitation. Rhonda is a great employee with impeccable integrity delivering high-quality therapeutic programs that sets examples for her colleagues and for students. In her role as OT she is able to show patients that she is enthusiastic and a dedicated advocate for veterans.

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### Susan Ricker

Health System Specialist - Compliance

Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Sue is exceptional in her work and superbly models the VA's Integrity - Commitment - Advocacy - Respect - Excellence (ICARE) core values. Willing to engage fully outside her direct responsibilities, she is an exceptional mentor for LEAD participants. Sue successfully completed all Compliance and Ethics performance metrics in the Facility Director's Performance Plan, shining a favorable light on the Facility and ensuring that we have the right controls and Facility climate to act ethically and responsibly. Nationally she participates in assessing and developing training skill sets for Compliance Business Integrity (CBI) Officers. She trained supervisors and incorporated a 100% oversight requirement into Health Care System's policy. As a result, her overall compliance program scored a remarkable 98% at the national level.



### Katharina Ryan

Voluntary Services

Veterans Affairs (VA), Veterans Health Administration

Katy's leadership of the Voluntary Services Program has significantly impacted the Veteran and family experience within our health care system. Katy and her staff successfully managed the activities of nearly 2000 volunteers within the VAVS program, as well as the Recreation/Creative Arts Therapy program. In 2014, this includes over 200,000 hours of time and more than 21,000 transit rides to Veterans. She is an outstanding representative of the Minneapolis VAHCS and maintains excellent collaborative working relationships with over 85 Veteran Service Organization representatives and deputy representatives as Co-Chair of the Minneapolis VAVS Committee. Katy is a highly visible, focused, and committed customer service champion and her leadership efforts have improved the patient experience and enhanced the overall healing environment.

*2015 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*

*We wish to acknowledge the contributions of the following people and organizations without whose help this year's awards program would not have been possible*

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