

The Federal Executive Board of Minnesota  
presents the

*2016 Finalists*

*for the*

*Civil Servant of the Year*

*Awards*





**Mark Gutierrez**

Deputy Director

**Department of Agriculture - Risk Management Agency**

Mark Gutierrez is clearly an outstanding public servant who puts customer service at the forefront of all his actions. Mark initiated work measures using the Lean Six Sigma approach in our office to improve the work-flow for both employees and customers. His passionate enthusiasm for this project led him to be selected for a national USDA Lean Six Sigma Team to make improvements agency-wide. Mark worked with Human Resources to streamline recruitment and hiring processes, resulting in good hires and a Native American intern. Mark improved our in-house on-boarding process helping employees feel welcome and retaining valuable experience. Mark's efforts are recognized with "Thank You" notes from private sector customers, measurable improvements in our office processes, and his selection as the FEB Diversity Council Chair.



**Dr. David Garvin**

Research Geneticist

**Department of Agriculture- Agricultural Research Service**

Dr. Garvin has consistently demonstrated a high degree of originality throughout his career by independently devising and conducting research in many areas of plant biology and crop improvement. Dr. Garvin created new innovative strategies to accelerate development of wheat varieties with resistance to Fusarium head blight and leaf rust, the most important diseases of wheat in Minnesota. Dr. Garvin designed and led a project to identify genes for enhancing health-promoting properties in oats and was the first to identify genes for increasing vitamin E. He has been a leader in developing a new plant model system that has been adopted around the world for improving grain crops and discovering genes important in crop production.



**Dean Peterson**

Agricultural Science Research Technician

**Department of Agriculture- Agricultural Research Service**

Mr. Dean Peterson actively promotes USDA-ARS research conducted at the North Central Soil Conservation Research Laboratory both locally and internationally. He works closely with visiting international scientists, integrates them into the research team, and facilitates important cultural interactions between staff and visitors. Mr. Peterson represents ARS at many outreach events. Through our pollinator research program, he works closely with the Minnesota Honey Producers Association (MHPA). He was instrumental in inviting three MHPA presidents to participate in three USDA-ARS Field Days. As a result, MHPA invited him to speak at their annual meeting. Because of these activities, ARS was asked by MHPA to host their annual 2015 field trip. This resulted in the most popular and well-attended field event in the 50+ year history of the USDA-ARS Swan Lake Research Farm.



**Michael Chiodi**

Contracting Officer

**Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Health Inspection**

In 2015 Michael Chiodi participated in the prestigious Federal Leadership Excellence in Acquisition Program (LEAP). His input, feedback, and recommendations for improvement to the entire process lead him to be selected as a co-coach for the 2016 LEAP cohort. He is passionate about the program and its value in preparing Acquisition professionals to assume leadership positions within their organizations. He has helped strengthen the program to meet the needs of these emerging leaders. His leadership, facilitation, training, and oratory skills are being recognized at the highest levels of Federal procurement leadership.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



**Thomas Lehner**

Lead Human Resources Specialist

**Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Health Inspection**

In FY2015, Tom was asked to serve as the technical supervisor for a cross-functional Human Resources team that was then unexpectedly tasked with providing Human Resources service and support for the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) outbreak. Tom coordinated and provided guidance to the geographically dispersed 24 person team primarily responsible for the initiative to hire over 500 temporary employees for emergency response as well as continuing to serve the day to day human resources needs of the program. In addition, he served as an HR operations liaison to provide updates on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis to program and agency management, as well as the USDA Multi-Agency Coordination group on the progress of recruiting, onboarding, and training the emergency responders.



**Leah Schultz**

Contracting Officer

**Department of Agriculture- Animal and Plant Health Inspection**

Leah was the second contracting officer deployed to the Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) response working for 123 straight days (including nights and weekend) directly awarding over 20 contracts worth over 20 million dollars. She was the prime federal negotiator in contentious landfill disposal contracts (including negotiations between industry, State, and Federal agencies) resulting in multiple contracts necessary for the disposal of infectious and hazardous waste. When contract performance issues arose she independently established and coordinated the deployment of contracting officers representatives (CORs). Their performance was so instrumental in controlling operations and costs that the entire Incident Command Team structure was revised to incorporate this functions. Her actions (without exaggeration) saved the Government tens of millions of dollars.



**Ben Ellefson**

Civil Engineering Technician

**Department of Agriculture- Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Ben has provided excellent technical assistance to employees in 12 USDA field offices, private landowners in 15 counties, and to Natural Resources Management divisions of 4 tribal nations on water quality environmental projects. His engineering on the aquaculture pond for the Grand Portage Lake Superior Band of Chippewa will provide wall-eye fingerling production to rehabilitate native walleye in tribal waters. Despite his demanding career, Ben remains committed to his local community as a youth soccer coach for three different teams. Over 64 youth participated in the soccer program he organized. He presented a detailed proposal for youth soccer fields to the South Ridge School Board which then approved \$30,000 for establishment of three soccer fields. Ben is an outstanding employee and community person.



**Gary Watson**

Assistant State Conservationist- Field Operations

**Department of Agriculture- Natural Resources Conservation Service**

Gary Watson serves as an Advisor for the Civil Rights Advisory Committee in Minnesota. He has worked to enhance workforce diversity by hiring veterans and has recruited summer interns from Southwest Minnesota State University in Marshall, Minnesota. Additionally he has successfully implemented the NRCS' Earth Team Volunteer Program in his area which resulted in 3885.3 volunteer hours in FY 2016. Gary has made time to career coach 5 employees and 2 Pathway students. In the fall of 2015, Gary served as Acting Assistant State Conservationist-Field Operations in a second NRCS area increasing his supervision to 31 direct reports.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



**Andrew Gag**

Area Specialist

Department of Agriculture- Rural Development

For his exceptional performance in leadership, planning, and widespread networking to promote the use of USDA Rural Development programs to under-served segments of the population, including minority and high-poverty areas, with the objective of making the highest potential impact for positive, measurable, and sustainable community and economic development. In addition to his normal work duties, Andrew willingly assumed the lead role for implementing the Minnesota RD Community and Economic Development Plan, acting as a liaison to the USDA National Office and also training the MN workforce. Andrew also demonstrated leadership by developing strategies and mechanisms to implement Section 6025 of the 2014 Farm Bill which targets funding to projects that support multi-jurisdictional strategic economic development plans.



**Jacob Beitlich**

Meteorologist

Department of Commerce- National Weather Service

Jake exceeds customer expectations and performs at high standards by listening to customers and addressing their concerns. He reached out to county dispatchers at the 911 Centers and to Emergency Managers to provide guidance and training for their staff regarding radar interpretation and NWS warning procedures. This ensures uniform siren activation procedures and ultimately better service and information for Minnesotans. As a result of Jake's contributions, siren activation is consistent in the Twin Cities Metro area for the first time in 20 years and consistent among most Minnesota counties reducing siren fatigue. He is one of the most customer-service driven employees and is constantly looking back at past weather cases and reviewing office performance, trying to figure out how we can provide even better customer service.



**Peter Grant**

Munitions Flight Chief

Department of Defense- Air Force Reserve

Mr. Grant was 1 of 7 personnel selected from 24 bases nationwide to participate in a rapid improvement event. His contributions resulted in the conversion of 72 temporary positions to permanent guaranteeing munitions accountability across the AF Reserve. He authored an inter-agency support agreement increasing munitions storage by 2,857 lbs reducing transportation time to the user by 865 man hours. To accommodate this increase, he initiated a \$617,000 remodel of the base munitions storage facility. Leading a section undermanned by 40%, he complied with 344 checklist items ensuring accurate inventory 750,000 items valued at over \$1.56 million. Furthering the spirit of innovation, he sought local destruction of 20 items both saving the AF \$125,000 in disposition costs and fostered EOD proficiency training.



**Tabitha Morrison**

Office Services Assistant

Department of Defense- Air Force Reserve

Tackled Record Custodian training plan, trained fifteen Non-Commissioned Officers on creating, managing and filing records. Also managed thirteen plus file plans with 100% approval rate with no deficiencies noted. Devoted over 96 hours to revamp file plans to ensure compliance with Air Force Instruction 33-322 which required the elimination of 10 GB of excess data on the server. Ensured 500 plus orders and 600 plus Unit Training Assembly Participation System orders were processed which enabled the 934 Maintenance Group in sustaining vital mission requirements. Member is subject matter expert in Defense Travel System, provided assistance to 120 members resulted in an 80% decrease in returned vouchers. Assisted the Unit Training Manager with three waiver packages, results saved the Air Force Reserve Command \$200,000.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Rick T. Pelzl**

Chief, Sustainment Services Flight

**Department of Defense- Air Force Reserve**

Mr. Pelzl organizes, directs and monitors the operations of base services including lodging, food operations, fitness center functions and Outdoor Recreation activities serving over 50K personnel, military, DOD civilians and veterans. He manages 67 employees and oversees an \$850K budget. Through his exceptional leadership and vision, he combined the Officer/Service Club organizational structure saving the Air Force over \$250K annually and transitioned all marketing to electronic media saving \$20K annually. He implemented an Air Force Customer Service Training course and created an electronic customer service feedback program to enhance service for all. He stepped up to take on temporary role as the 934th Force Support Squadron Operations Officer while position was vacant, increasing his responsibilities to manage an additional budget of \$930K and 82 personnel.



**John Peterson**

Information Protection

**Department of Defense- Air Force Reserve**

John is the Information Security officer for 1800 personnel, and ensures 100% compliance, and information safeguards for the largest military organization in Minnesota. Besides his primary duty, he's truly a "jack-of-all-trades". His contributions range from driving leadership to the airport to leading base clean-up, to shoveling snow. John is the headquarters building manager, managing all resources, equipment, and computers. He ensures important safety measures are met. John provides support as time-keeper and credit card approving official. He also created and manned an innovative "help desk", training personnel on our self-assessment program, and manages all headquarters inspection checklists. He also supports our sister guard unit by training their inspectors. Finally, John manages multiple Red Cross blood drives annually, and volunteers in local schools.



**Michael J. Sanford**

Director of Airman and Family Readiness

**Department of Defense- Air Force Reserve**

Mr. Sanford is responsible for building a strong community within Minnesota to support military members and their families, enhancing mission readiness, and adapting to military life. His operation has won the DOD Airman and Family Readiness Program of the Year two years straight. He served over 5,000 military members, DOD civilians and retirees from crisis counseling to providing basic resources for families. He facilitated over 30 Outreach events with 800+ attendees strengthening community bonds. He responded to 10 emergency consults with wing leadership ensuring all Airmen were safe along with providing comprehensive Suicide Prevention and Sexual Assault Prevention and Response training to over 1,300 military members. He played an integral role educating 260 federal employees in honor of the Federal Executive Board Diversity Day.



**Virginia Gnabasiik**

Archaeologist

**Department of Defense- Army Corps of Engineers**

Virginia has provided exceptional service for critical District projects, including the Fargo-Moorhead, Grand Forks, and Devil's Lake projects. Her hard work and professionalism allows the District and community sponsors to overcome cultural resource challenges to keep planning and construction activities on schedule. This routinely involves solving complex problems quickly with little advance notice. Her leadership and relationships with agency counterparts is essential to completing these tasks, and her professional views are deeply respected within her professional community. Finally, Virginia has worked selflessly to accomplish her tasks amid great personal challenges without expectations for recognition. The District, community sponsors and agency partners are grateful for her numerous professional contributions and selfless service.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Chad Konickson

Section Chief

Department of Defense- Army Corps of Engineers

Mr. Konickson initiated a widespread change in the St. Paul District’s permitting procedures, converting paper to electronic processing, which will save an estimated \$100,000 annually in labor and materials for roughly 1,500 permits per year. He also oversaw a process to provide automated acknowledgement to permit applicants, which provides a tracking number and contact information for the person assigned to review the application, which has greatly improved our customer service and accountability. Mr. Konickson has been the driver of many valuable improvements to permitting procedures in the past several years. He has been instrumental in hiring and mentoring new staff to handle an increasing workload, and his extensive program knowledge has been heavily relied upon as numerous changes have occurred at the national and regional level.



## Terry Williams

Project Manager

Department of Defense- Army Corps of Engineers

Ms. Williams continually exceeds expectations, her leadership and innovation on the Fargo-Moorhead project have directly lead to the implementation of the Corps first ever public-private-partnership on the \$2 Billion project that will benefit more than 200,000 people. Her accomplishments will directly improve the lives of people living in the communities of Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead, Minnesota. She has lead her teams during uncertain times, keeping the team’s motivation and morale high. Ms. Williams is always looking out for others, helping them succeed and ensuring that credit is given to her teams. She has a desire to see others succeed and is dedicated to her teams, sponsors, and citizens of Fargo-Moorhead. Ms. Williams is an innovative leader and the Nation is a better place due to her character and leadership.



## Hannah Dittmer

Administrative Contracting Officer

Department of Defense- Defense Contract Management Agency

On her own volition, Ms. Dittmer leveraged her leadership abilities and knowledge of DoD Invoicing, Receipt, Acceptance and Property Transfer (iRAPT) tool to organize, facilitate and conduct hands-on functional training across DCMA Twin Cities. Her sessions integrated collaboration, improved command operations and enhanced Major Program Support for the combat warfighter. Her actions benefited 300+ active defense contractors, 218 procurement offices and multiple major DoD programs, including \$530M Advanced Medium Mobile Power Source generator contract. Hannah's ability to identify a critical gap and offer a solution was instrumental to the Command executing contract administration, vendor payments and payment requests. Her training saved ~15 hrs/month through improved iRAPT documentation, increasing on-time delivery and decreasing research time.



## Brian Kramer

Management Analyst

Department of Defense- Defense Contract Management Agency

Mr. Kramer took immediate ownership of Manufacturing & Eng assignments and created innovative ways to execute action plans. To manage OSHA compliance tracking, he designed a Job Hazard Analysis (JHA) tool using Microsoft InfoPath, which is being assessed for Agency-wide implementation to over 11,000 employees worldwide. He knew existing record management tools lacked the flexibility needed to quantify, analyze and forecast job hazards and mitigation controls for over 200 defense contractors across 7 states. His user friendly JHA tool is easily modified for a dynamic government workplace. His efforts inspired development of other InfoPath based data management tools within the Command, including GOV utilization tool for 200 members. His other Innovative accomplishments include Engineering Metrics Dashboard, SharePoint Transition & Compliance Tracking Tools.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



### Todd Frerichs

Enlisted Processing Division Supervisor  
Department of Defense Naval Recruiting

Mr. Frerichs led and managed a high-performing team of both civilians and military personnel to support the command's mission. He demonstrated subject matter expertise and leadership by passing the Navy Recruiting Command National Inspection with an outstanding 89% score despite only having one year onboard! He created a positive work environment that valued teamwork, integrity, compliance and dedication to Command objectives. He pro-actively provided positive feedback to his team members and recruiters while giving timely, targeted training to address any identified shortfalls - the mark of a superb leader. Showed adept personnel management skills in the face of a manning shortfall by redistributing essential duties to ensure his Recruiting Processing Station remained fully mission capable. A true leader and superstar at Navy Recruiting District Minneapolis!



### Heidi DeBeck

Emergency Response Coordinator  
Department of Health and Human Services- Food and Drug Administration

During 2015, Heidi DeBeck was a driver for positive change, demonstrating unwavering dedication and unparalleled professionalism highlighted by these examples: Heidi worked closely with the State of Wisconsin to develop an independent, unfunded Rapid Response Team which is only the second of its kind in the country. During the year, she represented FDA in multiple national working groups as well as training courses for industry, states and law enforcement personnel. She managed numerous foodborne illness outbreaks - at one point handling five concurrent outbreaks and monitoring two others. Throughout the year, she fostered a collaborative spirit between the District and our State and federal partners, resulting in more effective communication and coordination and heightened cooperation and collaboration between the District office and its States.



### Rebecca Kimball

Legal Administrative Specialist  
Department of Health and Human Services- Food and Drug Administration

Rebecca capably and accurately manages the Freedom of Information (FOIA) program for the FDA Minneapolis District Office (MIN-DO). She processes hundreds of FOIA requests each year, which must be processed within strict time frames. Rebecca meets or exceeds established time frames, she maintains one of the highest compliance rates within FDA. Rebecca is respected for the speed and accuracy of her work. During the past year Rebecca assisted other Districts with FOIA requests when staffing was short. Rebecca also processed high volume, high priority judicial cases within difficult to meet time frames. Her work helped FDA to enjoin a firm which manufactured dangerous adulterated products. Rebecca is an indispensable member of the MIN-DO Compliance Branch team and role model for other civil servants.



### Lisa Hasbrook

Nurse Consultant  
Department of Homeland Security- Customs and Border Protection

During FY 15, Lisa Hasbrook took a lead role mentoring two new Nurse Consultants, assisted in mentoring four other new employees, and brought her case load into real-time processing, all while meeting her day-to-day responsibilities and providing excellent customer service to our applicants. Lisa is a problem solver and quick thinker who consistently volunteers to take on additional tasks to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our Medical Review Unit. Lisa's strong work ethic and ability to efficiently and accurately complete tasks is outstanding. Lisa Hasbrook is an exceptional employee and deserving of the Civil Servant of the Year for her significant contributions to the Minneapolis Hiring Center.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Roberta Hodgins

Human Resources Specialist

Department of Homeland Security- Customs and Border Protection

Roberta Hodgins identified and organized team training needs with grace and skill while meeting her day-to-day responsibilities, providing excellent customer service to her programs and assisting her teammates. During FY15; Bobbi trained 4 new employees on an array of recruitment methods and also served as a Quality Reviewer providing essential feedback to ensure all standard operating procedures are applied consistently. As a result of her efforts to help implement new processes and provide leadership to the team, she reduced the Team's recruiting backlog by over 20% in 2015. Bobbi served as the Lead Specialist on an Internal HR Audit, ensuring all items identified were resolved. Bobbi's unbeatable customer service and ability to find innovative ideas are recognized as significant strengths to the hiring center.



## David Besse

Transportation Security Specialist- Explosives

Department of Homeland Security- Transportation and Security Administration

In 2015, Transportation Security Specialist in Explosives (TSS-E) David Besse distinguished himself as a dedicated, solutions-orientated leader creating a new and innovative security training program for the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). David was handpicked from a nationwide field of 427 TSS-E's to address threat detection capabilities at the TSA headquarters in Washington D.C. Using his leadership skills and ingenuity, he created a security based program, Threat Awareness and Countermeasure Training (TACT). The program was lauded as a best practice and identified as the best training program of its kind in the nation. David's efforts have ensured the TSA and MSP Airport are prepared to provide world-class transportation security that is central to the TSA mission and the expectations of the traveling public we serve.



## George Callow

Lead Transportation Security Officer

Department of Homeland Security- Transportation and Security Administration

Transportation Security Officer George Callow is a professional, providing passengers at Minneapolis-St Paul International Airport (MSP) world-class security and customer service. George serves on MSP's Travelers with Disabilities Advisory Council and volunteers as a Passenger Support Specialist (PSS). As a PSS he goes above and beyond to assist passengers with special needs such as dementia, post-traumatic stress or physical disabilities. He often works outside his shift to ensure the passengers are contacted. George was selected to represent TSA on Channel 5 News, informing the public about lost and found at MSP. In 2015, George was chosen as MSP's Airport Employee of the Year becoming the first TSA employee selected for this honor. His efforts enhance TSA's reputation and ability to perform its vital security mission.



## Brian Petersen

Stakeholder Manager

Department of Homeland Security- Transportation and Security Administration

In the past six months, MSP Airport has gone through major renovations; most notably a new ten lane Security Checkpoint and a new baggage handling and screening system. Stakeholder Manager Brian Petersen, worked countless, and as the project needed, irregular hours on the planning and design aspects regarding these major renovation projects. Brian coordinated logistics, equipment testing, and equipment relocation and removal. He professionally coordinated a vast communication network to ensure that all phases of the project kept moving forward and all concerned parties were kept apprised of progress. Work on these projects began over a year ago and thanks to his efforts both projects were completed in February 2016. Brian was the Go to Person in helping TSA get these two major projects completed.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Thomas Durscher**

Senior Account Executive

**Department of Housing and Urban Development**

Tom Durscher is a dependable, supportive go-to person in HUD’s Minneapolis office. When his division went through reorganization, the number of staff in Minneapolis Multifamily Asset Management more than doubled. Tom educated the new staff on HUD programs and related service actions, continuously answered difficult questions, and held Learning Circles to train groups on more complicated tasks. He led by example, producing quality work and offering superior customer service to investors, lenders, and tenants. Additionally, he was a leader in moving the office to a fully electronic system--an arduous process of document identification, sorting, and scanning. He is a natural leader. In 2015, Tom was an organizational leader, and visible achiever, who took on high level responsibilities and defined the term “unsung hero.”



**Sandra Dietz**

Realty Officer, Great Lakes Agency

**Department of Interior - Bureau of Indian Affairs**

Sandra Dietz provided strong leadership in the midst of implementing the Department's Fee to Trust Priority. Sandy led a talented team to process a heavy fee to trust workload while continuing to provide outreach and technical assistance to tribal realty programs. Sandy’s dedication, expertise and leadership greatly contributed to the Midwest Region’s role in meeting its national fee to trust goals.



**Greg Peterson**

Fire Management Officer, Minnesota Agency

**Department of Interior - Bureau of Indian Affairs**

Greg Peterson has been a key factor in maintaining an excellent safety record within the busiest fire program in the Midwest Region. Greg represents the Bureau and Tribes on Inter-agency task forces, instructs high level fire training courses, coordinates the operation of the Bemidji Tanker Base, manages the annual aviation contracts, and serves as an Incident Commander on large in-state incidents. Greg always ensures that the Bureau and Tribal staff are well equipped, fully trained and physically fit for their assignments. Through all of this, Greg ensures that everyone he works with knows and understands the mission of the Bureau and respects the customers it serves.



**Mandy Priester**

Legal Administrative Specialist

**Department of Interior - Bureau of Indian Affairs**

Mandy Priester was instrumental in the success of the Region’s probate program. Mandy was an active team member whose efforts exceeded the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) Probate goals. Mandy was also part of a team responsible for moving a tremendous amount of records from one location to another. With her extraordinary skills in planning and improvising Mandy collaborated with all the team members to ensure the task was completed smoothly and seamlessly. Her desire to help meet the needs of her customers and her personal approach in dealing with people truly makes her stand out as a fantastic asset to the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Kimberly Bouchard

Superintendent, Great Lakes Agency

Department of Interior- Bureau of Indian Affairs

Kimberly Bouchard's contribution to the Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs in the area of leadership was outstanding in FY-2015. Through Kimberly's dedicated work and Executive Leadership roles and principles she administers the Agency with integrity, accountability, empowering and mentoring the staff. Kimberly's roles included assisting in developing the core curriculum and materials for the 40 hour Superintendent Boot Camp Course and assisting with the instruction of nearly 200 students currently with leadership roles within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Kimberly provided key support and follow-up to assist in facilitating the comprehensive training on responsibilities of an upcoming Superintendent. Kimberly's expertise in Government to Government relationships, leadership, and teamwork have contributed to the mission of the BIA who, at a national level, provides services to 567 Tribes.



## Patricia Olby

Superintendent, Minnesota Agency

Department of Interior- Bureau of Indian Affairs

Patricia Olby's contribution to the Department of the Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs in the area of leadership was outstanding in FY-2015. Through Patricia's admirable work and Executive Leadership roles and principles she administers the Agency with integrity, accountability, empowering and mentoring the staff. Patricia's roles include assisting in developing the core curriculum and materials for the 40 hour Superintendent's Boot Camp Course and instructing nearly 200 students currently with leadership roles within the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Patricia instructed in the areas of Budget Formulation, DOI Strategic Plan Initiatives, and Managing/Executing an Agency Budget, focusing on the responsibilities of an upcoming Superintendent. Patricia's expertise in Government to Government relationships, leadership, and teamwork have contributed to the mission of the BIA who, at a national level, provides services to 567 Tribes.



## Shawna Dingmann

Accountant

Department of Interior- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Shawna Dingmann provides outstanding support to conservation programs in the areas of real property (building and structures) accounting and reimbursable agreements. Shawna works with program staff to ensure real property is appropriately classified in various categories. She also provides expertise in working with programs to ensure agreements with reimbursable partners are established correctly in the enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. Shawna goes beyond just communicating expertise and works to connect with program staff to ensure program goals are achieved.



## Lisa Olson

Human Resources Specialist

Department of Interior- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Lisa Olson is a stand-out employee who is personally committed to delivering excellence. Her personal character is defined by an impeccable work ethic and high professional standards. As a staffing specialist, she handles the largest hiring workload for the Fish and Wildlife Service's Midwest Region. Each year, she works through a hiring surge of hundreds of seasonal and temporary workers that are vital to habitat restoration and invasive species control in the Great Lakes watershed and Midwestern river systems. The time frame for completing these hiring actions is compressed as the personnel have to be on-board by the time the winter weather wanes, allowing field work to begin. To complete this work, Lisa will put in the extra time and give it the personal care and attention that signifies excellence and enables the delivery of vital conservation work.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Tim Cowdery

Hydrogeologist

Department of Interior- U.S. Geological Survey

Tim Cowdery maintains high standards of scientific rigor and professionalism in every aspect of his work. Tim was instrumental in building a program that investigated the hydrology and water quality of the Glacial Ridge National Wildlife Refuge, and has built strong collaborative relationships with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, the Nature Conservancy, numerous State agencies, and Native American tribes in Minnesota. In 2015 Tim developed and implemented a robust database processes critical to the mission of the USGS. Tim strives to find more efficient ways to manage the USGS ground-water data program. Tim also is a mentor for student and early-career employees. Tim volunteers his time and talents with the Girl Scouts and serves on the board of the Lyndale Neighborhood Association in Minneapolis.



## Martin Siebenaler

Division Operations Officer

Department of Justice- Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives

Martin has been with ATF since 2001 and became a supervisor in July 2015. His years as a Special Agent serving on various task forces and teams have prepared him for his new role, exceeding expectations of his superiors. He takes his job seriously and strives to do his best, and has an unwavering dedication to his staff. He is committed to helping his employees do their best by giving them not only the tools they need to succeed, but just as important, gives them the moral support to achieve their professional best. He also believes strongly in helping others by volunteering for office community services projects. Martin exemplifies what a leader should be: professional, exceedingly competent and dedicated to his staff and Agency.



## Amanda Nelson-Duac

Passport Specialist

Department of State- Minneapolis Passport Agency

Amanda is an outstanding employee who plays a critical role within our agency. In 2015, Amanda handled 23,652 passport cases (31% above average), while continuously exceeding national standards for quality. She had 25 fraud referrals during that time, including uncovering a scheme to use counterfeit Kenyan birth certificates. In addition to her regular duties, Amanda contributed over 140 hours of voluntary overtime and worked with senior management to create specialized trainings on complex guardianship orders and understanding ISIL. She is an active participant in our service counter working group, which maximizes efficiencies and minimizes customer wait times, as well as our agency's planning committee. Our agency has tripled in size in the past year and Amanda has played a vital role in the assimilation, training, and mentoring of new employees.



## Elaine Buckner

Air Traffic Manager, Minneapolis ATCT

Department of Transportation- Federal Aviation Administration

Elaine's duties as Manager of the Minneapolis ATCT include being the focal for airport noise concerns from residents in surrounding communities. Elaine regularly attends Public Input Meetings to stay updated on the concerns of the community. Noise concerns are highly political and require great finesse when dealing with the public and elected officials. Elaine ensures communications are complete and timely to all stakeholders. She deals directly with Great Lakes Public Affairs Officers, Central Service Area environmental specialists and the Minneapolis Airports Commission (MAC) Noise Program Office. Elaine attends meetings of the MAC Noise Oversight Committee (NOC) often explaining complex air traffic control procedures including the effect of winds, weather patterns, aircraft load factors, and type of aircraft have on runway use and noise.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Joe Czech**

Air Traffic Control Specialist

**Department of Transportation- Federal Aviation Administration**

Mr. Czech is the true example of leading from where you are. Every day as an Air Traffic Controller at Minneapolis Tower, Joe demonstrates his commitment to professionalism by holding himself to the highest standard as a controller. Joe challenges his fellow controllers to be the best they can be. He works well with his co-workers, the pilots, and the management team. In addition to his duties as a controller, Joe dedicates many hours of his free time in support of the MN Aviation Career Education (ACE) Camp held twice each summer, and in promoting aviation at high school career days. Joe is integral in his support of ACE Camp from his participation in the year long planning leading up to the camps to his leadership as a 24/7 counselor and mentor in residence during week-long camps. His enthusiastic leadership has resulted in many budding Aviation enthusiast's.



**Dolly Johnson**

Support Specialist

**Department of Transportation- Federal Aviation Administration**

Dolly Johnson has made contributions to the Federal Aviation Administration and the National Air Space that are unparalleled. Dolly began her career at the Minneapolis Air Traffic Control Tower in 1983. In her current role as Support Specialist Dolly is considered "THE" positive contributor to the MSP Tower team. Dolly has been the leader in many large projects, and can always be found heading up the MSP team when the President visits Minneapolis. Dolly provides a very welcoming environment when approached with a question. Minneapolis Tower personnel consider her the "Go to" person for help. MSP is lucky to have Dolly as our Support Specialist. Minneapolis NATCA considers her "their Rock" and most deserving of this award. Dolly's dedication to her job has certainly shown through. It is without hesitation that we recommend Dolly for the Civil Servant Award.



**Kelly C. Nelson**

Air Traffic Manager, Minneapolis ARTCC

**Department of Transportation- Federal Aviation Administration**

Kelly is the Air Traffic Manager (ATM) at Minneapolis ARTCC, he has held a variety of positions over his 30 year career. His values and work ethic have made him an ideal leader. The example he demonstrates and the expectations that he has set for himself and his workforce are second to none. Kelly has managed through some of the biggest changes and challenges, as staffing levels have been cut and the technology changes. He has built successful teams to help the facility navigate through difficult times. Kelly recognizes the value of collaboration and his ability to utilize and understand it has enabled him to succeed. Recognizing individual's abilities and having trust in those individuals is the secret to his success as ATM.



**Joe Rygh**

Airway Transportation Systems Specialist

**Department of Transportation- Federal Aviation Administration**

Joe is the go-to specialist for the Minneapolis Environmental Unit for operational sustainment projects. He is consistently called upon to use his extensive knowledge and expertise to upgrade National Airspace Facilities. In doing so, he saves the federal government thousands of dollars in labor costs and ensures that critical facilities operate at peak performance. In Joe's personal life he seeks countless opportunities to give back to his community and mankind in general. For several years, Joe uses his skills and abilities to lead Habitat for Humanity projects in the local community, but in addition he travels to third world countries to build schools and orphanages as part of a mission's aid organization. Joe models the character and integrity of the FAA at the highest level.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



### Jeffery P. St. Germain

Air Traffic Control Specialist

Department of Transportation- Federal Aviation Administration

Jeff was an integral part of the leadership team during the development and implementation of the Minneapolis RNAV STARs and Optimal Profile Descents (OPDs). These NextGen initiatives have produced substantial fuel savings, reduced carbon emissions, and reduced delays at the Minneapolis airport. Jeff's experience as an air traffic controller and his ability to collaborate with multiple government and private entities was instrumental to the success of the project. He was elected by his peers to lead negotiations, represent their interests, and communicate their principles. He has demonstrated this leadership with poise and integrity. Jeff is a valued resource to the Air Traffic Organization, and the FAA.



### Marcy Woodruff

Traffic Management Officer-Northern Planes District

Department of Transportation- Federal Aviation Administration

Marcy works hard to provide exceptional customer service in her role as Traffic Management Officer for the Northern Planes District. Marcy responds to numerous questions, inquiries, complaints, etc. on the services provided to aircraft at the twenty six air traffic facilities that the District oversees. With the recently developed Optimum Profile Descent Approaches at Minneapolis, as well as Converging Runway Operations changes, Marcy has responded to an unusually high number of inquiries from the airlines, MAC, air taxi operators and GA pilots. Marcy leads monthly customer forums as well as telecons where controllers, airport customers and the airport authority can exchange information. Marcy coordinates with Minneapolis Tower, TRACON, en route center and the Command Center to ensure the safety and efficiency of the NAS.



### Emeka Ezekwemba

Area Engineer

Department of Transportation- Federal Highway Administration

Emeka Ezekwemba is skilled in influencing very complex and unique Metro District highway projects. He has established good working relationships with Minnesota Department of Transportation and FHWA Division staff—where people feel comfortable offering different points of view. He asks tough probing questions, which pushes people to think through their opinions more carefully and support their recommendations more completely. He collaborates well and consults with Division staff. Emeka's project management approach allows project issues to be more thoroughly thought out resulting in a more cost-effective and correctly-sized projects. For example, Emeka influenced various phases of the large, complex I-35W North MnPASS project including analysis of a broad range of alternatives, use of an innovative median design and public outreach to disadvantaged communities.



### Cheryl Brellenthin

Revenue Officer

Department of Treasury- Internal Revenue Service

Cheryl is a high achiever who constantly takes charge of a situation and follows through on projects and commitments. Her dependability and work ethic is evident to anyone fortunate enough to work with her. During her very distinguished 25 year career with the IRS, Cheryl has provided complex systems training, served on task force teams working to solve unique issues facing the agency, served as a mentor to many, and she spent time as an acting manager when that need arose. She has proven time and again her commitment, not only to the agency, but to the development and growth of her colleagues; leading work-shops, sharing technical guidance and developing job aids. Throughout her career Cheryl has been a "go-to person", whether it be handling complex/difficult case work or stepping up to lead a team. Cheryl exemplifies and promotes the image of what it means to be a true leader.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Pam Owens**

Revenue Officer

**Department of Treasury- Internal Revenue Service**

Pam Owens has worked tirelessly for the Internal Revenue Service for 31 years. While Pam has had a very successful career, what sets Pam apart is the generosity of her time and talents as the Chair of the Shingle Creek Neighborhood Association. The SCNA organized in 1991 to be a voice in the community by improving neighborhood livability and economic opportunities by involving the residents and promoting the safety and health of community members. Projects that made a difference in 2015 include the Shingle Creek Clean-up project, Olson Middle School garden project, Tour de Camden bike ride, Jenny Lind School book drive, Patrick Henry robotics team support, community concerts, Emerald Ash Bore project and community meetings. All of this was achieved because Pam and the SCNA care about their community in the city of Minneapolis!



**Tim Wheeler**

Chief of Operations- Veteran Care Division

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Debt Management Center**

Tim Wheeler is a true unsung hero at the VA Debt Management Center where his personal and organizational successes are always passed onto his dedicated employees. He was hand-selected to serve on the Secretary of the VA's Executive Escalation Team to work the most complex and volatile Veteran debt cases where he consistently and expertly solved the Veteran's most pressing issues in a manner that maintained the Veterans dignity and respect. A selfless and compassionate leader, Mr. Wheeler sets the example by being the example as he executed over 212 EXECVA cases with positive outcomes in FY2015 and over 75 cases so far in FY2016. Displaying unparalleled professionalism, judgment and financial acumen, Mr. Wheeler's efforts not only have a positive and lasting impact on the Debt Management Center but the 22 million Veterans served by the VA.



**David K. Ahrens**

Housekeeping Aid Supervisor

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Dave goes above and beyond the scope of duty to keep this hospital clean each and every day he comes to work. On a day when a veteran had passed away, the personal belongings were placed in bag and inadvertently put in the waste receptacle chute. The family conveyed their deep concern for the retrieval of these items. Dave came to work in scrubs the next day and followed the dumpster all the way to Burnsville, then sifted through the entire dumpster as Waste Management unloaded everything on the ground for him to pick through. Although this was a needle in the haystack sort of event, Dave found the wallet and the phone and we were able to get it all back to the family.



**Lisa M. Anderson**

Supervisor Pharmacist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Lisa is a dedicated VA employee emphasizing priorities on patients, coworkers and other VA staff. She is professional, friendly, warm and caring at all times. She was a core lead and contributor to the outpatient pharmacy remodeling project. The completion of this project has led to improved patient flow in the outpatient pharmacy, improved employee flow and workspace. She creates a sense of collaboration and works to the highest potential to ensure there is respect and trust in the pharmacy-related meetings. She went out of her way to work with volunteer services, became the supervisor to the volunteers and now has increased volunteer staffing hours from 4 hours to 6-8 hours due to the success of their presence on veteran service!

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Joshua J. Armagost

Program Support Assistant

Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center

Josh's official title is that of Office Manager, but he has assigned himself many more duties than are described in his job description. He will often go above and beyond for veterans by spending time with them in the waiting room to make them feel more comfortable during their first visit. He is focused on easing their anxiety about coming to a counseling center for the first time and graciously explains what the VA and Vet Centers can do. He is one of the hardest working individuals and never has a negative attitude about the work given to him. He keeps the morale and the spirit positive in this work place and veterans are always pleased to see him when they come to this center.



## Dr. Amy E. Candy Heinlein

Physician

Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center

In 2015 Dr. Candy Heinlein, along with others, developed and enacted the VALUE student program which has brought a group of medical students to work at the VA in a longitudinal clerkship. She redesigned the resident clinic to offer our veterans full day clinic. She leads the charge in preparing our trainees to become primary care providers through direct instruction, modeling in clinic, and mentorship. She takes extra time to work with residents and students on difficult patient interactions. She volunteers to teach extra noon lectures and morning reports while still balancing a full patient panel. Dr. Candy Heinlein is one of the biggest assets to the Minneapolis VA through her work directly with patients, through her work in academics, and through her interpersonal interactions each day with staff.



## Danielle A. DeWitt

Program Support Assistant

Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center

The Telehealth program would not be the service it is today without Danielle's enthusiasm, positivity, and dedication to the Telehealth mission and to the veterans it serves. Danielle went above and beyond and researched online how to adjust microphone settings on an iPad. This dedication and commitment Danielle displayed truly helped the patient utilize Telehealth at home, improved patient care, and helped the clinician connect with their patient. I believe this is also in line with the ICARE mission of commitment and advocacy. Danielle works incredibly hard to ensure clinicians and other administrative staff have a good experience in Telehealth, which ultimately translates to the patient care experience. She works behind the scenes setting up providers and appointments so patients can access services in a more convenient way.



## Nancy J. Dobbins

Dietician

Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center

Nancy is a Certified Nutritional Support Dietitian although she does not put those initials behind her name in her chart notes (because of her humbleness). She has her own quality assurance program auditing the charts of the veteran's on home tube feedings in order to provide the highest quality care. She is currently in the LEAD program and is working on another tube feeding project for her project. Nancy is an employee who is positive and caring. If you call her to ask a question, she always takes time to help you even though she is busy and she doesn't make you feel incompetent with the question you ask. She leads by example and has inspired her co-workers to be the best they can be and to always challenge themselves.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Iden C. Hill**

Peer Specialist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Mr. Hill has been a pioneer in peer support services for our facility. He was one of the first full-time, professional peer specialists hired here, and has helped to create a positive reputation for this new discipline from the start. Mr. Hill has overcome addiction and homelessness, and acts as living evidence that high levels of recovery and quality of life are possible for all Veterans. In addition to working with addictions, psychosocial rehabilitation, and health behaviors, he has been involved in training new peer specialists, implementation of the annual mental health summit, and has served as a liaison with VA Central Office in peer support. He has volunteered to work with a MN state commission on homelessness, and leads sober support groups in the community on his personal time.



**Frank J. Lay Jr.**

Housekeeping Aid

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Frank is our housekeeper on ward 3F and keeps the inpatient area in top condition. He keeps his eyes and ears out on everything. We always thank him profusely for going above and beyond, but he is so humble that he just shrugs it off as part of his job. Mr. Lay is always willing to help with whatever we need, most of the time without being asked- moving beds, calling in to SPS to get rental beds picked up, etc. The job of housekeeper is by no means a glamorous or highly recognized position but is an essential part of creating a safe and welcoming environment. He greets patients in the same quiet and positive way and they take note of his good work as well.



**Wade G. Neubauer**

Training Specialist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Mr. Neubauer expertly manages the online learning management system (TMS) as well as creates online learning offerings for the Mpls VA Health Care System. To better inform and update facility leadership, managers and supervisors, Mr. Neubauer produced a monthly training status report that is emailed to leadership and contains the training status for "hot topic" training requirements, as well as providing an overall training compliance percentage for the entire facility. He has developed this new report template to automatically calculate training compliance by individual Department/Service Line for all or selected trainings. This has proved to be a valuable tool to the organization. He has coordinated the template approval with Privacy and Information Security Officer and the Deputy Network Director has requested that the template be shared throughout VISN23.



**Jennyann D. Noack**

Visual Information Specialist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Within mere weeks of Jennyann's start date at our VA, staff members from outside of my department were singing her praises and marveling about how impactful her work had been in such a short period of time. She had taken on the social media presence of our VA facility and transformed it from a neglected, outdated, inefficient tool to a positive, informative communication platform that effectively reaches our Veterans and keeps staff and the public informed of accomplishments and priorities. Her messaging is professional, uplifting, data-driven and prompt. She is self-directed, takes initiative and stays in sync with stories in the mainstream media. The ever rising numbers of follower and likes as well as comments quantify how she has forged important bridges with the Veterans we serve.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



**Hillari S. Olson**

Physical Therapist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Ms. Olson has voluntarily lead weekly noon-hour yoga sessions for PM&R employees since March 2014. She provides this effort at the expense of her own time during sessions held during her lunch break. She provides the yoga sessions as an opportunity for health and wellbeing for our employees but they have also resulted in increased morale and improved relationships between employees which improves overall team functioning. The combination of all of these benefits supports our workforce and, as such, improves our ability to serve our Veterans each and every day. She embodies whole health principles and encourages coworkers to join her in this approach through the experiences she offers. Her voluntary contribution of her skills as a certified yoga instructor is worthy of recognition.



**Kristin L. Powell**

Recreation Therapist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Kristin Powell's dedication, energy, passion and skills make a positive difference in the lives of the VA Polytrauma Outpatient TBI Veterans she serves. Watching Kristin you see she does not treat her profession like a job, but instead it is obvious she is living out her true calling in life. Kristin coordinated the Adaptive Sports Expo at the Minneapolis VA for the past 2 years, bringing representatives and adaptive equipment from the community providers into the medical center, exposing our Veterans, their families and staff to the many community opportunities available in the Twin Cities area. Kristin is able to challenge the Veterans through inspiration while avoiding frustration. She is skilled at adapting the program and her approach to the unique situation and needs of each individual Veteran.



**Clarice D. Purdy**

Telecommunication Specialist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Clarice Purdy's dedication to serving veterans is endless. No matter how busy things gets she always is there to help if there is a connection problem that the telehealth staff cannot resolve. I do not think there is a service line she has not helped in some way, from pathology, to mental health to surgery specialty care and beyond. She coordinates all the required resources with such attention to detail and kindness. I truly do not think telehealth and many other teleconference activities, such as grand rounds, would run as smoothly as they do without her. She is essential to continuing to provide great care to patients and education and training to other staff. She truly exemplifies customer service and team work spirit here at the VA.



**Dawn A. Strojny**

Program Specialist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Dawn was assigned as the site-lead for the Veterans Point of Service (VPS) self-check-in Vet Link Kiosk project. This assignment is outside the scope of her VERA Coordinator duties, but she graciously accepted this substantial additional role. As a member of the kiosk team, I can say she effectively managed the Minneapolis Vet Link implementation team successfully, keeping both VA and Vendor staff on task. Dawn was able to professionally and diplomatically communicate the facility expectations to the vendor and make their program work for our facility and CBOCs. The Kiosk implementation involved working with many people and departments; Because of Dawn, veterans began encouraging other veterans to use the kiosk. Dawn is always willing to help others; patients, family members and staff, going above and beyond to find an answer or solution.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## **Torricia H. Yamada**

Psychologist

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

As a clinical neuropsychologist, she takes great care to accommodate the veterans she serves every step of the way. She is flexible in her schedule and fitting in veterans at times outside of the usual appointment slots, and taking the time during her evaluations to determine if she is the best resource for the veteran in that moment. Torrii has also spearheaded a new direction for neuropsychology by starting a cognitive rehabilitation group. This process included consulting with experts across the country, adapting established cognitive rehabilitation resources to fit the veterans' needs at the Minneapolis VAHCS, involving psychology trainees in this process, recruiting from various teams, and running the first cognitive rehabilitation group with pre and post-evaluations with a psychology intern. She is ever willing to assist and share her knowledge to all.



## **Tim M. Yue**

Nurse Manager

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Medical Center**

Mr. Yue possesses a unique sense of fair play and treats everyone as an individual yet also empowers a “team” approach by enlisting cooperation. He communicates goals and expectations clearly and holds staff accountable and empowers everyone to achieve their best and supports career development. He provides support and encouragement when things are not going well and promotes learning and advancement for all with offers to help to make things clearer. Mr. Yue leads by example and provides feedback in a constructive way. Mr. Yue is a recognized “VISN 23 Mediator” and uses this skill to provide mediation within the VISN as well as this facility. He travels to other VA's in the VISN to provide Mediation and attends workshops to keep this skill consistent and fair to all served.



## **Jason Rudie**

Attorney

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Office of General Counsel**

Last year VA continued to face media & congressional scrutiny as its top leaders worked to create a more Veteran-centric culture. Mr. Rudie works in employment law & media relations for the Upper Midwest; in 2015 he was asked to provide counsel to additional Southern states facing significant crises & lacking adequate support. Mr. Rudie's service was always at an exemplary level & he regularly communicated with his clients after hours & on weekends. In fact, he often assisted beyond the scope of his responsibility. The issues that cause a manager to seek Mr. Rudie's counsel involve extremely sensitive & stressful situations. Recently, the Director of the Minneapolis Level 1 Medical Center publicly recognized his outstanding support over the last year. His positive impact to Veterans & VA is immeasurable – evidenced through this nomination by his customers.



## **Shawn Buermann**

Quality Assurance Management Analyst

**Department of Veterans Affairs- Regional Benefits Office**

Shawn Buermann's innovation and enthusiasm is evident in his initiative of completing projects at the Regional Loan Center (RLC). He possesses exceptional abilities with Microsoft Excel and uses these skills to develop tools for the RLC. This past year, Mr. Buermann developed two highly complex and interactive systems from the ground up. These systems allowed for the automation of several reports regularly prepared by his division, and automated new employee access forms. These systems have reduced the amount of time staff spend completing reports and expedited the time-frame for new employees to receive system access. His exemplary efforts have benefited his agency, his office, and his peers, and resulted in a more efficient way of doing business.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Chad Kenning

Rating Veterans Service Representative

Department of Veterans Affairs- Regional  
Benefits Office

For years, Chad Kenning has worked tirelessly behind the scenes in support of our nation's Veterans and their families. He has taken personal initiative to support his agency's goal of ending Veteran homelessness with his involvement in local StandDown events. Chad works with local businesses, humanitarian organizations, and other volunteers, and over the past six years has helped solicit, collect, and distribute over 25,000 personal care items. In particular, in 2015 he obtained a \$1,700 donation from the Rotary Organization that was used to purchase over 1,500 pairs of socks for the homeless. In this and many other ways, Chad exemplifies the characteristics of a Civil Servant and an unsung hero.



## Kevin Moore

Fiscal Accounts Technician

Department of Veterans Affairs- Regional  
Benefits Office

Kevin Moore regularly demonstrates unwavering dedication and professionalism, and exceeds expectations in the St Paul Regional Office Payroll Section. The past year he overcame significant obstacles in developing an implementation plan for a new nationwide time and attendance system. Despite limited time and resources, and working with a variety of stakeholders, his perseverance and attention to detail resulted in a seamless transition with minimum disruption to operations. While completing the project, Mr. Moore also identified programming shortcoming and quickly submitted thorough recommendations for process improvements. His proactive efforts resulted in changes benefiting 350,000+ VA program users. Through this and other ways, he demonstrates the values of advocacy, respect, and excellence in his duties, and models the qualities of a Civil Servant.



## Captain Kevin Dornan

133rd Medical Group/Medical Plans officers

Minnesota National Guard- 133rd Airlift  
Wing

In a five month period and in the absence of a full time Medical Administrative Officer, Captain Dornan took on the day-to-day responsibilities of the 133rd Medical Group. While maintaining his workload as the 133rd Medical Group's Medical Plans Officer for the Chemical, Biological, Radiologic, Nuclear, and Explosive Enhanced Response Force Package, Captain Dornan represented the 133rd Medical Group Commander at all daily and weekly leadership meetings to ensure medical concerns were addressed with the 133rd Airlift Wing's senior leadership team. He was further tasked to manage the financial transition during Fiscal Year 2016 turn-over and guarantee all required medical money was appropriately obligated. His duties also included making initial contact with Tripler Army Medical Center to coordinate the Medical Facilities Annual Training agreement.



## MSgt Rachel Maloney

Medical Administrator

Minnesota National Guard- 133rd Airlift  
Wing

Master Sergeant Rachel Maloney has distinguished herself by providing excellent customer service and unmatched effort as the Health Systems Administrator for the Aero-medical Evacuation Squadron. She assured training and travel orders were completed in a timely and efficient manner for 94 Squadron members. This effort allowed the successful completion of three major national exercises assuring the squadrons readiness for worldwide deployment. Her efforts also helped complete the successful deployment 17 AE personnel for a period of four month to three different locations, charged with the mission of transporting our nations wounded warriors. Her dedication to duty and top notch customer service provided orders, pay and health care to our military members and their families' throughout this deployment.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



### Maj Kevin Roche

Chief, Aircrew Standardization and Evaluation

Minnesota National Guard- 133rd Airlift Wing

As Chief of Aircrew Standardization and Evaluation, Maj Roche is responsible for ensuring mission qualification for 180 group aircrew members. The senior pilot evaluator/instructor, he directly supervises 5 other crew positions' senior evaluators and numerous programs including Publications, Functional Check Flight, and Go/No-Go. A Real Time Information in Cockpit (critical situational awareness and communications data-link for airdrop/airlift operations) SME, his expertise is relied upon by ALL Guard C-130/other MDS units. He was requested by-name to write a Mobility Data link Manager's Course for CCAF accreditation. His unique tactics background earned a place in the Air Force rewrite of the C-130 tactical operations manual, affecting all C-130 operations. Maj Roche is extremely deserving of the Civil Servant of the Year and Excellence Beyond Expectations Award.



### SMSgt Aaron Siek

Aircrew Flight Equipment Superintendent

Minnesota National Guard- 133rd Airlift Wing

SMSgt Siek is a multi-faceted, visionary leader who produces results. He was recently selected as the Minnesota Air National Guard Outstanding Senior NCO of the year! He revamped 4 OIs and updated 45 MICT tasks, correcting 3 AFE section deficiencies. Fiscally responsible, he identified and implemented a process on survival modules saving the Air Force over \$500,000 annually. He constructed a cutting-edge survival training facility which enhances training and prepares 133AW's members for global situations. He acquired an \$84,000 virtual-reality parachute simulator and state-of-the-art hoist trainer, improving accessibility, safety, and cost-savings vice helicopter training. He secured \$88,000 to replace outdated equipment, improving readiness. He identified and reserved two additional manning positions addressing shortfall, which cut upgrade training time by 40% and increased work center productivity.



### MSgt Alice C. Nephew

Force Management Technician

Minnesota National Guard- 148th Fighter Wing

MSgt Nephew distinguished herself by performing outstanding customer service to Wing members, retirees and dependents. MSgt Nephew has improved the Wing OPR/EPR program immensely by creating, editing and implementing a tracker for the Wing. Over 575 Man hours were saved with the new system allowing redistribution of those hours to other critical programs within the MSG. MSgt Nephew's process gives wing leadership a better scope of their evaluations and real time status. Additionally MSgt Nephew has improved the retirements/separation process by providing members with a retirement book that offers them all the necessary data that would benefit them during the retirement process. Because MSgt Nephew's improvements were so transformative the 133rd ALW and JFHQ in the state of Minnesota adopted the procedures.



### Blake Blomquist

Generalist Technical Expert

Social Security Administration

Blake is always willing to help out in answering the phones and taking additional claims. He provided the public along with our staff and other offices in Area 1 with quality training. He takes on additional offset cases and has provided many Area 1 offices with offset training,.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Jane Breckenridge**

Claims Specialist

Social Security Administration

Jane demonstrated outstanding public service in 2015 by training and mentoring other team members, sharing her excellent technical knowledge, and processing the most complex work with accuracy and timeliness. Each day she serves both our public and our entire staff by showing compassion, flexibility, an outstanding work ethic and a positive attitude. There is no work assignment that Jane deems beneath her, she cheerfully takes on any new task and performs it with excellence. Jane also developed a new work flow for a challenging workload and because of her efforts our office has been able to increase our productivity and quality in that area. Jane's outstanding contributions exemplify excellence in public service!



**Mark Childs**

Technical Expert

Social Security Administration

Mark Childs provided exemplary service in 2015 to the public and his colleagues alike. Throughout the year, Mark was routinely called upon to assist in the processing of the most complex cases from across our 3-office District, mentored a number of trainees within the St. Cloud office, and continued to be a leader in Area 1 in the area of prisoner suspension processing. While keeping on top of his own assigned workloads, he regularly assisted his colleagues with backlogs to ensure that our public was paid timely and accurately. He was routinely the first point of coverage for appointments and walk-in coverage when unexpected absences occurred. Mark is the personification of outstanding public service and a role model for his colleagues across the District.



**Shannon Cochlin**

Claims Specialist

Social Security Administration

Shannon provides exceptional customer service on a daily basis. She goes above and beyond to make sure the public is served in a courteous and professional manner. She is a go-to person in her office assisting her co-workers and manager wherever there is a need. Her knowledge and commitment to providing exceptional public service makes her an asset the Austin Social Security office and the public it serves.



**Tammy Fluto**

District Manager

Social Security Administration

Tammy truly leads her staff by example. She is willing to work the front lines right along with her employees by answering the phones, assisting members of the public that come into the office to help ensure their needs are met, and processing a number of workloads. She is hands on with training for new employees as well as ongoing training and development of others. Tammy is well respected and known for being fair, honest, and knowledgeable. She truly cares about her employees and wants the best for them. As a result, she has a team of happy productive employees that provide quality services. Tammy has also built strong relationships within the community helping to bridge gaps in services. One example, is the ongoing relationship and trust she has built with the Red Lake tribal reservation, making services more accessible to some of those most in need.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



## Shelly Fountain

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration

---

Shelly exemplifies what "outstanding" customer service is. Shelly is always positive, courteous, polite and respectful when dealing with the public and her coworkers. Shelly has excellent listening skills and makes sure the information she is providing is fully understood by the public. We often receive compliments regarding her excellent service, we're proud that Shelly represents the best in Social Security employees.



## Debbie Kangas

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration

---

Debbie can always be counted on to help out whenever the need arises and without being asked. In 2015 she volunteered to help out with mentoring new employees even though she had a full workload herself. While serving as a mentor, it was obvious she really cared and put a lot of effort into giving the trainees quality feedback and making sure they got the right answers. She also took on the role of an "eleader" for our office and has participated in community outreach, helping to inform the public of our programs and the different electronic services that are available. Debbie is a true team player and will take on the small things on a daily basis such as doing the mail, taking extra interviews if we're short staffed, putting in extra hours, assisting her peers if they are having trouble on a case, etc.. All the little things make a big difference!



## Kevin Maertens

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration

---

Kevin exemplifies what true customer/public service should be about. He is a true professional Public Service employee. He exhibits a quiet competence and proves to be a positive role model for his peers. Kevin has a true "can do" attitude. He quickly acquired technical proficiency and excelled in providing outstanding, compassionate and caring service to the public since joining the St. Paul SSA District Office on May 2010. Through his bilingual skills, he assists the office and provides assistance in the Spanish language as necessary.



## Lee Saunders

Service Representative

Social Security Administration

---

Lee Saunders positive attitude to providing quality public service is evident by the praise he receives from those he serves. He values people by treating everyone with courtesy and respect. Frequently we hear about his professionalism from his co-workers and the public. Everybody loves Lee is often heard throughout the office. Lee's approach towards workloads in support of the mission of the Agency has benefited the people we serve. His flexibility in adjusting his work plans for the day leads to a positive work environment.

2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards



**Jeanne Wartman**

Claims Representative

Social Security Administration

Jeanne excels at maintaining harmony in the Duluth Social Security office by sharing her pleasant demeanor and excellent sense of humor. She is a highly compassionate employee that puts all customers at ease. Jeanne is patient and thorough in her explanations when faced with challenging interview situations. Overall, these attributes make her a go-to employee when difficult customer relations are anticipated. Jeanne also makes positive contributions to her community away from work. One example of her community service is her coordination of the yearly 5k Run/Walk which brings community together to help raise funds to support the Hermantown Volunteer Fire Department. Overall, we've been lucky and proud to have Jeanne on board providing great service for Social Security.



**Cynthia Blackmon**

City Letter Carrier

United States Postal Service

Letter Carrier Cynthia Blackmon took on the challenge of being the Toys for Tots coordinator for University Station. She embraced the challenge with enthusiasm and dedication. She effectively coordinated toy donations with representatives of the Marine Corp., and with the Minneapolis Customer Relations Coordinator. Her devotion to the Toys for Tots drive energized her coworkers resulting in the donation of hundreds of toys from the University Station alone. She represented the USPS at the Toys for Tots donations center, and during a feature story on KARE 11 news with grace and professionalism. Cynthia embraced the project and went above and beyond to ensure the project's success. Her efforts embody the phrase POSTAL PROUD. She is a shining example of dedication and commitment.



**Lucia Brady**

Clerk

United States Postal Service

Ms. Brady is my most proficient, accurate, and highest producer within the CFS unit. In FY2015 the unit was 5th in the nation in productivity. Ms. Brady was the leading keyer during that period. The goal established is one must "key" 146 pieces per hour. She averaged a whopping 313 pieces per hour consistently. Additionally, she scans and corrects Change of Addresses. The goal is 60 per hour, she excels by averaging 102 per hour. She is the units' trainer and willingly accepts all tasks; and does each superbly. Off duty she participates in social activism programs concerning minorities.



**Tashi Dawa Lama**

Mail Handler Assistant

United States Postal Service

Last year On 25th April 2015, there was news on every channel that a 7.8 magnitude Earthquake hit Nepal that left many people injured, killed and homeless. While everyone was scared and taking shelter on the open ground, Tashi felt to help others. Without caring about himself, he selflessly talked to his club RTYC, Ktm to start helping the earthquake victims. At first, he led the team to prepare food and distribute them among the victims who were hospitalized. He led the team to carry out the relief work to different part of the worst earthquake affected areas like Kathmandu, Ramechap, Jiri, Dhadhing, Sakhu, etc. He distributed food, Tarpaulins (tents), water, etc; organized medical camp, monetary help to destroyed schools and victims of the families. He tirelessly helped for two months. He has been a hero to those earthquake victims and their families.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



**Amanda Greer**

City Letter Carrier

United States Postal Service

Amanda has been a Carrier since 1999, wife and mother. 2015 was the start of the 1st Annual Bowl-a-Thon for MDA. Amanda has planned, schedule and raised funds and gift items for the event. She is the planner and coordinator for the St Paul, MN stations to attend and participate in the event, a total of 17 stations, along with running this event for MDA she hosts weekly morning breakfast fund raising events for MDA which consists of preparing breakfast for employees that make contributions to MDA. The breakfast event is by schedule only and takes place months before the Bowl-a-Thon. The 2016 event dates for the 2nd Annual Bowl-a-thon is April 30.



**Bruce Gruenhagen**

Rural Carrier

United States Postal Service

Bruce has been a carrier for 10 years. He has always tries to help when asked. He looks for ways to improve the work he does, some weeks working 60 hours. He is an Elder at his church, part of the men's group. A handy man as well as a local Lions club member. 10 years ago he met his wife Sarah on his first mission trip. They continue to travel with their church yearly to either Haiti, Dominican Republic or Costa Rica for the last 10 years. With the "OASIS" (Offering A Savior in Service) group they do mostly construction work and have made hundreds of church pews. He also loves to spend time with his wife, kids and grandchildren.



**Terry Henthorn**

Human Resources Specialist

United States Postal Service

For over 7 years Terry has taken the lead on an initiative in his community to raise funds for the Toys for Tots campaign. When he began this endeavor several years ago he had no idea where this would lead and the impact he would have; donations were minimal. At the 2015 Toys for Tots event at the local KARE 11 backyard spotlight, Terry was happy to hand over a check for over \$18,000. He does this by soliciting donations through phone calls and mailings. Terry's unselfish commitment to this community building activity exemplifies true and meaningful leadership.



**Loren Kuhnly**

City Letter Carrier

United States Postal Service

Loren has been the driving force for the USPS presence in the Christmas of the North Parade in Duluth. Loren oversees the paperwork to secure a place in the parade and ensures all participants have required documentation. Loren transforms a 16 foot trailer into a holiday festive "Letters to Santa Float" decorated with lights, postal signage and products including a North Pole Express Mailbox. The newspaper and schools are notified to have children write letters to Santa and bring them to the parade for postal employees to collect and deliver to Santa. Children come running up to the postal employees to hand in their Santa letters and watch as their letters are deposited into the North Pole Express Mailbox headed to the North Pole.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*



**Deb Ochetti**

City Letter Carrier

United States Postal Service

Deb heard about the 'Be The Match' program through an article in the local newspaper. A local family whose sister was diagnosed with leukemia was searching for a match. No one in the family was found to be a match, so they were hoping to find someone outside the family. Deb decided to join the registry by completing a questionnaire and a cheek swab. Deb waited for about four years until she got the call. Deb donated in March of 2015 to a 42 year old woman with Leukemia. Even though the process was very involved she would do it again. She felt everyone was so helpful throughout the process, adding, "Knowing that I had a great opportunity to be a donor was a blessing".



**Natalie Sorvari**

Manager, Consumer and Industry Contact

United States Postal Service

Natalie has been instrumental in supporting and championing several projects both on the job and off the job which support raising funds for breast cancer research initiatives. For the last 9+ years she has volunteered to promote the Race for the Cure, procured t-shirts for the event and has led Team Postal participants. Last year Natalie also held the first annual golf tournament and memorial event for a Postal Employee, Tari Klapprich who succumbed to breast cancer. Monies raised at this event were given to the "Pay it Forward Fund" foundation; a non-profit group that assists patients in paying their bills while undergoing treatment for various cancers. Everyone who knows Natalie knows she's passionate about this cause and is always willing to go the extra mile to make a difference.

*2016 Civil Servant of the Year Awards*

*Exhibitors:*

We would like to thank all of our exhibitors whose generous support helped make the event possible!

**Civil Servant of the Year Award Plaques:** Crown Trophy

**Color Guard:** Minnesota National Guard

**Award Program Location:** Bloomington DoubleTree by Hilton

**Master of Ceremonies:** Alyssa Bryan, Chair, Federal Executive Board

**Program and Poster Design:** Federal Executive Board Staff

**Printing:** Allegra Printing

Federal Executive Board of Minnesota

**Dr. Michael Dutcher, Chair**

**Alyssa Bryan, Executive Director**

**Andria Stegeman-Horwitz, Assistant Director**

Suite 2250, 1 Federal Drive  
St. Paul, MN 55111

Phone (612)713-7200 Fax (612) 713-7203

www.minnesota.feb.gov

Follow us online!



*Exhibitors & Acknowledgements*

