Operating Staff Announces Outstanding Service Award Recipients

Four members of NIU’s Operating Staff were chosen to receive the Outstanding Service Award for 2016. The recipients are Brenda Hart, Ruperto Herrera, Lynne Meyer, and Lise Schlosser. About 1,530 employees make up the Civil Service staff. Each year, four are selected by a committee of their peers to receive the award of plaques and $1,500. They were honored at a Thursday, May 5, banquet.

Here is a closer look at the recipients.

Brenda Hart
Office administrator
Department of Marketing

Brenda Hart’s middle name isn’t “organization,” but don’t tell that to colleagues in the Department of Marketing who describe her as “exemplary,” “superb” and a “professional multitasker.” The office administrator, a 12-year NIU employee who took her current job five years ago, is regarded as excellent in planning activities while continually accepting “more and more” duties without additional compensation. Her long list of coordination responsibilities includes the scheduling of courses, the department’s awards ceremony, luncheons for current students and prospective ones, the Student Appreciation Hot Dog Day, the holiday food drive, student evaluations of faculty and the work schedules of graduate assistants. And that’s only scratching the surface for the employee known for her outgoing personality, optimistic nature and strong work ethic – and for “always going the extra mile.”

“Brenda is a major reason that I hear so many people that the Marketing Department is simply one of the best places to work on campus,” said Tim Aurand, the James E. Thompson Professor of Marketing.

Ruperto Herrera
Application programming analyst
Division of Information Technology

When NIU needed a more modern, more functional online directory, it was Ruperto Herrera who tackled that challenge. Those who describe Herrera as “extraordinary, amazing and exemplary” weren’t surprised. He already had implemented a better platform to deliver streaming audio and video content. He oversaw the development of a smartphone app for NIU. He led the development of a custom building block for Blackboard that allows NIU faculty to send course grades directly into MyNIU. “I’ve had countless opportunities to witness firsthand the fact that Ruperto’s abilities go far above and beyond,” said Jason Rhode, director of the Faculty Development and Instructional Design Center. “The new online directory has become one of the most vital and most-used information items within the NIU website.”

Last spring, Herrera agreed to serve as a technical lead for the Program Prioritization Data Support Team.
Program Prioritization leaders now praise his ability to build a custom scoring system from scratch “under incredible time demands with numerous requests for enhancements to the program.”

“He has put in endless hours over and beyond his formal commitment when the success of the project has depended on this,” said Carolinda Douglass, vice provost for Academic Planning and Development. “Clearly, his intelligence, persistence, maturity and hard work will continue to serve him and our institution well.”

The double NIU alum, who hold a bachelor’s in computer science and a master’s in management information systems, joined NIU in 2006. Off the job, he is a child sponsor for Juna Amagara Ministries.

Lynne Meyer
Office support specialist
Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures

Lynne Meyer is more than someone who handles regular secretarial work. She’s more than the problem-solver who supervises work-study, manages student evaluations, coordinates the new STAMP testing program, organizes the annual awards ceremony and runs departmental elections. She’s more than the department’s “backbone” and its human encyclopedia of university procedures and policies.

Meyer is also a compassionate “caregiver.” “In her pivotal role as the person students see first when they come into our department, she empowers students by treating them with respect,” said Gregory T. Ross, Ph.D. coordinator in the Foreign Language Residence Program, “and assists them in their journey toward realizing not only their academic goals – but as young adults discovering the myriad facets of their personality.”

An NIU employee since 1993, Meyer is known as friendly, courteous and professional. She’s also regarded as “a self-starter” who’s “cheerfully and faithfully” taken on the responsibilities of two former colleagues in the front office.

“We cannot stress enough how valuable she is,” agreed Chair Katharina Barbe and James Byrd, an instructor of Spanish, “and how wonderful her contributions have been and will continue to be. She is the face of the department.”

Outside of work, Meyer has participated in the Relay for Life for 15 years, serving as co-captain (with NIU professor Mary Cozad) or the department’s team: The Profes’ Posse. Never missing the annual American Cancer Society event, for which she has raised more than $1,000, Meyer often addresses the crowd, walks the track and recruits others to the cause.

Lise Schlosser
Office manager
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences External Programming

Although Lise Schlosser’s title includes the word “office,” much of the 12-year employee’s work takes place elsewhere. Schlosser has led travel programs to Canada for the Stratford Festival. She’s accompanied one-day trips to Chicago Shakespeare Theatre productions, and has organized several “movie meet-ups” with Lifelong Learning Institute (LLI) members.

Meanwhile, the Ph.D. candidate in the NIU Department of English has taught the English portion of the ACT Test Prep course offered through the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences External Programming.

“She is a proud Northern Illinois University alumnus, NIU employee and NIU student. It is NIU, however, that should be most proud that they helped produce a great professional.”

Called an “innovative” and “exceptional” employee who demonstrates “independence in exploring, expanding and improving ways to deal with her work,” Schlosser is praised by colleagues for her “perseverance, warmth, humor and expertise.”

She has ensured that academic summer camps ran smoothly, assisted in the implementation of new camp processes, encouraged the creation of a summer camp staff handbook and instituted a mandatory staff orientation.

Volunteering to teach study groups for the LLI, meanwhile, prompts her to spend several hours of free time planning, and conducting research for, those classes.

Away from work, she also has volunteered for Northern Public Radio, the Illinois History Expo and NIU women’s basketball.

New Opportunity – Operating Staff Personnel Advisor

A new opportunity to assist the operating staff on campus has been created through the cooperation of the Operating Staff Council, the University Council, and Executive Vice President & Provost Lisa Freeman. For more than 40 years, NIU has had a Faculty & SPS Personnel Advisor available to assist that population on campus. The Operating Staff Council has been working diligently to create a similar resource for the civil service operating staff which has resulted in the creation of an Operating Staff Personnel Advisor (OSPA) position.

The OSPA will advise civil service employees about policies and procedures, support and participate in meetings with them when requested, and assess the ongoing needs of the operating staff. The OSPA will also provide guidance to civil service employees in union bargaining units on locating appropriate union resources when needed. In addition, this person will prepare and maintain necessary records and reports, develop resource materials and provide an annual report that summarizes the advisor’s activities. A complete description of the position can be found at go.niu.edu/OSPA-Application

Civil service employees may apply for the OSPA position with approval from their supervisor. However, the position is not open to civil service operating staff employees who are part of a classification represented by a union that negotiates a contract with NIU, in order to avoid conflicts with contractual obligations.

There will be training provided to the OSPA to ensure understanding of NIU’s administrative structure, policies and procedures, State Universities Civil Service System statutes and rules, and the collective bargaining agreements. The OSPA will receive up to 10% release time and additional compensation (see the description for full details).

The deadline for applying for the Operating Staff Personnel Advisor is Tuesday, May 31 by 4:30 p.m. Visit go.niu.edu/OSPA to get full instructions about submitting a resume, a letter of interest, and supervisor approval form. This is a new opportunity to serve your fellow civil service employees by helping them navigate, understand, and take advantage of all the resources available at NIU.
Employment Changes

March 2016

Welcome New Employees
Charles Bockman, Food Service Sanitation Lab—Housing & Dining
Lakeisha Brown, Chief Clerk—Housing & Dining
Chase Cavanaugh, Broadcast News Specialist—Northern Public Radio
Alicyn Daehler, Program Assistant—School of Art and Design
Joseph Floress, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Patricia Gittleson, Chief Clerk—Housing & Dining
Jeanette Glaude, Office Manager—Foreign Languages & Literature
Michale Good, Waiter/Waitress—Holmes Student Center
Jennifer Hayes, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Amy Kennedy, Telephone Operator II—Regional Outreach and Engagement
Susan Kerschle, Benefits Representative—Human Resource Services
Michelle Mass, Program Adviser—First and Second Year Experience
Douglas Paul, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Kristine Raddke, Office Support Specialist—Family, Consumer & Nutrition
Steffen Scharmann, IT Technical Associate—University Libraries
Briana Tallitsch, Office Support Associate—Convocation Center
Darkene Wilson, Kitchen Helper—Housing & Dining
Lori York, Police Telecommunicator—Public Safety

Changes
Damien Cavazos to Food Service Administrator II—Housing & Dining
Jayson Curran to Applications Support Manager—Information Services
Dana Ditrichs-Kunel to Administrative Assistant—Executive Vice President and Provost
Kathy Gibbs to Administrative Assistant—Alumni Services
Logan Halstead to Building Services Foreman—Building Services
John Holmes to Building Services Foreman—Building Services
Mandy Kreitzer to Accounting Associate—Controller
Sheetal Kumar to Admissions/Records Officer—Admissions
Kathleen Marshall to Accounting Associate—Accounts Payable & Travel
Connie Rolon to Public Functions Supervisor—Holmes Student Center
Neiche Rush to Security Guard—Public Safety
Lene Schere to Office Manager—Vice President Research and Innovation Partnerships

Department Changes
Connie Moon, Office Support Specialist to Conference Services
Jeffrey Strohm, Graphic Design Manager to University Marketing

Retirement
Warren Lubbers, Distribution Services Assistant Supervisor—Materials Management
Barbara Parisot, Kitchen Helper—Housing & Dining
Warren Lubbers, Distribution Services Assistant Supervisor—Materials Management
Barbara Parisot, Kitchen Helper—Housing & Dining

Separations
Charles Almberg, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Stephen Blood, Telephone Operator II—Regional Outreach and Engagement
Jennifer Burris, Human Resource Assistant—Human Resource Services
Anne Claassen, Library Assistant—University Libraries
Elisabeth Clary, Admissions/Records Specialist—Registration & Records
Patricia Gittleson, Chief Clerk—Housing & Dining
Walter Howard, Jr., Office Support Specialist—English
JoAnn Lackey, Kitchen Helper—Housing & Dining
James Locke, Grounds Worker—Grounds
Kyla Matheson, Account Technician II—Development Operations
Megan Rissman, Motor Vehicle Operator/Mechanic—Transportation
Amita Sarup, IT Technical Associate—Information Services
Jeremy Seuring, IT Technical Associate—Information Services

April 2016

Welcome New Employees
Samantha Gaul, Office Support Associate—University Honors Program
Jacob Gingrich, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Marietto Jeffries, Financial Aid Adviser—Student Financial Aid
Greg Kleinprinz, Laboratory Mechanic—College of Engineering & Engineering Technology
Lisa March, Office Support Specialist—Public Administration
Eric Massey, Clerk—Public Safety
Brian Mihalik, IT Support Associate—Information Security & Operations
Cordelia Parham, Office Support Specialist—Electrical Engineering
Anthony Perham, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Amanda Rodge, Physician’s Assistant in Medicine—Health Services
Elizabeth Schwartz, Program Services Aide—Human Resource Services
Michael Tweed, Educational Program Evaluation Coordinator—Admissions
Troy West, Cook—Housing & Dining
Keith Zars, IT Support Associate—Information Security & Operations

Changes
Sherri Barber to Publicity Promotion Specialist—Document Services
Alan Crowley to Director Desktop and Media Technician—Network & Communication Services
Chad Gaugher to Steam & Power Plant II—Heating Plant
Daniel Ihm to Director Application Developer and Support—Information Services
John Kearing to Project Manager I—Information Services
Adham Kuhn to Project Manager I—Information Services
Herbert Kurylwi to Director Broadband Development—Network & Communication Services
Nina Lopez to Printing Production Assistant—Document Services
Rachel Pierce to Office Administrator—College of Liberal Arts & Sciences
Irene Sanderson to PeopleSoft Human Resource & Financial Systems Manager—Information Services

Timothy Schwartz to Project Manager I—Information Services
Alan Tody to Director Network Engineering—Network & Communication Services
Nyclo Velez to Cooks Helper—Housing & Dining
Taylor Wallin to Admissions/Records Officer—Graduate School
Denise White to Chief Clerk—Family, Consumer & Nutrition

Department Changes
Katherine Goshlo, IT Support Associate to Network & Communication Services
MARIANN OMALEY, Account Technician to Center for Governmental Studies

Retirements
Russell Arison, Building Service Worker—Holmes Student Center
Janet Rigney, Office Administrator—NIU Outreach Naperville

Separations
Kathryn Cumbo, Police Telecommunicator—Public Safety
Lauren Hohe, Program Adviser—Admissions
Jessica Lorang, Office Support Specialist—Student Academic Success
Therese Lorenz, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Vicki Stover Grubs, Building Service Worker—Building Services
Benjamin Thomas, Program Services Aide—Housing & Dining

Service Awards

March 2016

5 Years
Tanya Cervantes—Registration & Records
Alexandra Chapman—College of Law
Jeffrey Donohue—Public Safety
Prashanth Gurrala—Information Services
Shaunda Wilson—Public Safety

10 Years
Kenneth George—Architectural/Engineering Services
Sheetal Kumar—Admissions
Mary Williams—Bursar
Jennifer Wisser—Development Operations

15 Years
Steven Farmer—Network & Communication Services
James Sheridan—Building Services

25 Years
Sally Nieman—Housing & Dining

40 Years
William Kreda—Information Services

April 2016

5 Years
Carrie Bos—Building Services
Keanan Buckle—Building Services
James Cardine—Building Services
Wayne Cliff—Holmes Student Center
Bradley Crocker—Heating Plant
Tommas Cuizon—Building Services
James Farley—Building Services
Nathan Girt—Building Services
New Union Local on Campus

There is a new union on our Northern Illinois University campus. The American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) Local 1890 represents 125 different civil service job classifications on campus. Organizing began last spring with just a handful of employees contacting the organizing department of AFSCME Council 31 (the Illinois chapter) to come and answer questions about how to best protect jobs and benefits in these turbulent times. Rapidly, more and more concerned employees joined and helped in the organizing effort by signing membership cards, talking with coworkers and attending meetings. NIU was the last Illinois state university to organize the civil service classifications and win the right to negotiate as equals over pay, benefits and working conditions. Now it is the largest bargaining unit on NIU campus and the second largest AFSCME university bargaining unit in the state!

Last October, the local was certified by the Illinois Education Labor Relations Board representing more than 634 clerical, paraprofessional, administrative and other Civil Service campus support staff. That same month, the membership elected a representative, fifteen-member bargaining team to work alongside AFSCME staff to craft preliminary proposals to present to NIU administration representatives. The negotiating team has worked long hours to review, discuss and build a solid template to address such issues as health insurance, desk audits, job security, and a neutral grievance procedure that is efficient and ends with binding arbitration. The bargaining team and Member Action Team (MAT) members continue to share the progress with bargaining unit employees (those who have signed a card and are members, and those who have not, are ALL bargaining unit employees) by having lunchtime meetings near campus, email bulletins and newsletters. There are two negotiating team members who also represent civil service workers on the Operating Staff Council – Jennifer Jeffries and Barbara Andree. There are other OSC members who are represented by AFSCME and other unions as well.

Local 1890 currently has a New Employee Committee working on outreach to new NIU employees in the bargaining unit, a Newsletter Committee and a Solidarity Committee. There are many ways to get involved and levels of participation. Membership is constantly growing - if you are interested and want more information or have any questions regarding AFSCME local 1890, please call the Staff Representative Sara Dorner at 815-968-0447 or email sdorner@afscme31.org.