



**AWARD OF  
DISTINCTION**

**Heroism**

**2018**

# **Michelle Vogel**

*Corrections Officer, Department of Corrections*

Ms. Vogel entered an apartment building that was on fire and helped a four year old child safely out of the apartment building. She then went through the building apartment by apartment to ensure everyone was out safely. Once she had cleared the building, she helped comfort a pregnant mother who was having trouble breathing until EMS arrived. Ms. Vogel has also received the 2018 Missouri Public Safety Medal for her heroic actions during this incident.



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Heroism

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# Robert Dunn

*Recreation Officer, Department of Corrections*

While on a family trip, Mr. Dunn witnessed a serious traffic accident and stopped to assist victims. One vehicle was on fire and attempts were made to get to the driver of that vehicle but he was unsuccessful. He broke the window of another vehicle and with the assistance of another passerby removed three individuals from the vehicle. One had sustained moderate injuries, the second serious injuries, and third was non-responsive. In an effort to revive the non-responsive passenger, Mr. Dunn and his wife administered CPR on the individual. As first responders began to arrive at the accident site, they took over performing CPR on the accident victim. Mr. Dunn and another passerby began spraying the vehicles involved in the accident that were on fire in an attempt to prevent the gas tanks from igniting. While two individuals' sustained fatal injuries in the accident, Mr. Dunn's quick actions in removing the passengers before the vehicles were consumed in flames contributed to saving the lives of two individuals. He did so at great risk to his own safety.



**AWARD OF  
DISTINCTION**

**Human Relations**

**2018**

# **Tina Brooks**

*Eligibility Specialist, Department of Social Services*

Ms. Brooks has made building office morale her mission. Often using her own time and funds she developed innovative ways to encourage her co-workers and make them aware of the impact they have on the lives of others. After receiving approval, she began leaving anonymous gifts on the desk of co-workers to help them realize their hard work was making a difference. Understanding the impact a good attitude could have on co-workers, she developed the slogan “change your atmosphere.” As part of this effort, Ms. Brooks also organized “National Gratitude Day” within her office, a day where she offered her co-workers a small gift in recognition of their hard work and dedication. Her kind gesture had an immediate impact, and her idea quickly spread to three additional offices. She also created “giving trees” for each office, a place where co-workers could make tags to hang from the tree and state what gift they brought to their job, as well as gift bags to place under the tree stating what gift their job gave them. Ms. Brook’s commitment to creating a positive atmosphere at work reflects the dedication she has to her fellow employees and the clientele they serve. She remains a positive force and practices the grateful atmosphere she has helped create.



AWARD OF  
DISTINCTION

Innovation

2018

## Kim Mills

### *Probation Officer II, Department of Corrections*

Recognizing an opportunity for the Department of Corrections to serve clients more effectively, Officer Mills developed a program that supports just released parolees attempting to navigate numerous challenges so they can move forward with their lives. On her own initiative, she researched best practices and networked with providers to create this innovative program. Immediately upon their release, parolees are enrolled in counseling. Once engaged in treatment, their needs can be quickly assessed. Working with local treatment providers, Officer Mills locates counselors who come to the Clinton Probation office and provide either individual or group treatment sessions to clients. The average time it takes a parolee to normally access outpatient counseling or mental health treatment is 30 days. In Officer Mill's program, that time is shrunk to just 24 hours. Participants are given a life goal sheet and forms for getting organized and identifying possible barriers. Information parolees provide is used to determine what services they need to enhance their ability to overcome challenges, obtain a job, and become productive citizens. Officer Mills works with a Citizens Advisory Board to obtain funds to help clients purchase forms of identification, such as a birth certificate, which is necessary to obtain a driver's license. She finds resources to help participants create a resume and identify employment opportunities they can then utilize to gain employment. A six month analysis comparing participants in this program to those who didn't participate was remarkable. Only 18% of the Henry County parolees who participated in the reentry program had technical violations of their parole compared with 83 % of the Henry County parolees who did not participate in the reentry program. While this program is completely voluntary (there are no penalties for participants failing to miss counseling), they rarely miss appointments. This program has a much higher attendance rate than other programs with mandated participation. Another innovative idea Officer Mills developed was to have Recovery Graduates complete the cognitive restructuring Pathways to Change facilitator training. This program is designed to foster substantive behavioral change, reduce recidivism, and strengthen relationships. Special arrangements were made to send two ex-offenders through the Pathways to Change facilitator training. After graduation, they became the first ex-offenders in the State to work with probation officers to deliver Pathways sessions to clients. The clients were very receptive to having someone who has walked in their path deliver the classes. Officer Mills on her own initiative developed an innovative parolee re-entry program that bundles a broad array of support services in a timely manner designed to maximize the chance parolees can move forward with their lives and become productive members of society.



**AWARD OF  
DISTINCTION**

**Public Service**

**2018**

# Heather Suerig

*Special Education Teacher, Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*

Heather Suerig was selected for the time she invests as a volunteer in her community with her local fire department. Throughout the year she responds day or night to hundreds of calls including basic medical assistance, vehicle accidents, vehicle fires, and house fires. Some calls she responds to are in neighboring districts. She has also left family events to respond to the needs of her community. Following training, Heather completed her Emergency Medical Technician certification. She organizes and leads the Fill the Boot Campaign in her community to support Muscular Dystrophy. The funds she helps raise send children to summer camp that would otherwise not be able to attend. She also assists with the coordination of the rental of the Department dunking booth. The booth is used by many nonprofit groups at fundraising events. Heather works to better the safety of her community members by installing donated smoke detectors in homes. Every year she participates in many public relations activities. She especially enjoys going to elementary schools during fire prevention week where she teaches younger students how to deal with fire in their homes. Providing a positive female role model, she was one of the first females in a department that now has five female members -- one of them being her daughter. Inspired by her mother's acts of selflessness, her daughter chose to join the day she turned 16. Ms. Suerig's long term commitment to ensuring the safety of those in her community reflect her commitment to public service and proves that one person really can make a difference.

## David Eppright, Russell Fisher, Travis Teter, and Chris Zurn

### *Truck Mounted Attenuator Flagger Team, Department of Transportation*

Two flaggers were killed, a MoDOT employee and an employee working for a contractor, in a period of less than six months. Shortly after the death of the first flagger, Travis Teter, David Eppright, Russell Fisher and Chris Zurn began brainstorming and developing a concept that evolved into the TMA Flagger. Initially, their goal was to create a safer work environment for flaggers, but in the process of evaluating the flagging process the team saw other opportunities as well. They quickly realized they might be able to create an automated flagger that would not only save lives, but also benefit the traveling public by making different elements of traffic and traffic control safer and more effective, while also making the process more efficient. By rethinking the flagging process from the ground up, the MoDOT team began brainstorming and designing an automated flagger that:

- Removed flaggers from the road's surface, thereby eliminating the danger to the flagger from being injured by motorists;
- Used signage and equipment to alert drivers to the work zone including slow/stop paddles similar to signage on the sides of school buses, flashing red and yellow signals similar to what drivers encountered at intersections with "lights," and a three color variable message board that could display large electronic signage like stop signs.
- Allowed work to continue in harsh weather conditions when extreme heat or cold sometimes required human flaggers to postpone work or move traffic with frequent interruptions.

MoDOT combined all the equipment (described above) on a boat style trailer, which is pulled by a heavy duty fleet vehicle. An air horn and panic lights were installed and are only used when necessary. Because MoDOT is the pioneer in the development of this type of vehicle, the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) had to certify the TMA Flagger for road use before road testing could begin. Following numerous mandated modifications, FHWA permitted road testing but also required independent testing by a third party, which was conducted by the University of Missouri. Since November 2016, MoDOT has utilized TMA Flaggers on the roadways of Missouri. Successful utilization of the prototype TMA Flaggers has led MoDOT to recently issue a request for proposal for the purchase of 44 TMA Flaggers that will be deployed across the state. The TMA Flagger has drawn the attention of industry leaders, FHWA, and other state highway departments around the country. This innovation was entered into MoDOT's Innovation Challenge. It was the first innovation to win an award in all three categories since the start of the Innovation Challenge in 2017 the People's Choice Award, the Director's Award, and First Place in Tool and Equipment. While the TMA Flagger was initially designed to save lives, it will also make MoDOT road work operations more efficient by facilitating the continuation of road projects when human flaggers would be removed from work zones due to extraordinarily hot or cold weather conditions. The creation of the TMA Flagger illustrates how a small team of MoDOT employees motivated by a commitment to save the lives of their co-workers, contractors and traveling public invented a completely new device. They then took responsibility for shepherding their creation through a complex federal certification process, prototype testing, and ultimately adoption by the Department of Transportation for use on roads across Missouri, where it holds the promise of saving lives and making MoDOT more efficient for years to come.