



# 2011 Missouri State Employees of the Month

## January 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Suzie Comstock, Department of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration



Above Governor Nixon (right of center) and Jim McAdams, [right of Governor Nixon] Deputy Director of the Dept. of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration, recognize Suzie Comstock as the January 2011 State Employee of the Month. Also pictured are family, friends, and co-workers.

As a Consumer Services Specialist II, in the Dept. of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration, Suzie Comstock is responsible for receiving, analyzing, investigating and resolving complaints filed by consumers against insurance companies or investor-owned utilities, and providing consumers with requested information and explanations. As a leader in the Consumer Services, Suzie has assisted in hiring employees, provided training to Consumer Services Specialists, and is the go-to-person for tracking down old insurance companies. The ability and willingness to track down old insurance companies is especially important when a constituent calls with a old insurance policy they need to collect on and the company is no longer in existence. Suzie takes the time to find the successor company so that the claimant can collect on the policy. She is determined in her efforts to get claims paid for consumers. In one particular instance involving a supplemental health insurance company the entity refused to pay the claim on the basis of what appeared to be an outdated definition of a type of medical service. The term was not something defined

under Missouri insurance law, so Suzie reached out to other state agencies and determined how they services were defined by other state agencies and how medical providers were licensed to provide the varying levels of services to patients. After providing that information to the company, the outstanding claims were paid – a very valuable benefit to a Missouri citizen!

Suzie has the ability to look at a complaint to provide the best investigation and knows the internal and external resources available to her and continually reviews new laws/regulations and asks the questions needed so she can explain it to the consumer. She explains the company’s position and the applicable Missouri law so the consumer understands why the situation was handled in that manner. Her patience and ability to keep calls from escalating to a supervisor level shows that her efforts in explanation are extremely good and effective. Suzie Comstock is a prime example of the great work that state employees deliver to Missouri consumers each and every day – which makes her a valuable asset not only to the Dept. of Insurance, Financial Institutions and Professional Registration, but to all Missourians.

## February 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Corbin Hottel, Department of Public Safety, Veterans Commission-Cameron Veterans Home



Above Governor Nixon (center) recognizes Corbin Hottel as the February 2011 State Employee of the Month. Also pictured are family, friends, and co-workers.

As a Certified Nurse Assistant (CAN) for the Dept. of Public Safety’s Cameron Veterans Home, Corbin Hottel regularly assists staff in making detailed preparations for planned client activities in recreational, occupational, music and other therapy areas. Many of the recreational destinations do not have family restrooms and Corbin’s willingness to assist the Recreation Staff with cares is appreciated and bringing Mr. Corbin along on these types of outings allows Veterans to use the men’s restroom which upholds their dignity and privacy.

In addition to his regular day-to-day duties, Corbin always accepts special assignments with a cheerful and “can do” attitude. He willingly takes on other duties not normally required of a CNA; such as loading and unloading vans, securing wheelchairs, serving of refreshments and socializing with veterans.

Corbin’s value to the Home was recently demonstrated when Mr. Hottel agreed to drive a Veteran a total of 240 miles across state lines so he could attend a funeral visitation of a loved one. Corbin assisted the Veteran for the duration of the trip and even stopped at a Kentucky Fried Chicken so the Veteran could enjoy one of his favorite meals. Another instance of Mr. Hottel’s desire to bring joy to our Heroes was displayed when the Harlem Globetrotters stopped by the Home for an impromptu visit. Corbin assisted a recreation staff get a Veteran from the Special Care Unit up and ready so he could go see the basketball players; this particular Veteran loves the Harlem Globetrotters and regularly watches Globetrotters DVD’s in his room. Corbin assisted him to the lobby where the Veteran was able to meet and take pictures with the basketball team.

Mr. Corbin Hottel is not just a staff member of the Cameron Veterans Home – he is a valuable asset to the Heroes who reside within its walls and someone for all to emulate.

## March 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Ranger Charles Helton, Department of Natural Resources, Missouri State Parks



Above Governor Nixon (center) recognizes Ranger Charles Helton as the March 2011 State Employee of the Month. Also pictured [back row, left] Bill Bryan, Director of State Parks, [back row right] J. C. Kuessner, Deputy Division Director of State Parks. Also pictured are family, friends, and co-workers.

Among his duties as a Park Ranger for the Department of Natural Resources' Johnson's Shut-Ins State Park, Ranger Helton works to assure that Missouri state laws are enforced, patrols the park, and strives to assure the protection and security for state park visitors. In the spring of 2010 Ranger Helton's knowledge, skills, and abilities were put to the test when he was notified of a potentially deadly situation.

Reynolds County Dispatch notified Ranger Helton that a child was caught in the Shut-Ins with rapidly rising water preventing the child from exiting the river. Dispatch advised Ranger Helton that Fire and EMS were on route to the park and Ranger Helton advised the dispatcher that he was in the park and would provide an update when he arrived at the Shut-Ins.

Upon arrival at the Shut-Ins Ranger Helton was met by the mother of the child

who informed him that the boy was on a large flat rock and could not escape due to the rapidly moving water. At the time of this incident water flow, normally around 20 cubic feet per second, was flowing at 93 cubic feet per second. (Johnson's Shut-Ins is made up partly by several large rocks along the banks and in the river.) Ranger Helton made his way across the river and located the boy and another boy who were both sitting in the middle of the fast moving river on a rock that was just barely above the water's surface. Ranger Helton calmed the boys and told them to stay where they were and he would get them out shortly. While he was waiting for Fire and Rescue to arrive another visitor made his way to Ranger Helton and informed him that his daughter, who had been playing in the pool just above the Shut-Ins, got caught in the current and was swept downstream. After receiving confirmation that this young girl was safe, but scared, Ranger Helton informed the father that when Fire and Rescue arrived he would have them check on her to assure she was uninjured.

Reynolds County EMS arrived and threw a rope to Ranger Helton who passed it to the boys stranded in the river. Ranger Helton instructed the boys to exit the river one at a time and to hold on tightly to the rope as they walked toward him. The youngest boy went first and was able to successfully make his way to Ranger Helton; however the second boy lost his footing while crossing the river and went underwater. Ranger Helton was able to grab the boy's arm, but was pulled into the river himself. He managed to keep the boy's head above water and pushed the child to another rock along the riverbank. Ranger Helton was then swept downstream to calmer water where he was able to climb out of the river. In this single incident Ranger Helton's quick action resulted in two children's lives being saved and is a prime example of how a Ranger puts another's safety before his/her own. Ranger Helton's ongoing work and dedication to the safety of park visitors is demonstrated in his search and rescue incidents, patrol efforts, and outreach programs.

Ranger Charles Helton is unquestionably one of Missouri's most valued resources.

## April 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Tom Schlimpert – Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Above Governor Nixon (center) recognizes Tom Schlimpert as the April 2011 State Employee of the Month. Also pictured are family, friends, and co-workers.

Tom Schlimpert works as Supervisor of Guidance and Counseling for the Office of College and Career Readiness/Guidance Section within the Dept. of Elementary and Secondary Education. Within his first year with the department he not only learned and understood the components of a guidance and counseling program, he recognized the value of the program from an administrator's perspective and has the ability to articulate this to others in the field.

One of the components of Tom's responsibilities is overseeing Missouri Connections, a web based career educational planning tool that supports the individual planning component of comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. A major challenge Tom encountered was the transition of Missouri

Connections to a new vendor. The previous vendor had been in place since inception over 7 years ago, and had become a popular and well received tool for school counselors and students. Although some were very negative and resistant to the transition to a new vendor, it was through Tom's leadership and relationship skills, the "new" Missouri Connections became widely accepted and have seen phenomenal growth as can be seen from the growth in just the first three months.

Tom's commitment has resulted in more regional and local assistance to school counselors helping them implement their comprehensive guidance and counseling programs. The new model allows the Office of College and Career Readiness to work with districts to provide on-going development on various aspects of the guidance and counseling program.

Tom has worked with over 900 counselors providing assistance in their comprehensive guidance and counseling programs and about Missouri Connections. Mr. Tom Schlimpert has been an outstanding addition to the guidance and counseling staff and his initiative, hard work, and leadership have helped the new Missouri Connections get off to a fantastic start.

## May 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Joan Brundick – Department of Health and Senior Services



Above Governor Nixon recognizes Joan Brundick as the May State Employee of the Month. Also pictured are family, friends, and co-workers.

Joan Brundick works for the Dept. of Health and Senior Services as a Facility Advisory Nurse III. Among her duties Joan serves as statewide coordinator whom nursing home administrators and nurses from across the state turn to for information regarding the accurate completion of the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services [CMS] mandated assessment of residents who live in Medicare and/or Medicaid certified nursing home beds.

On October 1, 2010, CMS implemented sweeping changes in the mandatory assessment process. In the year leading up to this major change, Joan recognized the significant learning curve that would result from this change and knowing the stakes were high, she immediately sought approval to work with the

nursing home industry to provide free training to all facilities in the state - in addition to her normal work load! Joan spearheaded the effort, helped design the training, and then traveled to every corner of the state to provide 28 training sessions for facility staff, 11 sessions for departmental staff, and sessions specifically for long-term care physicians, and for the DHSS Ombudsman program. Despite these efforts, some nursing home staff members were still unable to attend this critical training. In response, Joan worked to provide additional training and assisted in developing and presenting three interactive webinars as the new Minimum Data Set 3.0 [MDS] implementation occurred to answer on-going questions. Joan also provided technical updates to the entire state to keep facilities constantly and consistently apprised of the quickly changing information that continued to be released by CMS and disseminated it to the nursing home contacts so everyone was fully aware of the progress and changes leading up to the October 1, 2010 implementation date. The implementation during the month of October had flaws (at the federal level) resulting in panicked nursing home employees calling Joan directly. The transition was specifically problematic for Medicare residents admitted in the week leading up to October 1, 2010 and in the few weeks that followed; Joan patiently and efficiently worked with these frustrated callers to answer questions and help them get the assistance they needed.

Since October, nursing homes and long-term care associations across the State have commented that Joan's efforts put the State of Missouri at the front of the national pack for implementation of MDS 3.0.

## June 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Kim Becker – Department of Public Safety – Fire Safety



Above Governor Nixon recognizes Kim Becker as the June State Employee of the Month. Also pictured are family, friends, and co-workers.

Employed with the Dept. of Public Safety, Division of Fire Safety as Deputy Chief, Ms. Kim Becker provides assistance to the fire chief and is responsible for the fire departments administrative and support activities and advises and assists the fire chief in matters of policy, training, personnel action, and coordinating special programs and projects.

A role of the Division of Fire Safety is to administer a training and state certification program for Missouri's fire service and emergency first responders. Fifteen [15] state certification are issued by the Division at the levels of fire fighter, fire officer and fire inspector, investigator and instructor. In the 1980's, to meet the training needs of the fire service, the Division developed curriculum

for firefighters which upon successful completion provided state certification as a Firefighter I and/or Firefighter II. In 1996 this curriculum became internationally accredited by the International Fire Service Accreditation Congress with periodic required reviews of the curriculum by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to assure compliance with national standards. While national curriculum packages are available for purchase by local fire departments between \$800 - \$2000 the Division decided to develop a program which could be given to fire department at no cost. Upon registering a course with the Division, fire department with qualified instructors are give the complete material needed to teach the course on CD including the instructor guide, the student manual, a practical skills workbook, as well as an audio visual program containing more than 1200 PowerPoint slides. Fire departments are then able to print as many copies as needed free of charge.

To meet the 2008 NFPA standards Ms. Becker devoted many hours orchestrating an extensive revision of the Division's Firefighter I & II curriculum. The new program now requires 270 hours of classroom training and more than 110 practical hands-on skills. Curriculum reviews are technical in nature and require detailed reference to exact sections of the national standard for the instructor and student manuals, practical skills books, slides, and state certification exams making for an intense and time consuming review. The detailed review process to create the revised curriculum for Fire Fighter I/II was taken on by Ms. Becker in addition to her normal day-to-day duties and due to frequent interruptions dealing with daily office tasks and responsibilities; she often worked evenings and weekends to maintain the integrity and quality of this critical review – without financial compensation or comp time!

Ms. Kim Becker is dedicated to Missouri's fire service and takes great pride in providing the highest quality of training and it is a true benefit for Missouri's fire service to have access to this program at absolutely no cost.

## July 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Heather Peters – Department of Natural Resources



Governor Nixon recognizes Heather Peters, the July State Employee of the Month. Also pictured are family, friends, and co-workers.

As an Environmental Specialist IV for the Dept. of Natural Resources Hazardous Waste program, Ms. Heather Peters works to assure that the implementation of federal/state laws, and regulations related to natural resource management, protection, conservation, and/or reclamation, and environmental health programs are maintained. Not only does Ms. Peters provide exceptional work on a daily basis she also took on the arduous task of rule revision regarding underground tank systems which had not been revised since the original inception in 1990.

In her role as compliance specialist, she works every day to make sure owners and operators comply with these rules. She was well aware that the rules were outdated. Realizing the need to update the rule, Ms. Peters obtained permission to

initiate the rulemaking process and tackled it with gusto. Over the course of several months, Ms. Peters personally contacted numerous tank owners and equipment companies. The equipment companies who supply parts and service to tank owners are also small businesses who little time to participate on committees or go to meetings to help state employees do their jobs. So communicating effectively with them requires initiative and creativity. Not only did Heather go to meetings and conferences to visit with these individuals face-to-face, she sent hundreds of emails and carefully read every response. She continually shared drafts of various rule provisions and invited feedback, spent hours in dialogue with staff of the Petroleum Storage Tank Insurance Fund [PSTIF], brainstorming and resolving differences of opinion, and used the PSTIF Committee and the Missouri Petroleum Marketers and Convenience Store Association as “sounding boards” and communications opportunities.

Perhaps of the best example of “extra effort” was one day in January, when Ms. Peters was scheduled to participate in a “webinar” with the PSTIF Advisory Committee to review the last few issues in the rulemaking. The State’s “hazardous weather policy” was implemented on the day of the webinar, due to a huge snowstorm. PSTIF staff contacted Ms. Peters, who lives in rural Cole County, to suggest she should stay home and participate via telephone or computer, rather than risk driving to Jefferson City. Ms. Peters knew that sitting in the same room with the webinar leader would make it easier to communicate effectively and would make the dialogue more productive, so she persuaded her husband to drive her to town just so she could do the best possible job communicating with “stakeholders” during this critical one-hour webinar designed to help finish drafting the rules.

Ms. Peters’ exemplary collaboration with the PSTIF and other interested persons has resulted in a superior package of rule amendments that effectively balance the Department’s desire and responsibility to protect the environment with the economic realities of today’s business climate. She has incorporated input from all interested parties and has demonstrated a genuine commitment to problem-solving. Perhaps most importantly, she consciously chose to set aside her own opinions and biases and purposely delayed coming to decisions in her own mind until after she listened to others. All of this was accomplished *before* the “formal rulemaking process” required by state law. Ms. Heather Peters is to be commended for her commitment not only to the State of Missouri and the Department of Natural Resources, but also to Missouri citizens.

## August 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Matt Ferguson – Department of Mental Health



Governor Nixon recognizes Matt Ferguson as the August State Employee of the Month. Also pictured is Missouri First Lady Georganne Nixon, family, friends, and co-workers.

On May 22, 2011 the State of Missouri’s town of Joplin, Missouri made national news after an EF5 tornado swept through city leaving behind a path of destruction and devastation. On this historic day Matt Ferguson, Director of the Department of Mental Health’s Joplin Region Center, was at a local fast food restaurant which was in the direct path of the tornado and was knocked unconscious by flying debris and sustained injuries.

On a typical day Mr. Ferguson is overseeing the operations of the Joplin Regional Center, but on this day Matt displayed exceptional leadership by putting the consumers first; even before seeking medical treatment for his own injuries. Matt immediately called his staff into actions searching for the

whereabouts of consumers and finding temporary housing for those who were displaced from their homes. Additionally, he opened the Regional Center to contracted providers who lost building and vehicles which included Ozark Center, Community Support Services, and Arc of the Ozarks. Meeting rooms were turned into makeshift offices and staff transported consumers to safe locations.

Mr. Ferguson not only looked out for the welfare of consumers of the Center, but also was responsive to the needs of Joplin Regional Office staff also impacted by the storm. Fortunately no staff members were fatally injured, but many lost homes and cars and some sustained injury. Matt took the lead and worked to make resources available to assist those impacted by the tornado helping with the first steps in the recovery process.

Mr. Matt Ferguson leads by example, and is truly an asset to the Department, the Regional Center, and to the citizens of Missouri.

## September 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Bonnie Neal – Department of Mental Health



Governor Nixon recognizes Bonnie Neal as the September State Employee of the Month. Also pictured [far left – Dr. Keith Schafer, Director of the Dept. of Mental Health, family, friends, and co-workers.

Employed with the Department of Mental Health for the past 24 years Bonnie Neal currently serves as the Chief of Children's Community Operations in Kansas City.

After the EF5 tornado devastated the city of Joplin, Missouri Bonnie immediately heeded her instinct to serve and draw upon her training as a Disaster Mental Health Technician and Psychological First Aid Trainer. Ms. Neal arranged her work schedule to allow her to continue to meet the needs of the Southwest Children's Community then left her home and family for six [6] weeks to volunteer in Joplin. While in Joplin Ms. Neal coordinated the on-site trauma response which resulted in many families, children, youth, and adults receiving triage and mental health services including response/medication management and scheduled appointments.

Working closely with the Red Cross during this time as a Licensed Clinical Social Worker, Bonnie stepped into an extremely hazardous and demanding full-time position working long days and late evenings to coordinate the mental health services. She additionally assisted the Joplin's Mental Health Center (Ozark Center) as their center sustained substantial damage. Through her endeavors she was able to bring in other mental health professionals from across the state to provide much needed assistance.

Without question, Ms. Bonnie Neal is someone to emulate and a valued asset, not only to the Department of Mental Health, but to all Missouri citizens.

## October 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Eric Norem – Department of Mental Health



Eric Norem is recognized by Governor Nixon as the October State Employee of the Month. Also pictured [far right – Dr. Keith Schafer, Director of the Dept. of Mental Health, family, friends, and co-workers.

As a Security Officer I with the Dept. of Mental Health's Southeast Mental Health Center in Farmington, Eric Norem works to provide security and protection of property in state owned and leased facilities. No matter the problem Eric strives to resolve the issue in an efficient and timely manner.

Recently, Eric took it upon himself to create a tool that would minimize, if not eliminate, frustration among his co-workers related to assignment sheets. Nursing staff assignment sheets are simple in purpose, but complex in filling out when a number of variables are to be accounted for on the sheet. These items include such things as: number of staff assigned; number of one-on-one situations, ward tasks, program assignments, breaks and lunches, etc. Eric noted that at times nurses were taking 10 to 15 minutes to complete this task when one-on-one situations were present.

Mr. Norem was able to logically program all variables into a spreadsheet format so that the nurse completing the form only enters the names of staff for a particular shift. The spreadsheet then assigns the staff to all the variables listed, evenly and fairly distributing the workload among all staff assigned. Additionally, Eric was able to program other worksheets that input all pertinent patient data and leaving space for staff observation for eventual use in generating the shift and subsequent 24-hour report.

Since implementation nurses have reported that a shift assignment sheet is now only taking two to three minutes to complete, with the majority of this time spent logging on and off of the computer. If log in time is discounted, the form can be pulled up, staff names entered and printed in approximately 30 seconds; yielding a staffing assignment sheet that is accurately and fairly created. Additionally this has created a conservative estimate of an annual saving by using this tool of \$23,000. Nursing Staff have made the following comments:

- "The new staffing assignment sheets have made my life way easier. Eric is excellent with his computer skills and is always looking for innovative ways to improve the function of the wards. We all greatly appreciate the time he has taken to create these assignment sheets."
- "At first I was resistive to the new program. But now I see how it has made it fairer in doing the assignments. I was used to doing it the old way, but the new ways makes life much easier."
- "It is much faster and more user friendly. The computer printout is already on a rotating schedule for every day of the week."

Mr. Eric Norem's skills and commitment to service make him an example for all to emulate and an asset both to both the Department of Mental Health and Missouri citizens.

## November 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Clifton Parker – Department of Social Services



Governor Nixon awards Clifton Parker as the November State Employee of the Month. Also pictured [far right] Director of the Div. of Legal Services – Joel Anderson and family members.

As an Administrative Office Support Assistant for the Dept. of Social Services, Legal Services, Clifton Parker works with office personnel to complete tasks in a timely and efficient manner and always with a “can do” attitude. As the main public contact he consistently provides high quality service and has quickly learned all the “ins and outs” to keep the office running smoothly and looks for ways to streamline processes. In addition to his daily tasks, Clifton has also recently taken on the task of training new clerical staff as vacancies occur.

The Division recently had a clerical turnover rate of more than 100%, and at one point Clifton was the only clerical worker for child support hearings who was not new or not in the training process. During this time Clif essentially held the office together by taking on the responsibilities of all five [5] clerical positions supporting 15 attorneys. He not only was able to maintain his own work, but simultaneously trained four new employees and also took on extra duties not normally required. He single-handedly kept the office work-flow process on track and maintained a positive and friendly attitude.

Clif is very passionate about improving the work environment, and with such a high turnover rate office morale had been low, which was a major concern of his. He volunteers on the Legal Services Survey of Employee engagement committee and is an invaluable resource with his past work experience, intelligence, and passion.

Clifton Parker is definitely the type of employee we all should strive to emulate and without question an invaluable resource for the Division, Department, and citizens of Missouri.

## December 2011 State Employee of the Month

### Kathryn “Renee” Mazurek – Department of Health and Senior Services



Above and below: Governor Nixon awards Kathryn “Renee” Mazurek as the December State Employee of the Month.

Also pictured is Deputy Director for the Dept. of Health and Senior Services, Gail Vasterling [red jacket behind Governor Nixon], family and co-workers.

Kathryn “Renee” Mazurek is employed with the Department of Health and Senior Services, Bureau of Home and Community Services an Adult Protective and Community Worker in the Bureau of Home and Community Services. On a daily basis Ms. Mazurek strives to work on the behalf of her clients in assuring they are provided protective services and also coordinates in-home services. Her dedication to these clients was recently demonstrated when she took on the task of ensuring the safety of two clients stricken with a rare condition known as Johansen Blizzard Syndrome.

Ms. Mazurek worked extensively with the guardian of these two clients in attempts to keep them at home. Renee made countless contacts with providers contracted through the Division of Senior and Disability Services (DSDS) and Dept. of Mental Health (DMH) to try and ensure the safety of the clients. Renee never gave up; she advocated for the clients and the family tirelessly, met with the guardian and made daily surprise visits to the home to make sure these clients were safe. Using good professional judgment Renee involved Office of General Counsel (OGC) and started on paperwork to ask for the Public Administrator to be appointed as guardian. Renee spent many hours collaborating with other agencies and maintained constant contact with DMH in order to ensure that once the guardianship was in place the clients would be able to be placed in the least restrictive environment. She also worked with law enforcement throughout her investigation and spent many hours working on this situation. By careful collaboration with OGC, law enforcement, DMH, the Public Administrator, and the court system, these clients are safe. Renee has shown a level of dedication and commitment that is commendable.

Renee worked numerous hours for these clients and tirelessly put forth the extra effort it took to get many agencies working smoothly together. Renee served as a coordinator and provided guidance to all agencies working for these particular clients. She did an outstanding job and coordinated many agencies working as a team. As a result, these reported adults are now protected and safe.

Ms. Renee Mazurek is dedicated to ensuring the safety and well being of all of the vulnerable adults on her caseload. She enjoys helping others and takes pride in her work and the work of DSDS making her an invaluable asset to both the Department and to the citizens of Missouri.

