

State Employee of the Month

January 2020

Robert “Bob” Jahnke II

**Southwest Region Service Coordinator Unit and
Excel Community Resources Manager
Department of Social Services**



Bob Jahnke was selected for his extraordinary leadership of his team of dedicated professionals. Their effectiveness has created an environment where juveniles in their care have the best opportunity possible to transform their lives.

Bob’s skills as a strength based creative leader who carefully teaches team members to be creative in identifying best solutions for the youth they serve is reflected in his philosophy of always doing the best to take care of “one child at a time.”

An excellent mentor who naturally empowers a team that regularly faces challenging situations, his powerful intuitive sense and personal concern for their well-being compels him to always be there for team members no matter when or where situations develop.

His collaborative decision making style and his skill as a communicator committed to keeping his team abreast of rapidly evolving situations makes him a superb leader who maximizes his team’s ability to make a difference in the lives of the juveniles in their care.

State Employee of the Month

February 2020

Amanda Rucker

Administrative Office Support Assistant

Department of Corrections



In her role monitoring offender correspondence, Amanda Rucker, an Administrative Office Support Assistant at the Missouri Department of Corrections was selected for alerting officials to inappropriate digital communications being sent to an inmate in the Jefferson City Correctional Center.

After spotting the inappropriate information, Ms. Rucker followed up and determined the sender was a known sex offender on parole who was also sending similar pictures of women in suggestive poses to offenders at other institutions.

Parole supervisors placed the parolee on GPS monitoring while investigating the matter. The parolee failed a polygraph examination and drug test and was found to have violated stipulations of his parole and terms of his community sex offender treatment. His parole was revoked, and he was returned to DOC custody.

Were it not for Ms. Rucker's attention to detail and concern for the subjects in the photos and the possibility that they may have been victims of human trafficking themselves, the activities of this offender may have gone overlooked.

State Employee of the Month

March 2020

Robert Deters

Maintenance Supervisor

Department of Transportation



During a flood event, Robert Deters, a Maintenance Supervisor, came upon an elderly woman in an automobile that had stalled in about eight inches of water on Route 16. Realizing the water was rising and the vehicle would be swept away before emergency responders arrived, Mr. Deters acted quickly.

Risking his own life, he drove out to the stalled vehicle and helped the woman out of her car and into his truck. He then carefully backed his vehicle out of the flooded portion of the roadway, and later helped the woman into a state patrolman's cruiser. Driving around to the other side of the flooded roadway, he blocked the road until a MoDOT crew could arrive and close the road. Within an hour of the rescue, the water across Route 16 was three feet deep.

Mr. Deters also received the Department of Transportation Meritorious Safety Award which recognizes employee for actions during an emergency or life-threatening event. Mr. Deters began his career at MoDOT as a seasonal worker and then started full-time in 1994. He currently serves as the Maintenance Supervisor at the Canton Maintenance Facility. He has worked for MoDOT for approximately 26 years.

State Employee of the Month

April 2020

Rene Brinkman

Children's Services Program Manager

Department of Social Services



“I believe in you.” Four simple words can change a life. Rene Brinkman then a case manager, said these four words to a young mother who was suffering an addiction. Fast forward five years, Ms. Brinkman, learned that this same woman was again struggling and asked the new case manager to give the woman a note on which she wrote, “I believe in you!” Years pass and the woman contacted Ms. Brinkman, telling her how much that note had meant. The woman successfully overcame her struggle and gives credit to those four simple words.

Ms. Brinkman is a member of the Faith Based Initiative and she has worked to strengthen the department's relationship with the community and with service providers. Ms. Brinkman sits on the board of the Jefferson County Foster Children's Fund and is an advocate for the needs of families and children.

Ms. Brinkman's commitment and dedication to the children and family's served by the Department of Social Services – Children's Division make her a strong asset. Ms. Brinkman exemplifies leadership, leading by example and bringing out the strengths in others.

State Employee of the Month

May 2020

Amberly Schulz

Environmental Specialist III

Department of Natural Resources



Amberly Schulz is a person that sees a problem, drills down into the details of what is going on, and implements solutions to correct issues. Amberly is a very dedicated team member that always is willing to help others, whether it is a random question or meeting a goal. She is an intelligent problem-solver, who brings new perspectives and solutions to problems. Amberly started in the Storm Water and Certification Unit. In a little over a year she became the primary master general permit writer.

Amberly strives to create sustainable best practices as she created a permit writers training for section staff, which has helped new staff draft permits more quickly and accurately. Ms. Schulz continually makes every effort to provide excellence and works tirelessly to find efficient work practices. She provides excellent customer service answering ePermitting and eDMR hotline questions.

Amberly has worked to reduce the permit backlog during the recent backlog reduction efforts. She also noted a recent issue with data entry. Her review corrected errors and resulted in new and accurate fees being assessed. Her work ethic and willingness to speak up lead to better department results. Amberly is a highly valued asset to the Department of Natural Resources.

State Employee of the Month

June 2020

Bryan Bethel

Natural Resource Manager

Department of Natural Resources



Bryan Bethel shares his passion for Missouri's State Parks with guests of all ages. Mr. Bethel's remarkable work throughout the past year with the Missouri Humanities Council hosting a traveling historic exhibit brought positive attention to the Battle of Pilot Knob site. Bryan ensured that grant funds awarded to the site were used for community outreach efforts. Bryan worked with the site's interpreter to teach school age children to hand make leather bound journals. Students were introduced to the important role journals serve to preserve and understand the past. Bryan and his team have helped produce over 1,000 journals.

The Battle of Pilot Knob historical site was awarded an Edgar Grant for the 2020 reenactment of the battle. This grant covers the entire cost of the event and will allow funds that would have been used to go to other endeavors.

Bryan also led a team in hosting the first Halloween event at Elephant Rocks State Park. This event that allowed over 2,500 visitors to enjoy the site after hours for the first time ever. Families were able to enjoy the park's trails while children "trick-or-treated". Bryan hard work resulted in an accomplishment enjoyed by many. Bryan brings enthusiasm to his work and his commitment to public outreach is impressive.

State Employee of the Month

July 2020

Loyd Rawlings

Water Specialist III

Department of Natural Resources



Loyd Rawlings' primary responsibility is conducting training for drinking water operators who need to obtain training hours for certification. COVID-19 brought changes to how this training would be delivered. Mr. Rawlings stepped up and began looking for ways to continue provide training. Loyd researched web platforms and determined the best one to meet the training needs. Loyd worked quickly to develop several 3 hour courses on specialized topics and then transferred them to a virtual setting. Loyd created practice trainings with peers to trouble shoot issues prior to going live with classes. These practice sessions with department staff also ensured interaction between the participants and facilitator.

Loyd collaborated and shared lessons learned with water specialists in other regions to help them to also offer virtual trainings. Loyd thought creatively, looked for a solution and provided a means to fill a need. This type of forward thinking is what will continue to make Missouri better.

State Employee of the Month

August 2020

Troy Gardner

Adult Protective Worker

Department of Health and Senior Services



Troy Gardner was assigned a case of an elderly woman who took a stranger into her home and became dependent on them for daily care. This stranger became what was described by the community as “a one woman crime spree, our once quiet residential neighborhood was being terrorized” with a multitude of criminal activities, as well as putting this vulnerable elderly woman in great danger. The community member notes “the situation became worse and worse, until Troy was assigned to the case.”

Troy involved multiple stakeholders in the investigation and he saved the life of this elderly woman. It is clear that Troy’s efforts and collaborative partnership with staff within our Special Investigations Unit, as well as community partners, reflect service that is above and beyond, so much so that it was recognized and held up by the local community as a model of a true public servant.

State Employee of the Month

September 2020

James Ryan Harris

Children's Division

Department of Social Services



Ryan exhibits commitment to serving not only a citizen of Missouri, but a fellow co-worker as he went above normal duties and responsibilities. Ryan learned that an employee in his circuit had very recently lost her brother-in-law in a tragic accident and needed help moving her sister into her home.

Ryan spoke up and volunteered to help this employee with moving and showed up on a Saturday morning with a trailer and he even recruited two other CD employees to help, Ryan stayed and helped move everything out of the home. A day that should have been used to enjoy time off and with his family, Ryan used to help an employee with CD so that it would be one less thing she would have to worry about and he didn't leave until it was all done.

Ryan's actions increased office morale throughout the team. Ryan's efforts provided "over and above" service which reflects favorably on the agency as it shows that the Children's Division not only serves the public in our local communities, but also the employees who spend countless hours helping families in our area.

State Employee of the Month

October 2020

Karen Harbert

Epidemiologist
Department of Health and Senior Services



Ms. Harbert has emerged as a shining star during the department's COVID-19 response. In addition to her "normal" job duties, Karen has built a complete data collection and reporting infrastructure for the department in REDCap. Her system allows DHSS users, local health agencies, and labs to easily share results of the COVID-19 tests processed, monitor community testing and track positive cases shared with local health agencies.

Karen has worked many extra hours during the COVID-19 response. Graciously responding to last minute requests and consistently being on-call. Karen took the initiative to train a team to provide back up for her duties. She continues to take the lead in developing and maintaining the REDCap project that is providing valuable information for the COVID-19 response.

State Employee of the Month

November 2020

Esteban Reynoso

Trooper
Missouri State Highway Patrol



Trooper Esteban Reynoso responded to a call regarding a juvenile walking in the road in a desolate area. During his encounter with the youth, Trooper Reynoso detected some inconsistencies with his account of why he was walking in the roadway. He relied upon his training to build a rapport with the juvenile subject. The conversation revealed the youth was being physically abused. Medical attention was sought for the youth and juvenile was removed from a life threatening environment. Trooper Reynoso went above and beyond by investigating more than the initial call for service. His actions took a juvenile out of a life-threatening environment.

State Employee of the Month

December 2020

Don Bequette

Workforce Development Specialist I
Department of Higher Education and
Workforce Development



Don Bequette is a Disabled Veteran Outreach Program Representative. He brings clients into his care, sees that any immediate needs they have are provided, and then works to help them become "job ready". He helps clients explore relevant training or educational options, assists in resume preparation and provides wise counsel.

Don consistently shows his commitment to helping veterans by the "above and beyond" manner that he provides services to his clients. His genuine concern for clients is forefront in his daily duties. Don strives to assist every client find long term financial security providing employment. His dedication to veteran's and continual striving for excellence make Don an inspiration as a public servant.