

August 24, 2021

Board of Supervisors
Kern County Administrative Center
1115 Truxtun Avenue
Bakersfield, CA 93301

PRESENTATION OF 2019-2020 EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION AWARDS
Fiscal Impact: None

Every year, the Human Resources Division facilitates the County's Employee Recognition Awards Program. This program intends to show our employees not only how much they are appreciated but also highlights the incredible, and often hidden, work that our County family performs every day. Nominations are solicited County-wide from all employees and a Review Committee of five management and five non-management employees then evaluates all submitted nominations in order to select the final candidates. Awards are given in five distinct categories, designed to recognize a variety of exceptional work, with an occasional tie providing multiple winners. The awards listed below were nominated by County employees and selected by the Review Committee as the *most* deserving of recognition for their work, among our many, many deserving employees. Presentation of the prior year's awards have been delayed due to COVID-19, the below awards reflect work done both before and toward the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The winners of the 2019-2020 Employee Recognition Awards are:

(TIE) BRANDON SMITH AND JILL CHRISTOPHER – OUTSTANDING LEADERSHIP

Brandon Smith was nominated for his work as the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) Director in 2020, in support of Kern County Public Health's efforts with responding to the global COVID-19 pandemic, locally. Battalion Chief Smith served as the EOC Director for the entirety of an extended activation in support of Public Health's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Effective EOC coordination is directly correlated to the skill, commitment, and ability of the EOC Director. The EOC response was successful in completing a wide variety of assignments. EOC support was critical to safe operations of COVID-19 test sites, coordination with community feeding programs, establishment of temporary housing for homeless persons at high risk of COVID-19, contingency planning for County operations, maintaining situational awareness with cities and special districts within Kern County and County departments, and dissemination of accessible public information to meet the diverse needs in our community.

Jill Christopher was nominated for her work as Program Director at the Department of Human Services. In October 2019, Ms. Christopher approved a project for a complete revision of the Hotline process for Emergency Response. There was an issue that had been on-going with a backlog of work in entering referrals based on the reports received on incidents that do not require an in person response. Ms. Christopher engaged the hotline team to create a more streamlined process. The new process the team created eliminated all backlog and the need for overtime work to resolve that backlog. Referrals are now entered the same day and approved by a supervisor for accuracy within a business week. In March 2020, the Department of Human Services faced dealing with the COVID-19 global pandemic. Ms. Christopher devised a plan in which all the Emergency Response supervisors would run the Hotline remotely using their laptops, the same as how the Hotline works after hours. With Ms. Christopher's plan, the supervisors of the program were able to keep up with the calls coming in. That arrangement continued until June 1, 2020, when the Hotline social workers returned to the office. The Kern

County Child Abuse Hotline happened to be the only Child Abuse Hotline that was operated remotely in the entire State of California.

KIMBERLY HERNANDEZ – CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

Kimberly Hernandez was nominated for her work for Kern County Public Health in assisting County departments with guidance on dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Hernandez assisted with questions regarding COVID 19 exposures, testing, quarantines, etc. and always provided helpful and timely responses. Ms. Hernandez participated in live chats with managers and supervisors at the Department of Human Services and also responded to countless questions via individual telephone calls and email communication. Through the ever-changing work environment of COVID-19, Ms. Hernandez was a steady and reliable resource, helping to establish protocols for tracking exposures and illness among County staff. Ms. Hernandez' open communication assisted departments greatly in adequately responding to the County's efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and keep our workforce safe.

MICHELLE AYALA – WORKFORCE EXCELLENCE

Michelle Ayala was nominated for her work with the Department of Human Services. In the Department's district offices, it is imperative to be able to be a well-rounded Human Services Technician. Ms. Ayala is able to adapt to any program (CalWORKs, CalFresh, Medi-Cal or General Assistance) and any position (Intake, Ongoing, Screening, Liaison, Mentor or acting supervisor) in which to meet the office needs. Ms. Ayala goes above and beyond to help meet all agency deadlines, all while staying abreast of the variety of consistently changing policies and increasing caseload sizes. Ms. Ayala's high work ethic ensures she has the ability to organize and prioritize her assignments to meet her deadlines, while also volunteering to assist her co-workers. Ms. Ayala takes it upon herself when she sees an obstacle to determine a way to overcome it. She continually achieves an accuracy rate of above standard on a regular basis. Her efficient processes of managing her caseload allows her to accept additional assignments and has the ability to work independently as well as with a team. This is displayed in her commitment to job excellence, which is reflected in the quality of work she produces.

(TIE) KEVIN WRIGHT AND BRETT SAKAMOTO – SUSTAINED EFFORT

Kevin Wright was nominated for his work as Sheriff's Detentions Lieutenant at the Lerdo Detentions Facility. Lt. Wright has been described as the "go-to guy" whenever an emergency develops or an operation needs to be planned because of his calm and level-headed approach. He prioritizes the safety and security of staff and what is in the best interest of the Sheriff's Office as a whole. Lt. Wright was assigned to the COVID-19 Detentions Bureau Operations Center in March 2020 and demonstrated outstanding leadership day in and day out. His attitude is always positive and his work ethic is unmatched, giving 110% of himself at all hours of the day, 7 days a week. Lt. Wright conducts himself professionally and represents the Department well with members of the public and members from other agencies that he deals with on a daily basis.

Brett Sakamoto was nominated for his work at the Kern County Department of Child Support Services. Mr. Sakamoto has served the County of Kern for 36 years, most recently as Assistant Director for Child Support Services. Mr. Sakamoto has had a profound impact on many employees, regarded as a trusted advisor to four different Department Directors. Staff throughout the office have sought his guidance knowing he will be fair and understanding. His advanced knowledge in County, State, and federal funding has been a great asset to the department. He has provided sound input, advice and feedback regarding how to successfully manage a relatively flat budget over many years and many changes to business costs and expenses. He has spearheaded and influenced several innovative programs such as an interview Skills Class for staff, efficient improvements to our Human Resources processes, Customer Service Kiosks, Health and Wellness initiatives and so much more. Mr.

Sakamoto has been an exemplary leader whose hard work and contributions impacted not only the Department of Child Support Services' performance and outcomes, but the growth and development of many employees within the Department.

STOCKDALE HELPING HANDS – EXCEPTIONAL TEAMWORK

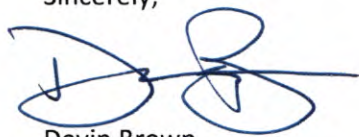
Stockdale Helping Hands (board members: Jessica Cortez, Sarah Radney, Victoria Anderson, Maura Rivas, April Tabarez) was created to provide basic necessities such as clothing, shoes, and hygiene items as a solution to combat truancy, prevent further involvement within the Juvenile Justice system, build self-esteem, and help build a foundation for academic success. The primary focus of Stockdale Helping Hands are socio-economically disadvantaged youth of color, ages 13 to 18, that are currently involved within the Juvenile Justice system. In addition to their regular duties as Kern County Probation Officers, this team developed the Stockdale Helping Hands logo, collaborated with community schools, searched for grants, initiated fundraising, collected donations, clipped coupons, and shopped to stock supplies based on youth's needs. An example of this exceptional program is with one of the very first youth to benefit from the Stockdale Helping Hands program. Accompanied by his grandmother, this youth was able to pick out several pairs of pants and shirts but was most excited about being able to have his own hygiene products and not have to share with his grandmother. The board of Stockdale Helping Hands have demonstrated exemplary efforts and commitment in carrying out the Probation Department's mission, values, and goals.

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Although the above winners were selected as the most exceptional stand-outs from this year's nominees, many more deserving nominations were also received. The list in Attachment A shows all of this year's "Honorable Mentions," whose incredible stories are still just a sampling the many hours of hard work and dedication that our employees put forth daily all across Kern County.

Therefore, IT IS RECOMMENDED that your Board hear presentation of the 2019-2020 Employee Recognition Awards.

Sincerely,



Devin Brown
Chief Human Resources Officer

Attachment

- cc: Aging and Adult Services
Behavioral Health and Recovery Services
Department of Human Services
Fire Department
General Services
Information Technology Services
Probation
Public Health
Sheriff-Coroner

HONORABLE MENTIONS

Customer Service Excellence

Beatriz Olaya (BHRS)
Martha Macias (Aging and Adult)

Exceptional Teamwork

Bria Roberts (BHRS)
Carl Brewer & Isaac Preston (General Services)
Natasia Santyo (BHRS)
PH Call Center (Public Health)
ER Hotline Team (DHS)
Child Abuse Hotline Team (DHS)
Fire ECC (Fire)

Outstanding Leadership

Alex Battistoni (Fire)
Arthur Morato (BHRS)
Dominica Martinez (DHS)
Erica Rico (BHRS)
Jeaniene Reneau (DHS)
Gary Douglas (Probation)

Workforce Excellence

Belina Flynn (DHS)
Mac Avancena (ITS)
Vanessa Barboza (Public Health)
Denise Blackmon (Aging and Adult)
Five Lerdo Detentions Deputies (Sheriff)
- Jose Sanchez-Marquez
- Aaron Smith
- Brandon Gifford
- Oscar Preciado-Guerra
- Efren Gonzalez