

Governor's Honor Awards
Employee Communication Attachment

The recipients of the 2021 Governor's Honor Awards are:

Administration Excellence: Positively impacted efficiencies and alignment, transforming the culture of the Commonwealth of Virginia, significantly reducing overhead costs, and implementing strategic process improvement.

Crystal Barrett, Department of General Services Division of Consolidated Labs

DCLS has implemented a number of efficiencies and resource conservation measures using lean-based management principles. Through June 2021, DCLS has completed approximately 150 different projects under Ms. Barrett's direction, with activities aimed at improving services, fostering innovation, strengthening the workforce, and improving the organization overall. To date, DCLS estimates financial savings of approximately 1.2 million dollars per year with 1,138 man-hours conserved, 12,430 dollars expired supplies donated, and 1,133 square feet of space reclaimed due to Ms. Barrett's efforts.

Champion of Change: Advocates, promotes, and institutes a change that aligns with the Agency's vision and motivates employees towards elevating organizational performance.

Dr. Tomikia LeGrande, Virginia Commonwealth University Strategic Enrollment and Student Success

Dr. LeGrande's vision and expertise reimaged the student financial services function to incorporate a novel Student Financial Services Center that blends financial aid, financial literacy, mentorship, and counseling in a holistic approach that supports student success. Because of these efforts, VCU has outperformed other Tier III higher education peers in graduation rates of low-income students. Additional efforts have helped to make higher education more affordable and accessible to all Virginians. Dr. LeGrande has been a strong champion of change at VCU and has strengthened the higher education landscape throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Courageous Leader: Demonstrates the courage to make bold moves that transform their workplace by improving the efficiency of state government services.

Pamela Kestner, Virginia Department of Housing and Community Development

From the onset of the pandemic, Ms. Kestner led DHCD's emergency response efforts, receiving national accolades as a model for protecting the most vulnerable Virginians. She led the data collection effort that demonstrated the need to move quickly with FEMA, VDEM, and VDH to move from congregate shelters for people experiencing homelessness to non-congregate shelters, like hotels and motels. She partnered with VDH to create a guide for shelters to follow, she helped advocate for temporary emergency funds provided by the Governor's Office to move within weeks to ensure every unsheltered Virginian had access to hotel/motel shelter. Ms. Kestner worked nights and weekends with her team to develop what became a national model.

She quickly turned from this emergency project to working to create the Commonwealth's first emergency Rent and Mortgage Relief Program in three weeks, a program that through June 16 has processed and disbursed more than 268 million dollars in 52,469 rent and mortgage payments for households throughout Virginia, and has aided 41,386 unique households.

Creative Customer Service: Exceptional level of accomplishment and innovation in serving their customers in the execution of the mission of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

David Todd Phillips, Department of Military Affairs Directorate of Plans, Training, and Security (DPTS) at Fort Pickett

Mr. Phillips made outstanding contributions this past year to some of the most important clientele undertaking the most critical missions within the Commonwealth and abroad. Using techniques such as coordinating co-use among units and facilities, establishing alternative locations to support diversity, novelty, and resilience, as well as leveraging capabilities and resources among the entire work force, and transient training populations of Fort Pickett to support a wide mix of military and civilian personnel. Thanks to his efforts, Fort Pickett continuously receives positive feedback from all training organization types highlighting the support from the staff, the appearance of range facilities and maneuver areas, and overall professionalism.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Outreach: Exceptional commitment to the value of diversity, inclusion, and outreach, demonstrating significant progress in the workforce demographics of an agency and enhancing access to Commonwealth of Virginia services for the communities we serve.

Seyoum Berhe from the Virginia Department of Social Services

A 2020 General Assembly created an Office of New Americans, Mr. Behre designed the Office of New Americans to build the capacity of communities, connect with other state programs, and address larger policy gaps and needs. A fellowship was secured for a senior policy officer placed in the Governor's Office on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion to support policy changes. Mr. Behre has demonstrated that the Commonwealth can build a vehicle to change policy, programs, and practices to improve equity and inclusion. His work has built a structure that now supports both refugees and immigrants. Prior to this work, 1.1 million immigrants in Virginia had limited access to human services. His work has improved the quality of human service delivery to refugees and new Americans. An integrated services delivery from multiple state agencies, economic, linguistic, and civic integration of New Americans have all become possible because of Mr. Behre's work.

Heroism: Voluntarily risks their life in the line of duty. This category also recognizes employees who demonstrate exceptional heroism by exhibiting outstanding judgment or courage in an emergency or displaying meritorious action to prevent injury, loss of life, or preventing damage to or loss of property in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Lieutenant Thomas Mitchell, Department of Corrections Coffeewood Correctional Center

On the night of April 18, 2020 around 10:04 pm, Lieutenant Thomas Mitchell was driving on route 29 when he avoided a head on collision and then called Culpeper County 911 to report the vehicle. With strong intuition that something bad was about to happen, he turned his vehicle around and saw that the vehicle had already hit a mini-van head on. The drivers of both vehicles succumbed to their injuries. But Lieutenant Mitchell didn't give up; he found a mother and three children still in the van, which had burst into flames. In a brave and utterly selfless act, Lieutenant Mitchell jumped in the van and started to get the three children and their mother out of the vehicle. The youngest child was in a car seat and unresponsive. Lieutenant Mitchell was able to get the straps cut to free the child just before the van engulfed in fire. This heroic and selfless act saved the lives of all three children and their mother, due to his quick and level-mindedness, perseverance, and selflessness. This act clearly demonstrates DOC's goal to foster high levels of safety and security in our institutions and community.

Innovative Spirit: Demonstrates a spirit of innovation by creating something new, improving existing technology or process, or adapting a tried and true idea to a new context.

Mitchell D. Broudy, Office of the Attorney General operating for the Department of Social Services Division of Child Support Enforcement

VDSS' Division of Child Support Enforcement faced the challenge of needing a self-guided automated child support guidelines calculator, which could be maintained internally to be rapidly updated as statutes and situations change. This would save the agency thousands of dollars by not requiring a private contractor to create a remote system that allowed more administrative actions. The calculator had to address all situations in the extensive Virginia Code §20-108 and be designed to take the user step by step through the complicated calculations based on prompted questions and do all the sub-calculations for the user. In developing this extensive project, Mr. Broudy exceeded job expectations by teaching himself coding. He used his new skills and innovative spirit to develop the automated support calculator, leading multiple beta tests and running thousands of case scenarios to refine the product. The results of his efforts now provide faster and more accurate services to the citizens of Virginia.

Pandemic Response: Exceptional level of accomplishment in furthering the mission of the Commonwealth of Virginia during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nathan O'Kane, P.E., Virginia Department of Transportation, Salem

In spring 2020, after seeing news reports about COVID-19 and the shortage of personal protective equipment (PPE) in hospitals, Mr. O'Kane discovered a face shield design approved by the National Institutes of Health that he could make with his 3D printer. He created a Facebook group called "3D Printed PPE Roanoke VA" to invite others with a 3D printer to join in this effort. The group currently has 141 members who all worked in the effort to create face shields. It was estimated that one face shield took about five hours to print, meaning you can make five to six on a very efficient day. Under Mr. O'Kane's leadership, the group collectively made 5,286 shields and almost 1,900 ear savers. In fact, the group made more shields than were

requested by local hospitals, so they organized a drive-through distribution event at the Salem Civic Center and gave out an estimated 900 masks to the public.

Personal and Professional Excellence: Exceptional level of accomplishment in furthering the mission of the Commonwealth of Virginia in such program areas as scientific research, economic analysis, or any other mission-related activity of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Department of Veterans Services Appeals Team of Vieng Sikler, Margie Wilks, Samantha Cohen, Barbara Smith, Andrew Sassoon, Cherly Hall and William Libby

The Appeals Team materially enhanced the Agency directive of serving Virginia's veterans by advocating for much-needed resolutions on appeals that are pending before the Board of Veterans' Appeals (BVA). Some appeals may have been pending for several years, others for decades. In fiscal year 2021, the appellate advocacy of the Appeals Team generated well over 11.5 million dollars in retroactive disability compensation awards to Virginia's veterans. These awards convey additional material benefits to veterans as well, including educational assistance and access to healthcare. During a national pandemic, the Appeals Team services provided a vital lifeline to veterans and survivors with previously denied claims.

Public Service: Making outstanding contributions by participating in or implementing community and public service projects that have made a beneficial and sustainable effect on the quality of community life for citizens in the Commonwealth.

Douglas D. Riley, Virginia Retirement System

During the pandemic, Mr. Riley coordinated vaccination implementation for King William County civic and faith-based groups to ensure vaccine doses were maximized. In addition, he coordinated efforts to provide meals to residents who were experiencing financial difficulty during the pandemic. Mr. Riley serves as a mentor for the King William Fatherhood Program to provide support and encouragement to fathers raising their children. He is an active member of the King William Lions Club and served as president for seven years. He arranged annual hearing and vision screenings, ensuring individuals received glasses or hearing aids. Mr. Riley obtained grants to purchase AED equipment for churches in King William County, and arranged for appropriate training for those using the equipment. Mr. Riley has had a tremendous impact on his small rural community and is an outstanding example of the importance of volunteering to make a difference.

Support Service: Exceptional level of accomplishment in providing administrative support, whose dedication and contributions enhance administrative excellence.

Alistria Crafton, Virginia Department of Education

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Ms. Crafton was instrumental in initiating a process for ensuring that the mail received for staff within the Office of Facilities and Family Engagement was delivered on time. She volunteered to go into the James Monroe building, wearing personal protective equipment and clothing, on a weekly basis to collect and distribute the mail by

transmitting it via secure email as deemed necessary for the continued operation of the work of the office staff. For larger mail items, she coordinated meetings to hand deliver the mail. Through her initiative and creativity, Ms. Crafton has streamlined the process of getting necessary documents to the Office of Facilities and Family Engagement Director for review and signature. The flow of correspondence has been flawless and always within required timelines.