Annual dinner honors long-serving staff members

With 25, 30, 35, 40 or more years of service to Cornell, 310 staff members were honored at the 58th Annual Service Recognition Dinner, held April 17 in Bartels Hall.

Remarks by President David Skorton, Vice Presidents Mary Opperman and Susan Murphy, and chair of the Employee Assembly Tanya Grove – and musical performances by the student group Jazz Voices during dinner and by the Backtalk Band afterward – paid tribute to the dedicated service of Cornell’s employees.

Opperman opened the event with thanks to the 165 awardees in attendance, noting that their service represents more than 4,620 years. “All your efforts and dedication have helped us push Cornell to the front ranks of world universities,” she said.

Opperman said the university has been through challenging times, but “thanks to your loyalty, determination, patience and good humor, we are rising above and pushing past the challenges.” She highlighted staff responses to communities in need, including relief efforts led by Cornellians in Ithaca and at Weill Cornell Medical College in the wake of Hurricane Sandy last fall – and, more recently, the signs saying “Sending Love to Boston” created by children at the Cornell Child Care Center. “Our compassion in this community fills me with pride,” she said.

Skorton thanked awardees “for your contributions to Cornell and for everything you do to make our campus and community a better place.”

He recognized five people celebrating 45 years of service:

- **Joan Lord**, who worked in the Division of Alumni Affairs and Development and retired in January, having “played a very special role in welcoming new staff members in her division.”

- **Joy Wagner**, executive staff assistant to President Emeritus Frank H.T. Rhodes. Wagner became a U.S. citizen last fall.

- **Joan Brink**, a library administrator in preservation conservation in Olin Library, who is “an incredibly well-organized person.”

- **Judith Eastburn**, who spent most of her career in the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences and retired last spring.

- **Stephen Haner**, assistant director for Building Care, Facilities Services, who designed the building care protocol for Commencement.

At the close of his remarks, Skorton called Grove to the podium so that she could surprise Opperman with an Employee Assembly resolution that establishes an award in her honor. “The Employee Assembly extends their appreciation and gratitude to Vice President Opperman for fostering a positive environment where staff are valued contributors to the campus community and its mission,” Grove said. She also cited Opperman “for her continued efforts in creating a culture that allows staff to thrive at home and in the workplace.” Opperman’s husband and daughter were present for the recognition while her son joined online.

The Opperman Award, Grove said, “will be given semiannually by the assembly to an employee who consistently demonstrates their commitment to encouraging and supporting staff excellence.” Grove thanked Skorton for establishing a financial commitment to future award winners through his office.

Said Opperman: “Cornell means a great deal to me … the people in this community are very special and, as you know, I believe that the staff create the support web that makes all this work. I feel very honored to be part of this community, and I just can’t thank you enough.” She said that she considered this recognition “a capstone achievement in my career.”
Tech Talk: Boston Marathon email fraud on the rise

The Information Technologies (IT) Security Office is seeing an increased number of email fraud attempts with reference to the tragedy that occurred at the Boston Marathon.

Many of the precautions outlined by the National Center for Disaster Fraud (NCDF) are relevant in this case:

- Do not respond to any unsolicited (spam) incoming emails, including by clicking links contained within those messages, because they may contain computer viruses.
- Beware of organizations with copycat names similar to, but not exactly the same as, those of reputable charities. [Within minutes of any disaster, new websites are registered with names that relate to the event.]
- Rather than following a purported link to a web site, verify the existence and legitimacy of non-profit organizations by using such Internet-based resources as Google. Most legitimate charities maintain websites ending in .org rather than .com.
- Be cautious of emails that claim to show pictures of the disaster areas in attached files, because those files may contain viruses. [Don’t download or forward images or video from unknown sources.]
- Do not give your personal or financial information to anyone who solicits contributions. Providing such information may compromise your identity and make you vulnerable to identity theft.
- Use trusted news channels for information and video footage of the events. [Fake YouTube pages, which request a Flash download, could install malware instead.]

The IT Security Office recommends the following:

- Delete any unsolicited emails regarding such tragedies. Do not respond to or forward such emails.

Tech Training Spotlight

Want to learn the basics of foundational web technology and how to create your own functional web pages using markup languages: Hypertext Markup Language (HTML), Extensible HyperText Markup Language (XHTML), and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)? Register now for the Web Design with XHTML, HTML and CSS (HTML), Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML), and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS)? Register now for the Web Design with XHTML, HTML and CSS (HTML), Extensible Hypertext Markup Language (XHTML), and Cascading Style Sheets (CSS) – Level 1 scheduled for June and Level 2 scheduled for July.

For a complete listing of technical training resources, see www.cit.cornell.edu/training. Email questions to workshop-info@cornell.edu.

Reminder: sign up now for financial fitness challenge

Cornell University began participating April 22 in the Financial Fitness Challenge, an online financial education program available to the first 500 employees who enroll between April 22 and May 15. The challenge includes an initial quiz and survey, 5 one-hour interactive online courses taken at the participant’s pace over seven weeks (April 22-June 7) and a final quiz and survey, to be taken June 10-21. Register at http://tinyurl.com/cyj9eck.

Topics covered include the basics of personal finance; saving and investing; retirement planning, and mutual funds.

Employees who complete the program with 75 percent accuracy for each course will earn a certificate of completion and be entered into a raffle to win prizes provided by Cornell’s retirement plan vendors (Fidelity Investments, TIAA-CREF, ING and MetLife), and ClearPoint Credit Counseling Services. Coursework can be completed on computers, iPads or other devices with access to the Internet.

The program is sponsored by Educated Investor, Employee Benefits News and Employee Benefit Adviser. Cornell’s participation is provided by Benefit Services and supported by TIAA-CREF and Fidelity Investments.
At two events, Emily Sampson, an administrative assistant who has worked for the Institute for Biotechnology and Life Science Technologies since 2008, and Bill Alberta, associate director for Career Services until his retirement in 2012 and creator of the Cornell Elves Program, were recognized April 23 with a George Peter Award for Dedicated Service.

Emily Sampson

Sampson had known she would receive a certificate recognizing her for five years of service when her department gathered in the Biotechnology Building. But she was taken by surprise when her parents, Russ and Judi, and boyfriend Greg Kehoe walked into the meeting along with members of the Employee Assembly (EA), and EA Chair Tanya Grove presented her with the George Peter award.

Mary Opperman, vice president for human resources and safety services, recounted that one of Sampson’s nominators had described how Sampson had simultaneously taken on the responsibilities of two colleagues on maternity leave in addition to her own.

Linda Carr, executive director of the institute, said Sampson is “absolutely tremendous with everything she does.” In her nomination letter, Carr described how Sampson works with “enormous grace,” “a positive team-player approach” and a “can-do attitude.”

Sampson’s supervisor, Jocelyn Rose, director of the institute, described how Sampson seamlessly moves between different aspects of her job, coordinating many of the center’s programs and lectures, serving as a “wonderful representative” to off-campus visitors and calmly dealing with any request she is given.

And Susi Varvayanis, a director in the Center for Life Science Enterprise, said that Sampson is “one in a million,” noting that “nothing ever falls through the cracks.”

Bill Alberta

Now retired, Alberta was asked to return to campus to lead a session on volunteering for the Bring a Child to Work program. As the session closed, approximately 60 friends, former colleagues and Alberta’s wife, Sherry, and daughter Amber joined the session to honor Alberta for founding and leading the Elves Program.

Grove presented Alberta with the George Peter Award for Dedicated Service, and Opperman read a letter from President David Skorton. “Although I’m unable to attend your celebration, I will be with you in spirit as many Cornellians gather to thank you for all you’ve done,” Skorton wrote. “The Elves Program, which you initiated in 1989 and have nurtured through 23 years of tremendous growth, today provides more than 900 children with clothing and toys each holiday season. Though many volunteers are essential to this effort, it is your leadership – even after your retirement from Cornell – that has been most crucial. … I am grateful for your years of dedicated service as a Cornell staff member and for your superb example of volunteer leadership.”

Several Elf leaders spoke of Alberta’s influence on their lives. For instance, Brigid Beachler, a managing director in the ILR School, said that Alberta “has been a fantastic mentor for me,” and Valerie Kelly, administrative assistant in the College of Human Ecology, has spread participation in the Elves Program throughout the town of Moravia.

Alberta can also be credited with inspiring Maureen Brull, senior consultant in Benefit Services, to found the Elves’ Summer Backpack Program. Each September, the program collects and provides new backpacks filled with school supplies to disenfranchised children from area schools, Brull said.

Vice President Susan Murphy applauded Alberta’s work in Career Services, where he was known as “Mr. Information Man,” while Graduate School Dean Barbara Knuth spoke to Alberta’s advising skills and being a role model of the values of community and engagement.
Cornell recognized for its support of veterans

The Families and Work Institute has named Cornell University one of four 2013 Work Life Legacy Military Award recipients. Cornell is the first institution of higher education to be recognized.

The Work Life Legacy Military Awards were created in 2012 to help increase the number of service men and women hired into civilian jobs and help them build long-term careers. By promoting awareness of military veterans’ talent and skills, and sharing best practices to recruit and support veterans and their families, the award helps veterans re-enter the civilian workforce.

Last year, Cornell was noted for its “promising practices” that support veterans; this year’s recognition highlights the work Cornell’s Veterans’ Colleague Network Group (VCNG) has done to help recruit and support veteran employees.

“We are very pleased to be recognized with a Work Life Legacy Military Award from the Families and Work Institute,” said Mary Opperman, vice president for human resources and safety services. “I would like to thank Cornell’s veterans in the Veterans Colleague Network Group – and those who lent their guidance and support to them – for initiating such concrete actions as establishing a Veterans Affairs office on campus and developing a dedicated website for veterans to encourage other veterans to come to Cornell and find a community here.”

The VCNG also participates in state and national veteran recruitment fairs and promotes positions at such bases as Fort Drum, said Opperman.

“Veterans bring a broad range of leadership, team-building and organization skills to the workplace, as well as a strong work ethic and engagement in their work,” said Lynette Chappell-Williams, associate vice president for inclusion and workforce diversity. “They also bring specific skill sets in project management, administration information technologies, engineering, facilities and law enforcement. We are pleased to offer programs that help us recruit, hire and support our military families.”

The Families and Work Institute highlighted some of these programs and support services, including Cornell’s email lists for faculty and staff interested in the topics of parenting children with special needs, caregiving for adults, and LGBT families; a family helper list with contact information and profiles of people available to help with family care, education and household maintenance; and a guide to finding, hiring and keeping informal care providers.

The three other 2013 winners were JPMorgan Chase, Merck and Verizon Communications.

“Each of these companies has generated a holistic approach by recruiting, hiring and training vets and giving them a path inside their organizations to sustain employment and create a bright future,” said retired Navy Admiral Mike Mullen, former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and a member of the Families and Work Institute’s board.

Opperman; Chappell-Williams; Cassandre Joseph, director of diversity engagement; and other Cornell and VCNG representatives will accept the legacy military award at the Work Life Legacy Awards dinner, June 3, at Cipriani 42nd Street in New York City.

The Families and Work Institute is a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization founded in 1989 to study the changing workplace, the changing family and the changing community.

Volunteers needed for Commencement, May 25 and 26

This year, Senior Convocation and the Ph.D. Hooding Ceremony will be held Saturday, May 25, and Cornell’s 145th Commencement, Sunday, May 26.

Help make graduation special for Cornell’s students and families, and automatically be entered in a drawing to win a free iPad or two free round-trip tickets to New York City on the Campus-to-Campus bus when you register at http://www.commencement.cornell.edu/May/ushers/index.html.

Volunteers will also receive:

• a paid day off to use by December 31 (time-off guidelines are available at http://www.commencement.cornell.edu/May/ushers/timeoff.html)
• a free continental breakfast on Saturday, May 25, before Senior Convocation
• a free continental breakfast on Sunday, May 26, before Commencement
• a special thank-you gift
• an invitation to a Thank You Reception with President Skorton on June 13, at which the iPad, bus tickets and many door prizes will be awarded.

To learn more and to sign up as a volunteer, go to: http://www.commencement.cornell.edu/May/ushers/index.html.

Questions? Contact the Commencement Office at commencement@cornell.edu or 255-9541.

Benefit concert May 11

Area musicians Black Castle, Sim Redmond Band, Boy with a Fish, The Double E, Unit and Jamie Notarthomas will hold an “R2Palooza” benefit concert May 11 at the State Theatre in Ithaca to benefit Running to Places (R2P), a program that connects middle and high school students from across the Tompkins County area, teaching important life skills and strengthening community while creating great theatre. All proceeds will go towards keeping participation in the non-profit theater company affordable for community youth. Doors open at 4:30 p.m.

Cost: $25 and seating is general admission. Buy tickets at the door or on-line at www.stateofithaca.com or http://www.ithacaevents.com. Tickets are also available at the State Theatre Box Office. 105 West State/MLK Jr. St., 607-277-8283 and Ticket Center (at Center Ithaca), 171 The Commons, 607-273-4497.
Service recognition from page 1...

1. Joan Brink, 45-year awardee, and Jan Frantz;
2. The Backtalk Band;
3. Robin Adams and Valerie McMillen;
4. Stephen Haner, 45-year awardee;
5. The 58th Service Recognition Dinner, April 17;
6. Judith Eastburn, 45-year awardee;
7. Mary Opperman;
8. Jazz Voices provides musical interlude;
9. Susanne Hawk, 35-year awardee, center, with Professor Robin Davisson and President David Skorton;
10. Susan Murphy;
11. Tanya Grove announces the Opperman Award.

ALL PHOTOS BY JASON KOSKI/UNIVERSITY PHOTOGRAPHY
Greetings:

As a follow-up to my last article, I wanted to describe some of the work being done by one of the four Board of Trustees committees on which I sit, Buildings and Properties. This committee reviews projects and capital expenditures within certain parameters.

Among the items discussed at the last meeting on March 27 were:

- an update on projects concluding this spring;
- the issuance of a final permit for Lake Source Cooling by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation setting an interim limit for phosphorous for the next five years during further study;
- an update on the installation of the meshes and fence removal at university bridges; and
- the achievement by the university of a higher Gold Star sustainability rating in 2012 than in 2011.

On March 26, Board Chairman Bob Harrison; Jan Zubrow, chair of the Cornell Board of Trustees’ Executive Committee; four of its members; and I had breakfast and an open, free-flowing discussion with more than a dozen members from the Employee Assembly (EA). The breakfast provided a great opportunity for direct contact between EA members and trustee leadership about employee issues, including results of the employee survey.

A few items of interest at the Board of Trustees meeting of March 28 include:

- A major presentation by SUNY Chairman of the Board H. Carl McCall, including the SUNY budget and implications for Cornell.
- A report of the Student Assembly (SA) by SA President Adam Gitlin, including campus safety and the effect on students of staff reductions in certain areas.
- A report of the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) by GPSA President Mitch Paine, including a GPSA delegation to Washington, D.C. to argue the deleterious effects on higher education from sequestration, and increased women professional development.
- Comments on a recent interview of Trustee Rubén José King-Shaw in the New York Times found at http://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/24/jobs/mansa-equitys-chief-on-answering-calls-to-serve.html?_r=0 headlined, Answering Calls to Serve, about his childhood, career in private and public service, and the importance of his undergraduate education at Cornell.

• The dedication, Oct. 25, 2012, the ILR Conference Center building as Patricia G. and Rubén José King-Shaw, Jr. ILR ’83, Hall.

More after our next meetings in late May. Enjoy Spring!

Alan Mittman, director, Office of Workplace Policy and Labor Relations and Employee-Elected Trustee.
Contact: alm63@cornell.edu.

News from the EA
Message from Alan Mittman

Bring a Child to Work Day provides a wide variety of educational activities

CHERYL MCGRAW

Volunteer leadership from across campus made it possible for Cornell’s Bring a Child to Work Day, held April 24, to provide learning opportunities for more than 400 children of Cornell employees.

For example, more than 100 children, with accompanying adults, visited the Johnson Museum to take part in a scavenger hunt designed to expose them to a variety of art forms and to experience the museum in a new and different way. Barton Hall was filled with children learning about careers in the Cornell Police, Army and Navy, as well as trying their hand at Wushu, a Chinese martial art form. Cornell Dining, The Statler Hotel, Nutritional Sciences, The Hotel School and Cornell Wellness provided different options for learning about food and food careers. And a new favorite this year was Professor Sam Nelson and Cornell’s debate team (ranked #1 in the world), teaching how to construct persuasive arguments and be a winning debater. 🐾
In recognition of the 25th anniversary of the Jennie T. Farley Office Professionals Celebration, held April 24 in Barton Hall, President David Skorton lauded the contributions of current office professionals, and ILR School guest speakers recalled the early days of the program and the professor for whom it is named.

“You are indispensable to all the major functions of this institution,” Skorton said in addressing more than 700 office professionals. He highlighted their roles in being contacts for students, in learning new technologies and teaching them to others, and in providing support networks for faculty and researchers. Skorton thanked the office professionals for “all the ways you make Cornell truly a caring community,” noting their volunteer efforts in times of disaster, and their contributions to the United Way and to such programs as the Elves Holiday Program and the Summer Backpack Program.

Professor Susanne Bruyère, ILR School associate dean of outreach, recalled Jennie Farley ’54, M.A. ’69, Ph.D. ’70, who had been her office mate for more than a decade. She said that Farley cared deeply “about the issues of women, the students she taught, her many friends both here and abroad, and above all, her family.”

The office professionals program had its roots in a brown bag lunch and symposium founded by Farley in 1988 to recognize National Secretaries Day and drew about 50 people. Farley had been a determined champion of women’s rights, co-founder of Cornell’s Women’s Studies Program and professor of industrial and labor relations, and was well-known for a report she authored that contributed to the formation of a university Advisory Committee on the Status of Women. Farley “would be absolutely delighted to see the number of people gathered here,” Bruyère said.

In her keynote address, Ileen DeVault, professor of labor history, provided a condensed history of work and family issues in the U.S. workplace, from the 1880s when the roles for men and women were clearly delineated, through World War II, into the 1970s, when more than half of women age 15 and older were employed, and employers started to pay attention to work/family concerns.

At the end of DeVault’s address, Farley’s husband, Don, professor emeritus of electrical and computer engineering, received a plaque in honor of his wife and was thanked for “continuing to support the office professionals program.”

The program closed with musical entertainment from the student duo The Mimi’s and student group The Hangovers, and with the distribution of many door prizes.

The office professionals celebration is sponsored by the ILR School, the Office of the President and the Division of Human Resources and Safety Services.
Cornell student volunteer firefighters gladly take the heat

ABIGAIL WARREN

For decades, Cornell students have been volunteering as firefighters at the Cayuga Heights Fire Department. Whether they’re in the library or out on a date, they are on call and ready to serve the community at a moment's notice.

Under the guidance of Chief George Tamborelle, the students join forces with Ithacans to become New York-state certified firefighters. Tamborelle said the intense training required to become a firefighter “entails a solid commitment.” But the enthusiastic Cornellians who are dedicated to the fire department’s mission have no problem putting in the hours, he said.

The training is “physically taxing and mentally challenging,” said Carolyn Scheinberg ’15, who has been training for her interior certification, which allows a firefighter to enter a burning building, for seven months.

As part of the training, Scheinberg said she and a partner entered a burning building, rescuing dummy victims, with blind shields on their eyes to mimic dense smoke and heat. Scheinberg described the adrenaline-boosting experience of feeling her way around as “stressful and draining.” The practice of finding pseudo victims amid chaos and bringing them to safety “reminds me what serious responsibility I have and the importance of my service.”

“When they join the department, we look at everybody as a firefighter and stop looking at them as students,” Tamborelle said. Twenty-three Cornell student volunteers currently serve on the squad.

Whether the firefighters are doing classroom preparation or athletic obstacle courses, everyone is growing and working together, Tamborelle said. “I’ve developed some of my closest friendships through working at the fire department,” he added.

Even though Scheinberg has been training for her interior certification, the adrenaline boost is still happening. Scheinberg found herself operating in a busy firehouse for the first time, and she describes the feeling of knowing that you’re out of the pit and have no problem putting in the hours, he said.

Far from an obligation, Tamborelle said volunteers “just fall in love with firefighting, and for many it becomes a calling.” He encourages those with an interest in volunteering to come to the department.

“Next year I plan to live in the fire station, in which case I’ll be volunteering about 40 hours per week,” Jamil said. He added that the department recruits twice a year and attend 25 percent of weekly trainings. Jamil notes she spends about 15 hours per week volunteering, but hours vary by student.

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