



## **Governor Wolf Honors 47 State Employees for Innovations that Create a Government That Works**

**Harrisburg, PA** – Governor Tom Wolf today honored 47 state employees with the annual Governor's Awards of Excellence and thanked them for building on his reforms to create a Government That Works.

The award recipients from 11 agencies have gone above and beyond to provide outstanding customer service and develop new and innovative solutions that make state government more effective.

Reforming state government and restoring faith in democracy are priorities for Governor Wolf. Over the past three years, the governor has:

- Cut \$2 billion in government waste and consolidated agencies.
- Reformed the liquor and pension systems to save taxpayer money.
- Banned gifts for employees under the governor's jurisdiction and has fought for a full gift ban for all state employees, as well as strong campaign finance and lobby reforms.
- Created the Office of Performance through Excellence to expand efforts to improve government operations.
- Established GO-TIME, which saved \$370 million by making government more efficient.
- Donated his salary to charity and refused a state pension.

Governor Wolf presented the awards during a ceremony at the Capitol Complex to the following state employees:

### **Jared Pierce - Department of Conservation and Natural Resources**

For bravery, professionalism and dedication in the line of duty at Nockamixon State Park in Bucks County. Jared came to the aid of a lifeguard who was being threatened by a group of visitors. When the crowd proceeded to attack and beat Jared, he refused to draw his weapon or fire in self defense out of concern for innocent bystanders. His calm handling of this volatile situation is being used to train other rangers.

### **Electronic Sales Suppression Audit Team - Department of Revenue**

Michael Answine, Kevin Dale, Louis Dondero, William Hartman, Adam Hovne, Kenneth Perry and Charles Snyder

For their efforts to address electronic sales suppression, an illegal practice that involves a person using software to systematically delete or alter sales and tax records. They pioneered new evidence-based methods to detect potential sales suppression that resulted in the recovery of \$6 million in sales, corporate, personal and other taxes. The employees have also built relationships with other states and the business community to share information and raise awareness of this issue.

### **Erie County Maintenance Team – PennDOT**

Randall Busch Jr., Bree McDonald-Stewart, Thomas Mello Jr., Robert Miller Jr., Michele Morningstar, Nathaniel Nunez, Douglas Schofield, James Shaut, Jean Sherrred and Jesse Williams

For keeping Interstate 90 and other major roads clear during the record-breaking seven-foot snow storm that hit northwestern PA during the 2017 Christmas holiday. The team deployed an innovative

response plan that mobilized staff and equipment from surrounding counties while maintaining coverage in those areas. As a result, no major road closures or traffic incidents occurred during this unprecedented weather event. They also provided assistance to the City of Erie to dig out its residents.

### **Major Michael Gourley - Department of Corrections**

For multiple initiatives focused on cost savings, safety and security and efficiency in community corrections centers. Major Gourley's accomplishments include reducing overtime costs by \$500,000 in 2017, improving training compliance and completion rates among facility staff, clearing a backlog of investigations and implanting a program to reduce repeat offenders. In the face of the opioid epidemic, he introduced Naloxone to community corrections facilities and testing to get users into treatment.

### **Medical Marijuana Team - Department of Health**

Latrisha Bentsch, Tabitha Bosack, Wendy Carson, Lawrence Clark, John Collins, Susan Jones, Sunny Podolak, Holli Senior and Amanda Yeager

For the creation of Pennsylvania's medical marijuana program to enable patients with serious medical conditions to have access to life-improving treatments. The employees were responsible for creating registries, ensuring the competent review of applications for permits and issuing permits to grower/processors and dispensaries. Implementation of the program, which occurred in February 2018, required creation of new regulations, which involved coordination across many areas of the Department of Health.

### **Community HealthChoices Team - Department of Human Services and Department of Aging**

Richard Bennett, Scott Brady, Virginia Brown, Patricia Clark, Kevin Hancock, Christine Miccio, Randolph Nolen, Jeanne Parisi, Shannon Stiffler and Jill Vovakes

For their work to launch Community HealthChoices (CHC), a new program to enable older Pennsylvanians and individuals with physical disabilities to receive care in their homes. Throughout the process, the team worked collaboratively with experts within the commonwealth and stakeholders ensure the program would be responsive to the needs of participants and workable for providers. CHC was implemented in 14 southwest Pennsylvania counties in January 2018 and will continue to be rolled out statewide.

### **Michael Heilman - Department of Environmental Protection**

For lasting contributions to the quality of the environment and health of residents through his work as an attorney. Michael used his legal background and expertise as a professional engineer to help DEP issue an order to cease underground mining activities causing dangerous methane emissions, and then successfully defended against an appeal by the company. He also collaborated with the federal EPA on new requirements to limit natural gas emission from transmission pipelines and sulfur emissions from coke plants. Michael is also a leader and mentor to other commonwealth attorneys and regularly shares his knowledge with colleagues.

### **Open Data Team – Office of Administration**

John Long IV, Jere Matthews and Julie Snyder

For building the state's open data program to improve public transparency, citizen engagement and government operations. The team launched the OpenDataPA portal and worked with agencies to add over 100 data sets. Last fall, they hosted the Code4PA hackathon, which attracted over 200 participants to compete to develop new apps and services using commonwealth open data. They are currently planning the next hackathon, which will focus on using data to combat the opioid epidemic.

## **Puddintown-Orchard Road Bike Path Team – PennDOT**

Joseph Baker, Shelley Scott and Scott Shaffer

For their creative approach to save a bike path project in Centre County after the discovery of an important archaeological site that would have required extensive study and review before the project could proceed. The team worked to fashion innovative agreements between Juniata College and Penn State to supply, house and support college students to do the work at a far lower cost, allowing for completion of the required archaeological studies and ultimately of the new bicycle path connection.

### **Linda Gagliardo - Department of Education**

For her assistance to veterans and their families to participate in job training and apprenticeship programs using their federal G.I. Bill Benefits. She reduced the time for veterans to receive benefits payments from three to four months to less than six weeks. In 2017 alone, she helped 424 veterans and their dependents receive over \$700,000 in financial benefits to which they were entitled. She also provides support to participating training and apprenticeship providers that are emulated by other states.

### **Beth Ann Shuttlesworth - Department of Military and Veterans Affairs**

For her dedication to supporting the department's dual mission to provide quality service to the commonwealth's veterans and their families and oversee the Pennsylvania National Guard. In 2017, she played a key role in supporting a variety of military training and operations on state, federal and international levels. Beth Ann also provided tremendous depth and breadth of support for programs and services for a state with the fourth largest veteran population in the country, including the operation of six state veterans' homes.

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