

Twenty-Fifth Annual

# Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award



May 21, 2008

1:00 p.m.

Senate Parlor  
State Capitol  
Madison, Wisconsin

## About Virginia Hart (1914-2007)

Virginia Hart, Wisconsin's first woman cabinet member, served as Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing, chairperson of the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, and as chairperson of the Labor and Industry Review Commission.

Upon Virginia Hart's retirement from state service in 1983, friends and colleagues established a fund so that each year a woman in Wisconsin state service could be recognized for exemplary performance and contribution to the citizens of the state. On March 24, 2007, Virginia Hart passed away at the age of 92.

With the generous help of contributors the fund has been able to sustain the program for 25 years. With continued support we hope to continue for many years to come. Contributors for 2007-2008 include Jo Ann Lampman, Helen Bruner, Tad Pinkerton, David and Ellen O'Brien Saunders, Philip Jones, Harold Jordahl Jr., Ed & Winnie Durkin, William Kraus, Anthony S. Earl, Neill De Clercq, David Nack, C.H. Blanchard, June Weisberger Blanchard, Mr. & Mrs. Stephen Cohen, Mary Jo Howard Croake, Ariel Y. Ford, James L. Pflasterer, and Mr. & Mrs. Wayne Miller.

The recognition award is administered by the Office of State Employment Relations.

## About the Award

The award's emphasis is on recognizing "unsung heroines" in state service, thus providing encouragement and recognition to all women in state government. The award seeks to recognize women who share the following qualities: esteem from peers; acceptance of responsibility beyond the limits of the nominee's job description; sustained, extraordinary achievement of assigned tasks; performance recognition from clients; community service; self-improvement; and overcoming handicaps to performance.

## Program

### Welcome

Jennifer Donnelly, Director  
Office of State Employment Relations

### Remarks

Roberta Gassman, Secretary  
Department of Workforce Development

### Presentation of Honorable Mention Awards

### Presentation of Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award

### Concluding Remarks

Jennifer Donnelly

*~Please join us for refreshments after the program has concluded.~*



## Nominees for 2008

Joyce A. Abrego  
Julie A. Amakobe  
Gretchen L. Benjamin  
Marianne Bolen  
Deborah Brescoll  
Diane Brookbank  
Quala Champagne  
Kristie Nielson Corning  
Sandy Drew  
Jennifer Engebretsen  
Michelle Femal  
Phyllis Fuller  
Mary K. Gansberg  
Kristin L. Hart  
Lisa D. Helmuth  
Patricia Hedden  
Jill Hjelsand  
Monica Horner  
Lois Hubert  
Sue Hunter  
Cathy Jess  
Judith A. Johnson  
Marilyn Klement  
Lisa Krachey  
Nichole Lysne  
Char Martin  
Kristin McHugh  
Rachel Meek  
Mary Lou Mephram  
Melissa K. Mlsna  
Nancy J. Olig  
Maria Redmond  
Andrea Reid  
Rebecca Rooyakkers  
Judith A. Roth  
Sherry L. Sanford  
Janet Sausen  
Ann Schoen  
Judy Smith  
Shawna Stringham  
Mary Rose Teves  
Georgia Thompson

2008 Virginia Hart  
Special Recognition Award Recipient

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*Shawna Stringham*  
Department of Natural Resources  
Viroqua Station

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Shawna Stringham is a Conservation Warden for the Department of Natural Resources, assigned to the Viroqua station which includes Vernon County. In the three years that Shawna has been working in this area, she has made significant contributions to the community and has been an outstanding ambassador for the DNR and for the State of Wisconsin.

Shawna is quick to recognize opportunities where her efforts can improve the quality of life for citizens. She took the initiative to develop a new boating and ATV volunteer instructor network within the county. As a result, boating safety and ATV instructors have been certified and will teach local youth how to safely operate boats and ATVs in Vernon County.

Shawna also recognized the need to develop a new Amish trapper education program, working with a trapper education instructor to offer a class for the Amish community to teach new techniques as well as legal requirements for placement of safe traps.

She has also taken the initiative in resolving conflict between local landowners and a town chairman with local DNR foresters regarding managed forest land disputes. This intervention resulted in a more favorable outcome that reflected positively on the DNR and on state government.

Shawna worked with law enforcement officers to give wildlife identification presentations to 200 terminally ill kids. She has been very active in other youth events, such as assisting another warden with presentations to 600 Boy Scouts, being the guest speaker at a local Boy Scout banquet, and giving numerous talks at schools and other public relations events.

Shawna took the initiative to reach out to newly-formed citizen environmental groups in the area. To educate her agency's employees, Shawna acts as a mentor at the recruit warden training academy, served as field training officer, supervised a college intern, and spent days with numerous high school student ride-alongs. She also takes the time to recognize citizens and meets with representatives of the Ho-Chunk Nation to improve the DNR's relationship.

Shawna is a current participant in the DNR leadership academy. For her project, she is studying how to improve conservation warden efficiencies to aid local law enforcement. She has also attended supervisory development classes at the State Patrol Academy.

Shawna is an individual law enforcement agencies turn to during a crisis, such as assisting with manhunts and backing up officers in difficult situations, because they know she is someone they can depend on. She always offers to help, even when her safety may be in jeopardy.

During August 2007, record rainstorms passed through western Wisconsin, flooding towns, washing homes off their foundations, and destroying roads and bridges. Citizens were trapped in homes and vehicles, and when emergency calls came in the Sheriff's department turned to Shawna for help with the rescues. She responded in the middle of the night and because her DNR-owned boat was inaccessible she took her personal boat out into the darkness to rescue numerous people who were stranded in their vehicles and homes. As a result of Shawna's selfless efforts, she received a special award from local fire department personnel.

This kind of dedication of duty alone is worthy of recognition with the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award. The nomination of Shawna for this award concludes: "I cannot remember any other employee I have supervised in my 19 years as a supervisor who has made such a positive impact in a community with so many different people and organizations. Shawna's contributions are substantial and reflect positively on all state employees."

## Honorable Mentions

### Deborah Brescoll

*Budget & Policy Officer*

*Wisconsin State Court Systems*

*Division of Management Services*

Deborah Brescoll has worked for Wisconsin state government for more than 17 years. Since 2002, she has been the budget & policy officer for the Wisconsin Court System. In her current role, Deborah combines her broad range of experience with intelligence, insight, professionalism, and a passion for good public policy. She is held in high esteem by elected officials, co-workers, and court system stakeholders.

When she began her current position, she brought a fresh, professional viewpoint to the biennial budget process, identifying a communication breakdown between the work of the Supreme Court's planning and policy advisory committee and the biennial budget submissions. The budget proposals she identified and incorporated significantly enhanced the court system's delivery of public service, ultimately benefiting the people of Wisconsin.

### Diane Brookbank

*Bureau Director*

*Department of Natural Resources*

*Bureau of Customer Service & Licensing*

During the past year alone, Diane has put many of her ideas for better customer service into action. These have included:

- Expand the DNR Customer Service Call Center hours so they are truly convenient for our customers.
- Introduce bilingual Customer Service Representatives.
- Implement a call center phone system that permits customers to “chat” with customer service representatives via online quick messaging as they navigate the DNR web site, including an automated call distribution feature which allows the department to utilize staffing resources throughout the state that is seamless to the customer.
- Develop an Automated Business Insurance System which combines different systems that previously were unable to “communicate” with each other.

Diane's efforts should be applauded and recognized.

### Phyllis Fuller

*Program & Planning Analyst*

*Department of Workforce Development*

*Division of Family Support, Bureau of Child Support*

Phyllis is the subject matter expert in the area of paternity establishment. She has worked diligently on the implementation and ongoing efforts of the Paternity Acknowledgment Through Hospitals (PATH) project, which provides for the legal establishment of fatherhood at the hospital at the time of a child's birth.

Phyllis has also actively worked the past few years on federally mandated changes to increase the establishment and enforcement of medical support (insurance coverage) for children through the child support program. In a preliminary report on the project, researchers from the UW Institute for Research on Poverty stated, “It appears that Wisconsin has succeeded where other states have not in developing an improved method to permit the child support agency to enforce medical support orders.”

Phyllis Fuller embodies a simple yet very evident conviction and rock-solid commitment to public service.

### Mary K. Gansberg

*Water Resource Biologist*

*Department of Natural Resources*

*Water Division*

Mary K. Gansberg has worked for DNR since 1989. Mary has accepted work assignments on high-visibility projects, utilizing her knowledge of water resources as well as her special organizational and leadership skills.

Her work on Legend Lake in Menominee County has led to increased communication and trust between groups of people and her ability to get various groups to work together to resolve their various issues and concerns. Mary provided leadership and facilitation on a 4-year project with Shawano Lake, which involved numerous groups of concerned citizens.

Several people nominated Mary for this recognition. Some of the comments included: “Mary has a rare quality to inspire others.” “She has a wonderful balance of high-tech and high-touch.” “Her leadership and savvy has helped guide, expand and shape Wisconsin's lake management efforts, which will pay back sound dividends to the people of Wisconsin.”

## Jill Hjelsand

*Regional Manager*

*Department of Transportation*

*Division of Motor Vehicles, Bureau of Field Services*

Jill Hjelsand is the Regional Manager for the Bureau of Field Services North-Central Region as well as interim manager for the Northwest region – combined, these two regions cover 38 counties in Wisconsin, more than half of the total number of our state’s counties.

Jill participates in many projects and has volunteered on many committees such as the IT committee and Traffic Safety Committee. She initiated the Special Exam Committee, which has developed and implemented a new, effective standardized training for driver’s license examiners who re-test older drivers and drivers with medical conditions which require special testing.

Jill is the Captain and Unit Commander of the Wisconsin Army National Guard’s 832<sup>nd</sup> Medical Company, which provides medical evacuation and support to both military and civilian populations. She is a UH-1 Huey helicopter pilot who maintains her required flying hours and training credentials.

Jill Hjelsand is an incredible leader who leads by example and who motivates her employees through the hard work she does for DOT, the way she makes decisions, and how she listens to others.

## Melissa K. Mlsna

*Transportation Customer Representative–Lead*

*Department of Transportation*

*Division of Motor Vehicles*

Melissa Mlsna has worked for the State of Wisconsin for nearly 5 years and has greatly distinguished herself at the Department of Transportation.

She was given the challenge to help develop a more efficient telephony system for the Division of Motor Vehicles to replace its obsolete system. After evaluating the few telephony applications that were compatible and suitable for the complexity of DMV needs, Melissa started from the shell of the basic application provided by the vendor, and worked with the vendor to develop programming that could meet the complex needs. The division was able to eliminate the need for expensive Dictaphone equipment, saving thousands of dollars each year.

Melissa has a thorough knowledge of her work unit’s duties, is capable of coaching and training all aspects of the work, encourages staff in making decisions, and provides feedback which is accurate, impartial, and highly valued. She can be counted upon to accept challenges and exceed performance expectations. The people who nominated her concluded: “We hope she will have a long career in service to the State of Wisconsin.”

## Ann Schoen

*Social Worker*

*Department of Corrections*

*Oshkosh Correctional Institution*

In 2006, Oshkosh Correctional Institution dedicated an institution Social Worker position to focus on inmate re-entry. Ann Schoen accepted this position and has since been motivated to spearhead a number of reintegration initiatives both at the institution and with community partners. Her dedication and efforts continue to have a positive influence on numerous inmates, staff, and the public.

Ann initially was tasked with the responsibility of coordinating a project that would provide support to released offenders. With the support of Oshkosh Correctional Institution Administration, Ann has worked vigorously in establishing a *Circle of Support* concept. She consulted with and made arrangements for staff from the State of Ohio to assist with initial training of DOC staff and community volunteers. Ann has been involved with recruiting and training numerous volunteers from correctional agencies and the community to participate in the Circle networks.

The presence of these support networks means that men and women who would otherwise return to their communities with little or no positive support have the opportunity to solve problems, receive reassurance from positive role models in their communities, and successfully transition back to the community and become productive citizens.

Ann Schoen has more than 32 years of service as a state employee. Her level of energy for her role in corrections is remarkable and contagious as many staff have volunteered or been persuaded to assist with re-entry initiatives because they want to work with Ann.

# Georgia Thompson

*Assistant to the Director*

*Department of Administration*

*Bureau of State Risk Management*

Georgia Thompson grew up in Madison as the daughter of blue-collar State employees. After working across the nation in the travel industry for 27 years, she returned to Madison in 2001 when she was hired by the Wisconsin Department of Administration. She served as a manager in the State civil service from 2001 until June 2006, and again from April 2007 until now.

Georgia has participated in and led several initiatives that reduced state government operating costs and consequently produced savings for taxpayers. These three initiatives are examples of her accomplishments and abilities.

**Fleet Reduction Initiative.** In 2004, the State of Wisconsin embarked on a plan to reduce its automotive fleet by 1,000 vehicles. Georgia was asked to lead a cross-functional project team through a myriad of programmatic, financial, and regulatory difficulties inherent in such a project.

**State Travel Program.** Georgia worked with agency partners and the consultant to develop a plan that would reduce the costs of travel for State employees and University staff through: contracts to limit service fees paid to travel agencies, contracts for discounted rates at in-state hotels, on-line travel booking tools, and data that could be used to negotiate more favorable future travel contracts.

**Local Government Summit.** In 2003, Georgia Thompson was the procurement lead on a project aimed at reducing costs for local governments. Georgia brought together a series of cooperative purchasing contracts for presentation at a Local Government Summit in December 2003.

From the very beginning of her State career, Georgia impressed colleagues and staff with her attention to detail and work ethic. She routinely worked evenings and weekends to ensure that projects were completed to high professional standards. She made herself available as a mentor and leader to all Bureau of Procurement staff, which continues to this day.

Georgia Thompson is regarded by her peers as kind, generous, intelligent, ethical, fair, and having a warm sense of humor. She is a hard worker who puts in whatever time is necessary to do a job well.

## Past Award Recipients

1 <sup>st</sup> Award	Ellen Vogel
2 <sup>nd</sup> Award	Ruth Louise-Hine
3 <sup>rd</sup> Award	Mabel Smith-Reed
4 <sup>th</sup> Award	Ruthe Badger
5 <sup>th</sup> Award	Jean Kioski
6 <sup>th</sup> Award	Daisy Cubias
7 <sup>th</sup> Award	Evie Duesterbeck
8 <sup>th</sup> Award	Vicki Bennington
9 <sup>th</sup> Award	Mary Ellen Franson
10 <sup>th</sup> Award	Debra Schwab
11 <sup>th</sup> Award	Annette Weissbach
12 <sup>th</sup> Award	Loriann Wunder
13 <sup>th</sup> Award	Jeanne Meyer
14 <sup>th</sup> Award	Celeste Hoze and Amy Rivers
15 <sup>th</sup> Award	Delores Ducklow
16 <sup>th</sup> Award	Sandee Pease
17 <sup>th</sup> Award	Lady Campbell
18 <sup>th</sup> Award	Harriet Schoenebeck
19 <sup>th</sup> Award	Janice Cummings and Kristine Martineau
20 <sup>th</sup> Award	Karen Morgan
21 <sup>st</sup> Award	Roxanne Nelezen Chronert
22 <sup>nd</sup> Award	Joan Sanzen
23 <sup>rd</sup> Award	Gena L. Jarr
24 <sup>th</sup> Award	Peggy Meyers

## Award Committee

Mary Becker  
Ed Kehl  
Leean White