

Twenty-Eighth Annual

Virginia Hart
Special Recognition Award



May 26, 2011

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 chairperson of the Labor and Industry Review Commission.

Ms. Hart was a superb advocate for workers' rights from the very start of her career. First as a social worker in Rochester, New York, later as a worker for the International Garment Workers Union in Tennessee during the 1940's. When she moved to Wisconsin, she taught at the UW-Madison School for Workers while earning a master's degree in labor economics in 1947.

In the 1960's, Ms. Hart helped set up the Community Welfare Council, which later became the Community Action Commission of Dane County. She served as its president from 1967-1969.

She was appointed to two terms on the Police and Fire Commission where she worked to improve opportunities for women both in the Madison Fire Department and the Madison Police Department.

She helped to form the Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin, was executive secretary of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin, and more recently was involved in the Dudgeon—Monroe Neighborhood Association in Madison.

Ms. Hart was a world traveler. She and Henry Hart, her husband of 67 years, backpacked in the Rockies, the Andes, and the Himalayas. She also worked as a labor education specialist at the University of Hawaii and for the Agency for International Development in New Delhi, India.

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 age 92.

With the generous help of contributors, the fund has been able to sustain the program for 28 years. With continued support, we hope to create an endowment to keep the Virginia Hart special recognition award alive for many years to come.

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

About the Award

The Virginia Hart award recognizes “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 their job descriptions; sustained, extraordinary achievement of assigned tasks; performance recognition from clients; community service; self-improvement; and the ability to overcome obstacles to performance.

Awards Program

Welcome

Gregory L. Gracz, Director
Office of State Employment Relations

Remarks

Shirley Abrahamson, Chief Justice
Wisconsin Supreme Court

Presentation of Honorable Mention Awards

Presentation of Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award

Concluding Remarks

Gregory L. Gracz

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

2011 Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award Recipients

Sylvia Cantu Smith

Department of Administration

Training Officer

Department of Administration

Division of Administrative Services

Sylvia Cantu Smith has touched the lives of many of her coworkers for the better. Whether its her warm and welcoming smile at the orientation for new employees, the countless hours of classes and training she develops or the emotional support she provides for employees who feel they have no where to turn, Sylvia has helped improve the workplace, ourselves and the services to the citizens of Wisconsin. She has also touched many lives in the community through her volunteer work opening doors to education, training and building understanding about different cultures.

Sylvia is truly an unsung heroine who deserves to be recognized for her exemplary performance and contributions to the citizens of the state. She became the Training Officer for DOA and its consolidated agencies, boards and commissions in 2008. Before coming to DOA, Sylvia served in a number of human resource positions in the public sector, where she implemented one of her first training programs. She worked with the employer to provide monthly professional training to support staff who were frontline, first point of contact workers.

Sylvia brings the same determination and energy to her present position. Her training philosophy is: Education and training makes a better workforce and that makes for better business. In the short time she has been at DOA, she has provided training with a wide variety of offerings to suit many interests, being creative in bringing quality training and educational workshops at little or no additional cost.

She says it is important to know what employees want and more important to know what they need. Recognizing the issues facing an aging workforce and the pressures of the current economy, she has developed training in the areas of health and wellness, professional development and financial literacy, resiliency and dealing with change as state government faces significant budget challenges.

Sylvia championed wellness programming at DOA including a Weight Watchers program, Yoga classes and starting the Walk -at-Work Program. Her efforts resulted in a Bronze Award for DOA in the Governor's Worksite Wellness Initiative.

Recognizing the changing workplace, she has put workforce diversity at the forefront. As part of a team effort, she has worked on diversity training in a number of different venues, contributing to the revision of the new Employee Orientation Program to include harassment and diversity training to educate employees and help reduce issues surrounding harassment in the workplace.

She started an HR training series for employees and supervisors, also creating the Supervisors Roundtable, getting supervisors to meet monthly on human resources issues. In addition to all of the training opportunities, Sylvia runs the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). She works tirelessly to make sure employees know they have a place to turn when workplace, personal or family problems arise.

Over the past twenty years, Sylvia has been an active volunteer and community leader. Whether she is fundraising for the American Red Cross as a Board member or raising her teenage niece, Sylvia brings as much energy to her endeavors after work as she does in the workplace. Her contributions to building cultural diversity and opening access to opportunities have been substantial. She was one of the founders of Latinos for Change and Advancement, an organization developed to provide resources for people who do not have a voice. Through this organization, she helped Latinos in the area find educational resources, job opportunities and deal with legal issues. She also served as the President of Wisconsin Women of Color, coordinating conferences in Madison helping to link local women to education, training opportunities and health information. As a Board member for FRIENDS of the Madison Civic Center (now the Overture Center), she helped start the first International Festival, an event that celebrates and shares cultural differences.

Sylvia participates in the School Makes a Difference program with the Madison Metropolitan School District, where yearly she meets with 8th grade students to help them understand the importance of school to their life goals. Sylvia certainly follows her own good advice about the importance of education. She completed her Masters in Business Administration Human Resources in 2003 while continuing to work full-time.

Even with her demanding work and strenuous volunteer life, she has the energy and commitment to be a foster parent. She has opened her heart and home to five different children since 2001, taking many of them as babies and remaining a part of their lives. At work, in the community and in her home, Sylvia has touched many lives for the better.

Sharon Hunter

Department of Public Instruction

*Education Program Supervisor
Department of Public Instruction
Division of Student and School Success*

Sharon Hunter has served the state in various capacities for over 30 years. She stands out as the most devoted, dedicated and motivated public employee around. She's currently the Supervisor for the four regional Wisconsin Educational Opportunity Program offices. Even prior to becoming a supervisor, she was a recognized leader of the Northern WEOP offices for many years.

Sharon has written or co-written several federal grants, including GEAR UP, Educational Talent Search and Upward Bound, bringing millions of dollars into the state, creating jobs and most importantly, offering educational opportunities to disadvantaged, low income and first-generation students. She has led state programs that work with low-income students and families who have the potential to succeed in college. She has certainly encouraged thousands of Wisconsin students to go on to college helping them find the financial resources to pursue higher education. She is respected in her agency and is often the go-to person when anyone needs guidance. She has taken on many responsibilities beyond her job description. The large Federal grant program she runs is just one example. She saw a need in the state for services and realized as a state, we would never be able to fund programs to the extent that would serve all the needy students.

For Sharon, the students she has helped through the programs she has created and managed are the measure of her achievement. What she has done for those students, their families and the taxpayers of our state is foster hope, and offer motivation and tools to make it in our economy.

Sharon is highly respected in WASFAA, the Wisconsin Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. She currently remains active as a member of the Pre-collegiate committee which works to offer programming for professionals working with students preparing for college. In addition, she currently serves as Chair of the Statewide College Goal Sunday taskforce. This initiative was brought to Wisconsin in 2004 and offers a statewide day event for students and families to fill out their financial aid forms.

Sharon is an active member in her community, respected for her work with education issues, students, professionals, her church and the county.

Although all state programs face difficulties at times with funding, she has actively and tirelessly, worked to obtain financial and other resources from many avenues to keep her programs going and to offer even more services and opportunities for students and families. People rely on her expertise and decision-making when attempting to run opportunity programs, they seek her guidance when writing federal or state grants, faced with obstacles in the education or financial aid fields.

Sharon exemplifies the spirit of the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award. She has made countless contributions to our state and she really is one of the unsung heroes. She reminds us, that the students we serve are grateful and the legacy of their success is what really matters.

Honorable Mentions

Jennifer Johnson

*Financial Specialist 2
Department of Corrections
Racine Correctional Institution*

Jennifer Johnson began employment with the Racine Correctional Institution (RCI) in 2007. In her three years of employment, she has demonstrated eagerness to learn and assist others within the institution whether helping with inmate payroll or providing back up to staff members within the business office.

Jennifer is a quick learner and ambitious to improve the quality of services the Department of Corrections provides overall. She was tasked with implementing the Tax Revenue Intercept Program (TRIP) introduced by the Department of Revenue, requiring adherence to various policies and guidelines to comply with tax law. Jennifer studied the policies which govern TRIP and initiated the program, creating detailed instructions outlining the program's guidelines.

The program has been so successful, she has been asked by a member of the Budget and Policy Analyst unit to share her methods with other institutions throughout the state and provide training. This program intercepts debts owed to the institution. She was instrumental in collecting and entering all debts owed to the institution over \$1.00. She has entered over three hundred debtors into the system, collecting over \$2,300.00. This same process was also followed for inmates who owed much greater amounts.

Jennifer is very passionate about this program and proud to have been given the opportunity to achieve something that saves the state tax payers money. To date, much of the funds owed to the State by debtors or inmates have been collected thanks to her efforts with the program. Jennifer takes the time to share information with coworkers and staff to open the lines of communication which benefit the department overall.

Jennifer is an exemplary employee who routinely takes the initiative to get things done, always looking for ways to handle business office tasks more efficiently and effectively, setting a positive example for those around her.

Kari Sanding

*Probation Agent
Department of Corrections
Division of Community Corrections*

After a medical leave and a transfer left Kari the only probation and parole agent in Crawford County, she soldiered on to do home visits, office visits, revocation hearings and other tasks that amounted to a triple workload through most of 2010. She always presents a pleasant demeanor and is a positive force in Crawford County for the people she supervises and the law enforcement community there.

Her years of experience give her an advantage in her job and allow her to be productive when her caseload is three times the normal probation and parole agent. She is productive, compassionate and competent.

Joanne Stumpf

*Program Support Supervisor
Department of Corrections
Division of Adult Institutions*

Joan Stumpf is the unsung hero at Oshkosh Correctional Institution (OCI). In her role as Program Support Supervisor, she works with all divisions and staff throughout the institution. She is involved in numerous committees and Institution wide activities, being instrumental in inmate activities, held in high esteem by both staff and inmates.

One of Joan's most important institution roles is that of Employee Services Program Coordinator. She co-chairs the program keeping it active and vibrant ensuring the committee hosts regular activities for the staff, including the yearly Open House for staff and their families. This program is crucial to staff working in a correctional institution, her efforts greatly contributing to high staff morale.

Joan is creative and often provides assistance and coordination throughout the Institution. She was asked to assume the role of Volunteer Coordinator when institution operations were re-organized due to position elimination. She accepted this task without questions and has developed it into an organized and active program, while also recruiting and training new volunteers.

With an Institution that houses over 2,050 inmates, we depend upon volunteers to supplement programming offered at OSCI. Every year, she organizes a banquet recognizing the volunteers, a recognition well received and evident that the volunteers hold her in high esteem by the often received words of appreciation to her and staff for their acceptance and assistance.

She has become the "Go to" person for many activities throughout the institution, often being asked to assist in projects that she willingly accepts because she is a team player. She is known system wide for her talents, creativity and willingness to assist.

The unit she supervises has been down sized but she manages to keep up with an increased workload. She coordinates the utilization of staff support services to all areas of the institution, including segregation and the inmate housing units. She has worked with staff to develop a system to record inmate disciplinary hearings, assisting the department with potential litigation situations by ensuring accurate information.

Joan is a member of the Victim Awareness Committee assisting with coordination of activities to remember victims during National Crime Victims Week. Throughout the year, the Committee develops fundraisers that involve staff, inmate and the community, donating the funds to Domestic Abuse Shelters.

Joan is an instrumental part of the Employee Recognition Committee and has been a member of the Department of Corrections committee that has developed and provided training for DOC Administrative Support staff for the past several years.

Joan is asked to assist with institution activities on a routine basis, be it developing written training materials for various conferences or providing assistance with events. In addition, she assists with coordinating many of the community service activities in the Institution, serving as the point of contact for community projects performed by inmates at OSCI. Through these projects inmates learn responsibility and the importance of "giving back." She has developed great working relationships with many area service organizations promoting a positive community presence for the Department of Corrections.

Joan has been an employee at the Oshkosh Correctional Institution since 1988. Her dedication and loyalty to the Institution and the staff is commendable. She has set the standard to which many employees should aspire. She is one of our many valuable and appreciated employees. We wonder how we would ever get along without Joan! She helps to make OSCI a great place to work!

Angela Wood

V-Building Unit Director

Department of Corrections

Division of Correctional Institutions

Angela Wood is an exemplary state employee and a dedicated member of the Department of Corrections for over 15 years. She currently serves as the Corrections Unit Supervisor of Oshkosh Correctional Institution's V-Building. This unit primarily serves offenders who are diagnosed with mental illness, cognitive disabilities, or are otherwise determined to be vulnerable to the general inmate population.

Ms. Wood's belief in the mission of the department and her personal goal of coordinating services and continuity of care for inmates led to a vision. She envisioned a program that would assist offenders with mental illness in the transition from incarceration to positive community integration.

Offenders with serious mental health illnesses often find themselves in the cyclic revolving door of offending, institutionalization, release, and reoffending. These offenders are released into significant poverty with little or no community service connections established while also struggling with the ability to navigate the social system and advocate for themselves to obtain services necessary for mental wellness and physical health. Because they do not understand these systems and processes, they are vulnerable to manipulation, re-offense and/or rule violation, and relapse. With these concerns in mind and vision for a better future for these individuals and the State of Wisconsin, the Transitional Outreach Program (TOP) was born.

Ms. Wood specifically designed this program to aid inmates with serious mental health illnesses in their transition from incarceration to the community. DOC's Reentry Vision Statement is to "Promote public safety and offender success from admission to custody through reentry and supervision in the community.

Ms. Wood sought to further this vision statement by designing and targeting reentry initiatives for mentally ill offenders and gaps in continuity of care and to provide comprehensive, statewide, pre-release and post-release services to offenders with chronic mental illness who are returning to the communities. This is accomplished through use of an intensive case management program that provides a continuum of services beginning prior to the inmate's release from prison. Areas of focus include symptom and medication management, community resource awareness, community survival skills, emotions management, working with community providers, and communication skills. The major goals are to minimize criminal recidivism and psychiatric deterioration, as well as to enhance community living skills.

The services of TOP do not stop at release. TOP Outreach Specialists continue to work with program participants for at least one year following release in the community. They continue to make face-to-face contact with TOP offenders, advocate and model social system navigation, assist them in making community contacts, and work with DCC agents in managing extended supervision. They also help bridge the gap between incarceration and community living. By doing so, the department is able to reduce recidivism, improve the quality of life, and making the state of Wisconsin a safer place.

Ms. Wood recognized a need that would both benefit the inmates and the state citizens. She worked diligently for two years to see this program become a reality at the Institution. Since then, it has grown into a well developed program, currently grant funded through a special fund for reentry programs.

Ms. Wood continues to supervise this program as well as provide key leadership in the further developing of TOP initiatives, development, and advancement. She has worked diligently to foster good working relationships in coordinating services with both DOC institutions as well as Department of Health Services, Resource Center (WRC). She was able to solidify collaboration between WRC's program and OSCI's TOP. This cooperation allows the two sites to collaborate on specific cases to ensure that outreach services are provided to offenders with serious mental health illness in the most cost-effective way without compromising on the way in which services are delivered.

Ms. Wood worked with WRC staff to get an informational handbook available to their inmates, whom are pending transfer to OSCI and has initiated some of the referral/intake processes now used between the two sites. She continues to work directly with various institutions to assist in facilitating transfer and transition of inmates with mental health concerns to medium-custody.

In a 2008 letter written to former Governor Jim Doyle, the Wisconsin Council on Mental Health writes, "According to a Department of Corrections study in 2003, 56% of these individuals will return to prison within 6 years of release, 72% of those returning will do so within the first 2 years of release, and approximately 30% will return due to new convictions and the rest are due to revocations. Thus, for a significant number of people with mental illness, the prison system is a revolving door of institutionalization with brief periods in the community."

In contrast, recidivism rates among those offenders with mental illness receiving TOP services released between March 2010 and March 2011 is 9.5%. This is far lower than the state average.

In addition, Ms. Wood is the Institution's coordinator for the Social Security Initiative/pilot program ensuring inmate benefits are applied for, prior to release to the community. This important reentry initiative has enhanced the efforts of

staff as they assist inmates with serious medical and mental health diagnosis, to plan for release to the community. This initiative helps to provide independent living and stability to the released offender in our communities.

Through the years, the department has utilized Ms. Wood's proven leadership abilities for numerous projects and steering committees. She was called upon to serve on the Field Training Officer Committee. This committee was tasked with developing a systematic, cost effective, efficient, and proven training module to enhance current officer training programs. She was also a member of the DOC's National Incident Management System (NIMS) Steering Committee. This committee was responsible to ensure the department was compliant with Presidential directives regarding homeland security and incident management.

Ms. Wood has a variety of experience and knowledge pertaining to inmate programming, specifically Anger Management. Most recently, she was appointed as Co-Chair of the Anger Management Cross Divisional Team. Under her direction, the team was charged with evaluating and developing screening tools, curriculum, treatment standards, and post program evaluations for the department.

Her involvement with these committees has helped make the Department of Corrections a leader among correctional systems and one of the safest in the United States.

Ms. Wood's vision, leadership, knowledge, and advocacy for significantly mentally ill inmates and inmates with cognitive disabilities has resulted in successful programming that not only benefits these offenders, but also breaks the revolving door of re-incarceration and protects Wisconsin citizens from further victimization and criminal activity. Additionally, this programming offers inmates with mental illness the opportunity to learn and practice pro-social skills, positive relationship building, stress-management, conflict resolution, problem solving, personal development, healthy communication, self-advocacy and assertiveness skills that allow them a fresh start in their community.

Ms. Wood has demonstrated exemplary performance, leadership, strength, endurance, compassion, and composure on a daily basis. It is through this daily devotion to duty and dedication to the Department's mission that make Ms. Wood worthy of the Virginia Heart Award.

Christine A. Niehaus

*Park and Recreation Specialist
Department of Natural Resources
Division of Lands*

Christine Niehaus has been employed with the Department of Natural Resources since 1986, currently stationed in Mercer. She worked as a Forester responsible for coordinating and performing timber management and administration on 52,000 acres of state owned land in Iron County until July 2009, when she accepted a transfer as the property manager of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage. This 40,000 acre state owned property is one of the states "crown jewels". Its scenic beauty, remoteness and wild character are unmatched in Wisconsin. Access to the recreational offerings is by watercraft which helps preserve the qualities sought by thousands of users each year.

Chris brings an untiring work ethic and unbridled enthusiasm to her job each and every day. She always remains positive, a true team player continually looking for new avenues to make the recreational offerings more appealing to the customer. During her off duty hours she is an active member of the Northwood's Wetlands and Wildlife Club, and current President of the MECCA Cross-country Ski Club. She is literally the epitome of the "Energizer Bunny" going full speed all the time.

The night of July 27th, 2010 was one beyond description and the course of events which transpired clearly demonstrates Chris's ability to go beyond the bounds of her normal job description, with an unselfish regard for her personal comfort and safety, pushing her self to incredible limits while overcoming hardships to achieve extraordinary results of human safety and environmental protection.

Without much warning, at approximately 8:00pm, a Category Three tornado struck the middle of the Turtle Flambeau Flowage property, ripping a line of damage approximately eight miles long by one and one-half miles wide. The path of the giant storm could not have taken a poorer course, right through the "guts" of the flowage property and through the majority of the campsites. Seventy-five percent of the 70 campsites were affected. At the time of the storm it was not known how many of those sites were occupied and shortly after the storm hit, it became dark.

From the first call Chris and Ranger Josh Kamrowski began putting the wheels of a search and rescue operation into motion. This turned out to be a very long night and an extremely stressful and harrowing experience. Chris and Josh began by coordinating rescue efforts with the Iron County Sheriff's Department, the Office of Emergency Management and several DNR volunteers. Immediately notification of injuries was received and the only method to rescue these folks

was by water. Unfortunately the boat access sites were blocked by fallen trees. A private landing was found and utilized by the rescue crews. This was a time where cool heads were needed.

Throughout the night Chris, Josh and other rescue personnel worked on evacuating injured campers needing help, clearing roads, and checking other campsites for injuries. The environmental conditions made it even more difficult as it was dark, raining, and many trees were in the water, with others dangerously hung up on other trees, with the threat of coming down at any time.

At approximately 3:00am rescue operations were halted until sunup. At the next morning's briefing, Chris outlined the key priorities to operations for the day. She arranged a strategy to complete the search, rescue and evacuation operations. The Incident Command System was activated, and crews were mobilized. Chris formed a very effective strategy by dividing the damaged area into three divisions, dividing the boats and personnel evenly between those divisions and assigning oversight for each one, to the ones familiar with the Incident Management System. This was a very critical decision she made which proved very effective.

By early evening all search / assessment teams were off the water and reporting in. They had visited each site within the damaged area and assisted visitors with their personal items. During the day many calls were received asking for updates on friends, relatives and considerable local media interested. Chris handled all this pressure like it was an everyday occurrence. Approximately forty-eight hours into the incident they seemed to have accomplished the key priorities. The initial shock and awe had worn off, the injured were rescued / treated and they were entering the clean up phase of the operations. This storm left some injured visitors that if not for the quick, timely response by Chris and her staff, there could easily have been reported fatalities.

This was no ordinary event. The complexion of the flowage has, for the foreseeable future changed. We plan and train for emergencies such as these but at the critical time cooler heads are needed. Chris stepped into the role of incident commander from the time she received the first call handling all with professional poise while operating under extreme duress and never missed a beat. From the rescue operations right into the damage assessment and recovery it was a seamless transition all based on personal self-confidence of her abilities.

Gwen S. Carr

*US 41 Outreach Coordinator and NE Region Tribal Liaison
Department of Transportation
Division of Systems Development*

Gwen has worked in this position in the NE Region close to three years. In that time she has been instrumental in helping Native American Women and other minority owned businesses from many areas around the State, get their Disadvantaged Business Enterprise certification (DBE), which in turn assisted many of them in getting sub-contracts on the US 41 corridor expansion project.

One example in particular is Big Horn Trucking. Gwen helped them prepare the forms in order to be certified as a DBE trucking firm. Once certified she worked with them on the quoting process. In their first year they turned in over a half million dollars worth of contracts. Their second year, they turned in almost a million dollars worth of contracts and not only bought two more trucks but had around sixty trucks leased to them. Another customer, one of the women owned businesses tried for about five years to get her DBE certification, after a short time working with Gwen to correct her paperwork, she received her DBE.

While working with the businesses, Gwen was also at the center of coordinating the CSD (Community Sensitive Design) work for the Lac butte des Mort bridge, and the Brown County CSD. She kept a US 41 presence attending all the major conferences and the community functions to keep everyone informed of the work progress on the US 41 project. The DBE participation in the NE Region was historically 0-3%. With Gwen and the Outreach Office's help, now is averaging around 16% with a high of 21.3%

Jean Ann Stronach

*Payroll and Benefits Specialist
Department of Transportation
Division of State Patrol*

Jean Ann routinely conducts her daily business with energy, passion, diligence and true dedication. Staff reductions over the past several years have pulled her in many directions resulting in her performing the duties of several people. As a rule, Jean Ann puts others first! Requests for her assistance are always met with a smile and unparalleled energy.

Jean Ann was instrumental at the Regional level during the implementation of new Traffic and Criminal Software used by Troopers and Inspectors. This software enables various reports to be completed electronically by Troopers and Inspectors and transferred electronically to different agencies. Her efforts helped to identify and correct discrepancies in the new software program regarding the review and approval of hundreds of crash reports.

Jean Ann was also instrumental in developing procedures at the Regional level for the new Mobile Data Computer software used in the field for tracking and organizing crash related information seen and reviewed by multiple agencies.

Jean Ann has been the key component in supporting employees, who are members of the Wisconsin Guard and Reserve, activated for military service since 9/11. Jean Ann singularly maintained contact with family members of deployed employees providing them with information pertaining to insurance, pay and other benefits. She often offered to babysit to allow the spouses of deployed members to shop or just, "getaway". Her selfless efforts clearly went outside the scope of her responsibilities demonstrating her true compassion for her fellow coworkers. Her efforts enabled family members of deployed employees to focus on increased responsibilities at home. Jean Ann exemplifies the phrase, "Unsung Hero". I only echo the thoughts and comments of her coworkers and gladly and proudly nominate Jean Ann.

Mary Jo Cleaver

*School Administration Consultant
Department of Public Instruction
Division of Finance and Management*

Mary Jo Cleaver is an exemplary state employee who works hard, providing outstanding public service to thousands of parents of school-aged children in Wisconsin.

Mary Jo began her career with the Department of Public Instruction in 1975. She was a quick study and a reliable asset soon becoming the administrative rules coordinator for the agency. She displayed a knack for analyzing complex problems and was soon promoted to policy and budget analyst. She quickly rose to a senior position within that unit and was responsible for evaluating multi-layered budget and legislative program issues affecting the State's elementary and secondary schools. During this time, Mary Jo organized the first school supplies drive at DPI, which has become an annual event resulting in the donations of thousands of school supplies to children who start school with few resources of their own.

Mary Jo's supervisors recognized her talents and promoted her to the top of the school administration consultant ranks in 1998. Since that time, she has served as the DPI's administrator of the public school open enrollment program. In this position, Mary Jo has worked closely with hundreds of school district administrators, public school principals, school board members and state legislators from across Wisconsin to implement public school choice. She has served as the department's spokesperson at legislative hearings, has responded to numerous press inquiries, and has trained thousands of school district personnel on the rules and statutes governing open enrollment. Perhaps the most important part of Mary Jo's job is the time she spends on the phone counseling thousands of parents who turn to her for help to navigate unfamiliar rules and regulations.

Although Mary Jo has had a rewarding career at DPI for thirty-five years and counting, she's not one to rest on her laurels. Her daughter recently competed in the New York City and Boston Marathons. Mary Jo cheered her on and decided she should take up running and has been training to run her first half-marathon this year. Everyone who works with her knows she will make it with flying colors. Virginia Hart would be proud to know that an award bearing her name honors a true public servant like Mary Jo Cleaver.

Past Award Recipients

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

Award Program Coordinator

Dee Surillo

Award Committee

Mary Becker
Ed Kehl
Louise Karpinski

Nominees for 2011

Eileen Abrams, PSY.D.
Susan Buroker
Sylvia Cantu Smith
Gwen S. Carr
Mary Celentani
Mary Jo Cleaver
Susan K. Cook
Amy Coughlin
Kathy Doran
Becky Fry
Rachel Gallagher
Joan Gerl
Sue Grady
Bonnie Hudziak-Oldenburg
Sharon Hunter
Jennifer Johnson
Heidi King
Yolanda McGowan
Susan Miller
Katie Mueller
Cynthia Neuhauser
Christine A. Niehaus
Nancy Olig
Dr. Fabienne Ouapou-Lena
Cynthia J. Partridge
Marie Peterson
Cate Rahmlow
Maria Redmond
Anne Reshadi
Kari Sanding
Peg Schmitt
Jean Ann Stronach
Joanne Stumpf
Dawn Vick
Angela Wood

Office of State Employment Relations

A proud supporter of the
**Virginia Hart
Special Recognition Awards**



The Wisconsin Department of Administration
embraces the spirit of the
Virginia Hart Special Recognition Awards.



*Congratulations to all of
this year's nominees*

**Congratulations to all the Virginia Hart
Award Nominees!**



Women's Council
· Wisconsin ·

The 2011 Award Program and Reception
is underwritten by the Women's Council

*Congratulations Sharon Hunter on
receiving the Virginia Hart Special
Recognition Award, Mary Jo Cleaver on
receiving honorable mention, and all of this
year's nominees and award recipients.*



Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
Tony Evers, PhD, State Superintendent



Friends of Virginia Hart

We have joined with other Wisconsin leaders to create an endowment to keep the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award alive. We hope you will join us.

Virginia Hart was Wisconsin's first woman cabinet member. She also served as Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing, Chairperson of the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, and Chairperson of the Labor and Industry Review Commission. On March 24, 2007, Virginia Hart passed away at the age of 92.

Upon her 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. The Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award 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 obstacles to performance. The recipient is recognized at an award ceremony with a plaque and cash award. With the generous help of contributors, the fund has been able to sustain the program for 28 years. Help us establish an endowment so the award will live on for years to come.

Although we have met our original \$20,000 fundraising goal, we still need your support. With the current economy, our endowment has not met financial expectations. We are hoping to raise an additional \$2,000 to ensure the endowment remains untouched

We are asking you to make a tax-deductible donation. By joining the Friends of Virginia Hart, you will help ensure her legacy continues and that women in Wisconsin State service are recognized for their contributions.

Founders Circle

Mayor Dave Cieslewicz	Paulette Harder	Eileen Mershart
Jennifer Donnelly	Celia Jackson	Mary Louise Munts
Sheehan Donoghue	Ed Kehl	Mary Panzer
Roberta Gassman	Christine Lidbury	Hannah Rosenthal
Henry Hart	Governor Patrick Lucey	Karen Timberlake
Jesse & Nancy Hart Hernandez		

Virginia Hart Platinum Sponsor (\$1000 or more)



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In Government**

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*Benjamin and
Judith Hart*



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Friends of Virginia Hart

The Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award is available because of generous contributors.

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Your name will appear annually in the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award event program.

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Name or organization logo will appear annually in the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Awards event program.

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How would you like your name to appear in the Award Program?

I am interested in hearing about women's networking opportunities.

Please make checks payable to: Wisconsin Women's Network

Return this card with your check to: Friends of Virginia Hart c/o OSER 101 E. Wilson St. 4th Floor, PO Box 7855, Madison, WI 53707-7855. The fiscal agent for the Friends of Virginia Hart is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

For more information, please contact Jennifer Gebert, Office of State Employment Relations, at (608) 267-2155 or email Jennifer.Gebert@Wisconsin.gov.