

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED ADMINISTRATIVE/PROFESSIONAL SERVICE AWARD



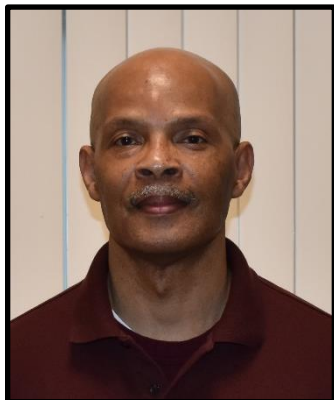
Sarah Smith
Fiscal Control Specialist/SOAR Stakeholder Lead
Federal Aviation Administration

Sarah is the Fiscal Control Specialist for the FAA, Central Region Office of Airports. Sarah is the connection between our regional staff and 390 airports in the four-state region. Because of her well-known skills, she was recruited to help develop a grant database tool know as SOAR (System of Airports Reporting). This national database produces and monitors thousands of federal grants issued to airport sponsors.

In 2020, the FAA Office of Airports was challenged with new funding programs while experiencing significant interruptions to our normal workflow. Congressional action added \$10.4 Billion dollars to our annual grants program of \$3.25 Billion. These pandemic relief funds came with new requirements and short deadlines. With employees forced into a remote work environment, we faced a new challenge of executing traditional paper based grants. We had just begun to explore a digital grant format and did not have the necessary processes in place prior to the pandemic. In April of 2020, Sarah began working in her SOAR capacity to assist in developing an electronic grant process that could distribute the document for electronic signature. Sarah worked to make essential updates to our SOAR database. Numerous statutory directives in the CARES legislation necessitated these updates. This required national coordination to understand the impacts of the legislation, how to incorporate and program these into the existing SOAR system, test the changes, and then train ARP users on these changes and enhancements. These modifications allowed ARP to distribute \$10B of CARES act funds a few weeks after the legislation was signed into law.

Sarah immediately became one of the national resource experts for all things related to the electronic signature (eSign) process and updates to the SOAR programs. She provided training sessions to educate our employees and fielded questions from our Airport Sponsors regarding the new processes. Sarah was hands-on for over 4,007 grants in 2021. (For reference, we typically issue 1,900 grants per year.) eSign has become very popular with our airport sponsors and facilitates mandatory remote working conditions across the country for FAA personnel and the airports themselves.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED CLERICAL AWARD**



Robert Bennett
Immigration Services Assistant
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's
National Benefits Center

Robert Bennett distinguished himself during FY2020 serving as an Immigration Services Assistant (ISA) in the National Benefits Center's (NBC) Adjudications Division 3, as one of two clerical staff assigned to support over 100 officers and supervisors. This division grants employment benefits to over 500,000 applicants every year. It is critical that pending applications are available to officers. Assuring that pending files are ordered and readily available is one of Robert's normal operational duties.

Robert distinguished himself by going above and beyond during the COVID operational situation. When all NBC staff were ordered to mandatory telework, Robert was one of the last people to leave the building and was the first person in the Division to volunteer to return to the office full-time following the mandatory telework order. He has been instrumental in the ongoing smooth functioning of his division and the communication between other divisions at the NBC.

Robert was designated as the primary point of contact for the file staging area. This was the centralized location designated for officers to pick up and return files that allows the officer to minimize the amount of time they are in the building. Robert's efforts reduced the amount of time an individual officer would have to spend in the building by over 50%, thereby significantly reducing the possibility of officers being exposed to COVID-19. During COVID operations, paper file staging was expanded from one to two rooms due to the demand. Robert created a description and diagram of the expansion. He made process recommendations adopted immediately by management and led the expansion move efficiently, resulting in minimal disruption to all.

Robert provided special assistance to staff with underlying health conditions. He arranged curbside pick-up and return to minimize entering the building at all. He assembled requested files, ensured they were packaged according to strict security protocols and securely delivered to an externally assigned, socially distanced approved, drop-off and return zone. Robert safeguarded returned cases and efficiently distributed to appropriate locations without delayed processing.

His efforts reach far beyond his division and is a very positive reflection on the NBC and USCIS.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED COMMUNITY SERVICE AWARD**



Jaime Habersat

***Loss Prevention Team – Fleet Service Representative
General Services Administration***

Jaime Habersat seems to always be doing some form of community service. She has deployed to 14 disasters (including Hurricane Harvey, floods in St. Louis, tornadoes in Kansas, and a volcano eruption in Hawaii) as part of Team Rubicon, an organization that utilizes the skills and experiences of military veterans with first responders to rapidly deploy emergency response teams. She is also a volunteer with Operation BBQ relief — an organization that provides hot meals to communities in need — where she helps in the warehouse and prepares trailers for deployment to devastated areas. Through GSA and FEMA, she went to Puerto Rico to assist with hurricane relief. She also volunteers with her church in various capacities.

Jaime did not let the pandemic and trying times of 2020 prevent her from serving the community. With limited ability to respond to disasters, she began working with Baby Grace to provide diapers and wipes to families in need. With restrictions on purchases and limited store supplies, she was able to work with a company willing to ship needed supplies directly to churches and homes. In 2020, the Raymore Christian Church chapter of Baby Grace, with Jaime's help, served an average of 80 families each month. She helped distribute a total of 22,604 diapers to families and hosted three open houses for families needing clothing, toys, blankets, bottles, bibs and other necessities. She spent many hours ordering, sorting, compiling and figuring out how to provide for the community in a safe way.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED DIVERSITY AWARD**



Terry James

***Peer Support Specialist
Department of Veterans Affairs
Kansas City Veterans Affairs Medical Center***

Terry James is currently a Peer Support Specialist at the Kansas City VA Medical Center in the PTSD clinic at the Honor Annex. In this role he assists Veterans navigating the challenges of therapy and struggles of everyday life. He was also recently recognized as KCVA 2020 Peer Support Specialist of the Year.

Mr. James also served as the KCVA acting Employee Experience Officer from July 2020 through February 2021. Prior to coming to KCVA, Mr. James worked at the Veterans Benefit Administrations Chicago regional office assisting Veterans with claims for disability. He then went on to serve at the VA San Diego Healthcare System in the Prosthetic Department before moving on to work as a Health Benefit and Enrollment advisor for the registration department.

Prior to the VA, Terry served in the United States Marine Corp as an Infantryman, where he would deploy three times to Iraq. During his first deployment LCpl James served as a rifleman with First Platoon, Lima Company, Third Battalion, First Marines – the famous Thundering Third (3/1). Lima Company was the tip of the spear during the liberation of Fallujah and during the battle of Fallujah, LCpl James received a Purple Heart for his actions. The heroic actions of Lima Company are well documented in the book “We Were One: Shoulder to Shoulder with the Marines Who Took Fallujah”.

Terry strives on making the workplace more enjoyable for internal and external customers. He has a knack for relating to individuals on different levels and ensuring every individual he meets feels the visit was meaningful. Terry has a saying “the only way to change the culture is to speak up and speak out”.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED LEADERSHIP AWARD**



Ann Michelle Konopasek-Morris
Nurse Manager Specialty Clinics MSSC
Kansas City VA Medical Center

Ann (Michelle) Konopasek-Morris is Specialty Clinics Nurse Manager for Medical Subspecialty. Her clinics include 8 different specialties and three geographic areas at the Linwood campus. She attended nursing school with her sister and they both obtained their nursing degrees in May 2011. She has worked for the Kansas City VA for over 5 years. Her clinical experience with KCVA includes Neurology Care Coordinator and PCU staff nurse. Before joining the KCVA in November 2015, she worked for a long-term acute care facility in the private sector as a staff nurse, nursing supervisor, and infection control nurse.

Michelle strives to constantly improve processes in the Specialty Clinics, with the ultimate goal of improving overall employee satisfaction and the veteran experience. All Employee Survey scores have steadily risen since she has been Specialty Clinics Nurse Manager. Michelle chooses to lead by example and has obtained her Green Belt Certification while motivating and facilitating her staff to obtain their certifications as well.

Michelle has a love of fashion and her first career was spent working as District Manager for various retail stores including Banana Republic. Her hobbies include shopping, traveling to tropical destinations, and taking quick road trips with her husband. She is blessed with four children and three grandchildren (with one more on the way!). She also has a 10-year-old German Shepherd named Maynard. She is honored to accept this FEB Leadership award today.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**



Connie Hisey

***Management and Program Analyst
Social Security Administration***

This award recognizes the extraordinary contributions of Connie Hisey during her nearly 40 years of federal service with the Social Security Administration. Throughout her career, customer service has been Connie's focal point. She began her career with the Agency as a typist in the Mid-America Program Service Center and dedicated the last 15 years of her distinguished career to the Security and Integrity Team, serving customers across the Kansas City Region (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska).

Her peers and customers recognize Connie for her strong technical expertise in the Security and Integrity realm, including helping to standardize internal Agency audits via our formal onsite security reviews. These reviews encompass areas of Acquisitions and Financial Responsibilities, Internal Employee Integrity Reviews, Social Security Number Processes, and Systems Security. In her role, Connie provides support and oversight of reviews for the largest Program Service Center and Workload Support Unit in our Agency, a growing Teleservice Center, 68 Field Offices, Disability Determination Service offices in four states, Regional Office, the Agency's only National Records Center, and a national Interactive Video Technology Training Studio.

Connie's impact spreads beyond the Kansas City Region, helping to mitigate our security vulnerabilities, protecting critical Personally Identifiable Information, and preserving the public's trust in the vital information and systems to which we are entrusted. In recognition of her work, Connie has received numerous Agency awards throughout her career.

Connie has demonstrated flexibility and resiliency throughout her career. She remains calm and poised even in the most difficult situations. Connie is service-minded and demonstrates this through her unwavering support to front line managers and employees. Connie's kindness and consistent willingness to put others first is her hallmark within the Social Security Administration.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD**



Douglas Palmer
Lead Communications Specialist
Kansas City VA Medical Center

Douglas Palmer was born in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, the youngest of 4 children, into an Army family. Raised in Carrollton, Missouri, upon graduation from high school, he immediately entered the United States Marine Corps in 1984. His path took him into the Military Police field as he had the desire to not only serve his country, but also to protect and serve his fellow man.

After graduating boot camp and military police school, he was stationed at MCAS Yuma, Camp HM Smith and MCAS Kaneohe Bay where he honed his law enforcement career. After almost 10 years in the Marines, he had been diagnosed with a medical conviction that resulted in him losing a portion of his eyesight and being medically discharged. Not giving up on his dream of law informant, he came back to the Kansas City area started work for the Clay County Sheriff Department as a Dispatcher. During the next 10 years he worked for Clay County Sheriff Department, Central Lane 911 (Eugene, OR) and the Liberty Missouri Police Department.

In 2003, he found that the Kansas City Veterans Hospital was starting a new program for the VA Police. Seizing the opportunity to not only continue to protect and serve, he saw the opportunity to give back to the veterans that he had served with. He applied, interviewed and accepted a position with the VA Police. Within weeks of being hired, he used his years of experience law enforcement in policing and dispatching design a training program and training all the new dispatchers. Within weeks he was assigned numerous collateral duties to include statically analysis, payroll, purchasing and other duties. During his career he has worn many hats and titles, but his true love and passion has been dispatching and the opportunity to help his fellow veterans.

After retirement, he plans to travel with his wife exploring the states that they have not yet visited and take several more cruises in the eastern Caribbean.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED MILITARY/MILITARY SUPPORT AWARD**



Ray Wheeler
Regional Security & Integrity Specialist
Social Security Administration

Ray Wheeler is a Regional Security and Integrity Specialist in the Social Security Administration's Center for Automation, Security and Integrity. During his 12-year federal civilian career in the Kansas City Region (Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska), Ray has taken a service first approach, demonstrating a daily commitment to teamwork and sincere care for his customers and peers.

However you define service, Ray fits the bill. Concurrent with his civilian career, Ray serves as a Tech Sergeant (E6) in the Missouri Air National Guard Reserve (139th Airlift Wing) in St. Joseph, Missouri. As part of Ray's 17-year military career, he has provided three years of active duty service in the United States Air Force, with the remaining 14 years as a Reservist in the Air Force Reserve and Missouri Air National Guard.

From April 2020 to September 2020, Ray served active duty as an Occupational Safety Apprentice, including three months of service specifically in support of the COVID-19 pandemic. Ray worked closely with security forces and medical staff to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for over 2,000 base personnel. When duty called, Ray again answered; the National Guard recently activated Ray, and he is currently assisting with the FEMA COVID-19 Vaccination Mission across the State of Missouri.

Ray displays his unwavering commitment to public service on a daily basis, both through his military career and as a representative of the Social Security Administration. His perseverance, timely and responsive military and civilian service, and dedication to his family and peers is an inspiration.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SAFETY AWARD**



Andy Bailey
Warning Coordination Meteorologist
Weather Forecast Office
National Weather Service

Andy Bailey is the Warning Coordination Meteorologist (WCM) for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA’s) National Weather Service (NWS) Kansas City, located in Pleasant Hill, MO. His work over the last 14 years partnering with Emergency Management, local, state, and federal law enforcement, fire departments, schools, hospitals, businesses, and the general public has saved lives and property across a 44-county area in Kansas and Missouri.

In addition, he has served across the US and abroad to improve outcomes from natural disasters of all types, in particular for large venues like the Kansas Speedway and our professional sports stadiums in the greater Kansas City area and across the US. Andy led the staff in partner engagement and relationship building to enhance life-saving messages during all types of severe weather events. He mentored operational staff members to lead partner training in programs such as “StormReady,” “Project Community Alert,” “Skywarn Spotter Training”, and “Weather Ready Nation Ambassador.”

When the COVID-19 pandemic threatened not only NWS ability to provide life-saving services, but also the health and safety of the NWS Kansas City staff, Andy sought solutions to keep everyone safe and continue 24-hour operations. As a result of his leadership, the Weather Forecast Office (WFO) was able to provide all services and backup neighboring offices when they had COVID-19 impacts. When local, county, and state emergency management officials needed specific weather information to conduct critical COVID-19 testing, Andy developed tailored services to keep testers and equipment safe during damaging thunderstorms and extreme cold events this past year. As a result, there were no reports of injuries to workers or damage to testing structures.

Andy’s outstanding public service in weather events from blizzards, to tornadoes, flash floods and heat waves, has been exemplary and saved many lives across the greater Kansas City metropolitan area and beyond.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED TEAM AWARD

**Kansas City National Payment Center for Excellence
Department of Treasury- Bureau of Fiscal Service**



The Bureau of the Fiscal Service, Kansas City National Payment Center of Excellence (NPCE) provides world-wide disbursement services on behalf of Federal Agencies. In 2020, the NPCE disbursed **1.34 billion payments** valued at **\$4.95 trillion dollars**. A core value of the NPCE is providing outstanding customer service to Federal Agencies and the American public. This outstanding customer service was demonstrated through responding to a global pandemic while at the same time disbursing historic volumes of payments resulting from the passage of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which was signed into law on March 27, 2020. This legislation provided direct economic assistance for American workers, families, and small businesses in the form of Economic Impact Payments (EIP1). Within the first two months, over 162.7 million EIP payments totaling more than \$272.3 billion dollars was disbursed to the American public.

Subsequently, as part of the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2020, the NPCE received a second round of Economic Impact Payments (EIP2). Within two days of the legislation passing, the NPCE disbursed 113.1 million electronic payments totaling \$112.3 billion dollars in less than seven hours. This effort marked a historic moment for the entire financial industry as no other commercial or federal entity had ever disbursed this size of payment volume on a single disbursement day.

Further, both EIP1 and EIP2 included check payments which required NPCE frontline essential employees to come onsite. To ensure the check payments were issued as quickly as possible, the dedicated check production staff worked 10-hour days, 6 days per week that spanned weekends and holidays.

The improvements in customer service were demonstrated by the accelerated time in which the payments were issued to the millions of Americans who were in dire need of financial relief.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED TECHNICAL AWARD**



Scott Paschen
Statistician
***U.S. Department of Agriculture-
Risk Management Agency***

Scott Paschen has spent his entire 26-year Federal career as a statistician in the Actuarial Branch of USDA's Risk Management Agency (RMA). Scott is the first person that people turn to when a complex technical problem arises, and he is always willing and ready to share information and knowledge for the common development of all staff. Through innovative techniques, Scott has made RMA more accurate and efficient by reducing errors through his detailed validation process, improving the actuarial rate review process for regional offices around the country, and improving the productivity of peers around him by providing training to all employees.

Scott's validation process reviews millions of data points quickly and efficiently and reduces possible errors. This would be impossible without Scott's technical skillset. He has also improved the actuarial rate review process by creating summary reports that highlight annual changes of actuarial data including rating components, yields, special provision statements, and program dates. These reports help regional offices across the country review the millions of data points efficiently and accurately.

Scott has also taken on the task of training new employees on RMA database structures and query writing techniques to help provide meaningful analysis to decision makers. He teaches weekly classes on Structured Query Language (SQL) coding and interfacing with RMA policy level data to not only new employees, but also other branches within Product Management. This improves efficiency and effectiveness of all employees of RMA.

Because of his expertise, RMA has saved thousands of labor hours that had previously been used reviewing millions of actuarial data points. This has led to a significant reduction in errors, improved efficiency across the agency, and given RMA a trusted reputation among our nation's farmers and ranchers.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED TRADE/CRAFT AWARD



Zach Homan
HVAC Supervisor
Kansas City VA Medical Center

Mr. Zachary Homan serves as our HVAC supervisor of 11 employees and oversees Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning systems for KCVA campuses. This is a 24/7 operation covering over 850,000 net square feet with buildings built in the 1950s and 1970s. Zach follows in his parent's footsteps as multiple generations of Homans have worked for the VA.

Mr. Homan retired from the VA Hospital in 2008 where he was also an HVAC Supervisor. Mrs. Homan retired from the VA Hospital in 2017 as physical therapist. Zach started his career with the VA in 2006 as a laborer for the grounds crew. He diligently worked his way through multiple facility positions gaining knowledge, experience, and respect from facility leaders as: Grounds Work Leader, Maintenance Worker, HVAC Mechanic, HVAC Work Leader, and now as the HVAC Supervisor. During his time with facilities, Zach was able to earn his Associate's Degree in HVAC at MCC Business & Technology.

Mr. Steve Homan, a well-respected Veteran, and previous employee of the VA has given Zach a strong connection to the VA and the veteran community. Zach's commitment and resiliency as a leader to his crew and our veterans, while always modeling VA's ICARE Values, illustrates to us all what it means to be the healthcare systems veterans choose and trust.

**UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT
DISTINGUISHED VALOR - AWARD**



Arthur Whittaker
Government Information Specialist
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's
National Records Center

In January of 2021, Arthur Whittaker, a Government Information Specialist with U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service's National Records Center and a Marine Corp veteran, was one of the two Good Samaritans recognized by the Independence Police Department for leaping into action in the face of life-threatening danger.

Arthur was selfless in responding to a tense and potentially dangerous situation at the Independence Mall in Independence, Missouri. Several individuals were involved in an argument in the crowded mall, the argument turned physical and escalated further when one of the men started waving what turned out to be a fake gun and pointed it at a customer. Given several recent incidents at the mall, panic among bystanders was immediate as they had concerns for their personal safety. Arthur courageously stepped in and effectively diffused the situation by subduing two of the individuals involved. Along with another Good Samaritan, a former police officer, these two assisted in calming others at the scene until officers arrived and took those involved into custody.

Arthur Whitaker received a Certificate of Appreciation and a challenge coin from the Independence Police Department for his valiant and courageous efforts.