

City's best and brightest lauded

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER
JHUBBED@ECCENTRIC.COM

The city of Farmington Hills honored its best and brightest Jan. 17 during its 24th Annual Employee Awards Ceremony.

This is the first year officials have held the event in the William Costick Activities Center. It was moved from City Hall because of the large number of employees honored, city manager Steve Brock said.

Forty employees, most from the police and fire departments, received five-year awards, while 17 were honored for 25 years of service. More than 50 received gifts for 10, 15 and 20 years with the city.

One of those honored for a quarter century of employment, Leonard Chapman, also received accolades among the year's Outstanding Employees. First employed as an engineering aide in 1974, he has moved up in rank to his current post as plan examiner in the Building Division.

"Leonard exhibits outstanding rapport with citizens and contractors," Brock said. "His job as plan examiner calls for patience and understanding with people and in this, he excels."

Chapman's good humor with the public and co-workers alike may lie in a secret he shared about the way he starts every day. He said Monday his wife, Freda, sends him off to work every morning with a smile, a

kiss and a hug, to start his day out right.

"This is for you, too," he said, smiling down at her from the podium.

Carolyn Elliot was also singled out for her cheerful attitude and professionalism. Hired in 1985 as a clerk typist, she was promoted to her current position as contract technician in 1991.

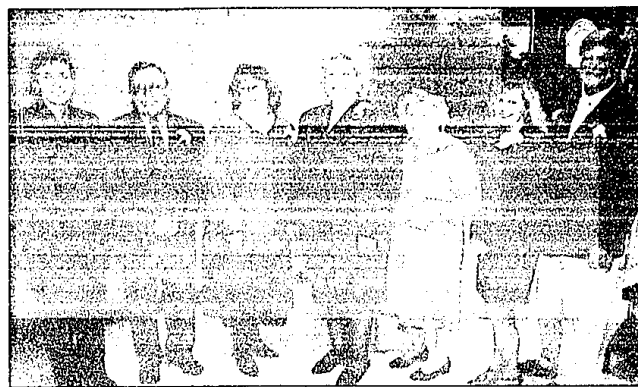
"No matter how hectic the work day becomes, Carolyn is always cheerful, thorough and professional," Brock said. "No job is too big or too small for Carolyn to take on, with a smile."

One employee who nominated her wrote, "Every time I call the DPW and speak with her, my day has been brightened. She is always bright, cheery and her laugh is infectious."

"What can I do for you?" has been the hallmark of Senior Human Resource Analyst Mary LaPorte's career. Hired on as a part-time human resources staffer, she became the city's first full-time personnel analyst in 1989, researching issues surrounding benefits, insurance and other employee concerns.

"Mary is the unsung hero of HR, where she puts extra work and effort into the Rolling in the Hills employee newsletter and the award-winning safety committee," said Brock. "Mary has been a rock for the department in a year of significant change."

What's more, Brock noted with a smile, she has been involved in the hiring of many Hills employ-



Recognize: Honored at the Jan. 17 city of Farmington Hills Employee Recognition Ceremony were (left to right): Richelle Hall, Firefighter of the Year, Leonard Chapman, Carolyn Elliot, Mary LaPorte, Kathleen McClellan, Laura Varga, all Outstanding Employees and Rob Clarkson, Employee of the Year.

ees — including him — and coordinates the Employee Awards program at which she was honored.

Working for the Engineering Division has been a second career for Kathleen McClellan. After retiring from Dayton Hudson where she had worked 23 years, she hired on as a regular part-time clerk typist in 1990.

"As an employee, Kathleen embodies all of the positive attributes an employer would seek, including dedicated, capable and customer-service oriented," Brock commented. "She always comes to work with a smile on her face. She is a joy that we sometimes take for

granted."

While her job might not be glamorous, she remains calm, collected and on task, even during difficult times. Brock added, "Her steady performance during even the most difficult circumstances contributes to the high productivity of the Engineering Division."

Moving up the ranks in the Police Department's clerical department, Laura Varga was promoted from clerk typist to administration secretary in August of 1998. Described as a "team player," Brock said she willingly takes on extra duties to assist anyone who needs help.

"She donates her time to ensure the success of the Police Open House and the golf outing fund-raiser of the Police Benevolent Association," Brock said. "She has distinguished herself in a short period of time as one of the city's most diligent employees."

In addition to her regular duties, he said, she has offered her expert skills in editing and proof-reading to numerous members of the department, assisting with preparation of graduate school papers, theses and other projects.

Peers honor top employee

BY JONI HUBBED
STAFF WRITER
JHUBBED@ECCENTRIC.COM

It may not have the pizzazz of Motown Records, but Robb Clarkson is perfectly happy with his job as director of Farmington Hills' William Costick Center.

His success has been recognized by his peers, in his selection as the city's 1999 Employee of the Year. While somewhat surprised, Clarkson happily accepted the honor.

At the award ceremony held Jan. 17 at the Center, he remarked, "I almost feel guilty accepting an award for doing a job I love so much."



Robb Clarkson

Of course, nothing good ever comes without a price, and for him, it was some good-natured ribbing by the Center's employees. Like the life-size, cardboard cutout of Superman, with Clarkson's face. Or the dozens of event programs taped up in his office the day after the ceremony.

"That's been just part of the overwhelming response he's experienced since being notified of the honor in December. E-mails, congratulatory cards and well wishes have flooded his office, which Clarkson said is typical of city staff.

"Everyone supports, helps and respects each other," he said. "The way people work together and communicate is outstanding."

That atmosphere pervades the Costick Center, where Clarkson initiated an "open door" policy when he first hired on in July of 1996. After being involved with planning events for the record company and directing the Livonia and Dearborn Athletic Clubs, the Hills job appeared to be the right opportunity at the right time.

City officials bought the building from the Sisters of Mercy in 1994 and had embarked on an ambitious plan to renovate the 34-year-old conference center.

"I guess it was the challenge," Clarkson said of his decision to take the job. "The potential here was just incredible. I saw tremendous possibilities as to where it could go and what could happen with it."

The city has been supportive and aggressive with the on-going project, which Clarkson estimates has cost more than \$10 million so far. The 70,000-square-foot facility houses a variety of recreation programs, senior services including congregational dining and activities and after school programs for youth.

It includes meeting spaces that range in size from 500 to 7,000 square feet, a full-sized gymnasium with a stage, a 25-meter pool and a large commercial kitchen. The Costick hosts civic events, banquets, trade shows and seminars. One of Clarkson's goals is to encourage more use by outside organizations.

His efforts to promote the facility have not gone unnoticed. In making the award presentation Monday, City Manager Steve Brock said, "We continually receive letters and phone calls from both residents and community agencies, as well as city staff, complimenting him on how gracious and helpful he is in scheduling, planning, coordinating and implementing various events."

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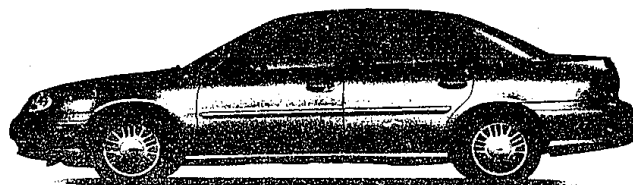
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