OWNERSHIP
TEAMWORK
SAFETY
INTEGRITY
RESPECT
OWNERSHIP

SALT OF THE EARTH

TEAMWORK
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

FIFTH ANNUAL
SALT OF THE EARTH AWARDS CEREMONY
NOVEMBER 6TH, 2020
A MESSAGE FROM SEAN

I am honored to present to you the 22 Salt of the Earth award winners for FY20. This year’s honorees have made significant contributions across the organization. Their embodiment of our core values is inspiring, and they are more than deserving of the highest Nuclear Waste Partnership employee recognition award.

It is especially impressive that these award winners were nominated by those who know them best, their co-workers, who see their hard work and dedication on a daily basis and took the time to nominate them.

While they don’t go above and beyond because they are seeking recognition, each of these exceptional employees should feel a great sense of pride in the very important part they play at WIPP, a project that is critical to our nation. Thank you for everything you do to ensure our success!

Sean Dunagan
President and Project Manager
Nuclear Waste Partnership
**SAFETY**

**RICHARD BRUGMAN - C&IP**

Richard Brugman maintains that construction safety is the top priority for his projects. He leads by example, whether walking down a construction site for environmental concerns and potential hazards or opening a meeting with a safety lesson from his own considerable past experiences. A team member need not ever worry that cost, schedule pressure or the politics of the moment will compromise worker safety or health, since safety is always a top priority and guiding value. As Lead Project Subcontractor Technical Representative for the Utility Shaft Capital Asset Project, he ensures that in areas that look unsafe or where incorrect methods are being deployed by contractors, he stops the activities and discusses what he is seeing with the contractors. One example is where a contractor was performing excavation work near the east side of the WIPP Site Property Protection Area. The contractor wasn’t properly sloping the excavation for workers’ safety in the trench. He paused the work, got the contractor supervisor and project manager, and then discussed how to safely perform the excavation to allow safe access by personnel who needed to work in the trench. Not only does he work with contractors, he also keeps NWP management informed as to safety issues and concerns and regularly consults with NWP safety personnel to ensure contractors are performing work in accordance with DOE Order 851.

Nominated by Stephen Smith & Jerry Clark

**JEFFREY GRAHAM - UNDERGROUND MAINTENANCE**

Jeff Graham has worked in different departments and on many projects, and working safe is one of his best qualities. He can be depended on to watch out for others due to the fact that he has years of experience and the knowledge needed to perform safely. He follows the rules better than anyone. If he doesn’t feel comfortable with a job, he will question it until he is sure the job is right to perform. There is no better worker to have on your team. He understands better than anyone what the goal is at WIPP and always leads by example.

Nominated by Danny Florez

**PATRICK QUINTANA - MINE OPERATIONS**

Patrick Quintana has demonstrated a safety-minded attitude and shares his attitude with management and with the Mine Ops group. He contributes with suggestions in safety briefings and toolbox talks and hasn’t had an incident during his time at WIPP. He has received safety bucks on several occasions for performing new tasks without incident and is quick to call safety pauses or stop work if he recognizes a hazard or process that has not been mitigated. He never cuts a corner.

Nominated by Tony Mihelic

**EDDIE THOMAS, JR. - SECURITY PROTECTIVE FORCE**

Describing SPO Eddie Thomas in one word: valuable. He always excels beyond what is expected and sets an extraordinary example, both on and off the job. He is also respected among his supervisors and peers. He is always willing to voice safety concerns. For example, when conducting perimeter fence line inspections, he noticed a need for repairs, ensuring that pictures were taken and a report was written immediately. He deserves to be commended for doing an excellent job in finding deficiencies and for raising the bar on awareness with inspections. Another example was in February when he was one of the first to suggest that the WIPP site start taking the temperatures of all employees and vendors entering the site due to COVID-19. He also suggested that all such employees with possible COVID-19 symptoms be immediately isolated from the normal work population and escorted by medical personnel through an alternate exit route to avoid contact with others. He is also proactive by reminding employees to practice social distancing and wear a mask. He has been instrumental in keeping the employees safe as they enter or exit the security gatehouse and, as a work condition, made a change from utilizing the vehicle trap to using the gatehouse. On the range, he encourages his team members to practice good safety when manipulating weapons. The Salt of the Earth award is the least that he should be awarded.

Nominated by Julissa Calleros & Bobby Martinez

**“PERFECTION IS NOT ATTAINABLE, BUT IF WE CHASE PERFECTION WE CAN CATCH EXCELLENCE.”**

– VINCET LOMBARDI, LEGENDARY GREEN BAY PACKERS COACH
KEVIN BARNHART - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

When it comes to “modeling high standards,” this and Kevin Barnhart are one and the same. Last year, the Flam Gas Team in Idaho had an issue with a stand-alone computer with one of their flam gas units. Following a power outage, this computer would not boot back up. He took the issue on like he does all issues that come his way. Head on. After working on this problem for a few months, his solution was an easy one. In Idaho, there was a unit that wasn’t being used anymore that was the same make and model and with the same operating system on it, so he took the hard drive from the broken computer and set up two hard drives in the unit that was being used. This not only worked great and saved all of the data on each hard drive but saved thousands of dollars in procuring a new computer, software and flam gas unit. He did what he said he would do, “fix the issue.”

Nominated by Michael Grenfell

ANDREA KELLY - BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

Andrea Kelly ensures that costs are submitted to DOE accurately each month. This became challenging earlier this year when faced with having to telework to complete tasks. She continued to examine each labor file to ensure the new COVID-19 codes were coming over correctly. She researched discrepancy and errors in the credit card file. She identified errors with a purchase order that affected commitment balances, implemented a mid-year pool reallocation and submitted her STARS file upload to DOE remotely. She did not let the fact that there were issues with connectivity, speed of the server and isolation from co-workers prevent her from ensuring costs were accurate and timely when submitted to DOE. She always works with the greatest level of integrity, strives to do the right thing and takes the utmost pride in everything she does both at work and at home. She is always willing to help out, even volunteering to help other organizations at work and in the community.

Nominated by Alisa West & Joy James-Foster

JERRY GRAHAM - ENGINEERING

Jerry Graham has been with NWP for more than 35 years and has been referred to as an “institution” due to the strong foundation he provides both for NWP as a whole and also in Engineering. His integrity is one of his strongest traits, as he is known for always doing the right thing the right way at the right time. He does not push issues aside – he always takes challenges head on. He holds his entire team accountable for implementing all of NWP’s core values, which alone demonstrates clear integrity.

Nominated by Nichole Havelin

DIANE SENUTOVITCH - SECURITY

Within an organization where safeguards and security are cornerstones, there are often some personnel who get overlooked. They don’t man the portals or drive the vehicles with flashing lights. They don’t carry weapons, and they don’t have a uniform that makes them readily recognizable to the rest of us, but their roles and responsibilities are just as important and are often, if not always, complicated. These individuals maintain all of the records for maintaining the security profiles, clearances and access controls to our sites. Diane Senutovitch does this and so much more. Her in-depth knowledge of the security systems and requirements has been a highly-valued resource for so many of our workers, all the while keeping the information that she handles protected and the personal identification information for each of us secure from unauthorized access. The most impressive detail related to how she performs these duties daily is that she does it with enthusiasm, kindness, sensitivity and genuine concern for others, along with the highest level of integrity. It is not normally a pleasant experience to visit any site’s security office, complete forms, complete files, update clearance documents, complete equip updates, meet U.S. Office of Personnel Management requirements and do it in a timely manner. At WIPP, this process is a breeze thanks to Diane. Her smile, her attitude and her knowledge make this process something that does not impede our daily routines, as she will also come in early, stay late, work though her lunch and might even deliver documents to your home when forced to telework. In today’s age of cyber-security and such high levels of risks, integrity with a smile is an attribute that is truly welcomed by those of us at WIPP that deal with Diane!

Nominated by Tim Taulbee
GABY MORRISON - FINANCE & ACCOUNTING

Gaby Morrison epitomizes the NWP core value of ownership. She is the project manager for the development, design, and testing of four new shielded container designs, which would allow RH-TRU waste to be shipped as CH-TRU waste. She is also the project manager for the development and submittal of the application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for the approval of new shielded containers as authorized contents for HalfPACT packaging. His leadership and ownership of these two extremely important projects, in addition to his other obligations with the Packaging Group, have been, and continue to be, critical to their success. Issues with the shielded container designs (e.g., going from five models to four due to funding issues) and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have delayed container testing. However, his positive attitude and commitment have not wavered. He is on top of any issues that arise and continually encourages the team to push forward. He is willing to do anything to help move the projects forward, from writing sections of the NRC application to ensuring the needed technology is available. He definitely owns his projects and assists others with their projects as well. NWP is a better organization because of his ownership.

Nominated by Cindy Morrison

SCOTT BURNS - NWP/NATIONAL TRU PROGRAM PACKAGING

Scott Burns epitomizes the NWP core value of ownership. He is the project manager for the development, design, and testing of four new shielded container designs, which would allow RH-TRU waste to be shipped as CH-TRU waste. He is also the project manager for the development and submittal of the application to the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) for the approval of new shielded containers as authorized contents for HalfPACT packaging. His leadership and ownership of these two extremely important projects, in addition to his other obligations with the Packaging Group, have been, and continue to be, critical to their success. Issues with the shielded container designs (e.g., going from five models to four due to funding issues) and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic have delayed container testing. However, his positive attitude and commitment have not wavered. He is on top of any issues that arise and continually encourages the team to push forward. He is willing to do anything to help move the projects forward, from writing sections of the NRC application to ensuring the needed technology is available. He definitely owns his projects and assists others with their projects as well. NWP is a better organization for having Scott.

Nominated by Cindy Morrison

RUBIN (ERIC) CHAVEZ - FACILITY OPERATIONS

Eric Chavez is the perfect example of ownership to ensure WIPP’s success. He got fully qualified as Facility Operations Shift Engineer (FSM)/Facility Shift Manager (FSM) on March 29, 2020, and due to COVID-19 was asked to immediately step up and fill in as the FSM of Crew D due to the current FSM being high risk for COVID-19 and working from home. Normally, after getting fully qualified, you would spend time as FOSE before being considered for the FSM position, but to ensure the success of the organization, he stepped up. He took ownership, held himself accountable and has filled in as the FSM in the absence of the normal FSM. Further, his crew has been operating with a minimal crew of three due to COVID-19. He once again held himself accountable and has done this, only being able to take one day off in a 5½-month period because of the coverage issue. His ownership has been a model for all employees in this time of COVID-19. He has been filling in to make the organization successful, knowing when things return to normal, he will return to the FOSE position, which translates into filling in as the FSM with minimal financial incentive compared to the normal FSM rate. He has been a true example of holding himself accountable to ensure the success of the organization and stepping up and taking ownership in these difficult times.

Nominated by Greg Brown & Joseph Bealler

TIFFANY GUTIERREZ - HUMAN RESOURCES

It’s obvious that Tiffany Gutierrez takes a lot of pride and ownership in her work. She consistently follows up with each organization during the hiring process to make sure they have everything they may need during the interview process. She ensures that all feedback forms are submitted prior to making an offer, and she provides a status on the offer to the candidates. Many times, she’ll communicate on her day off, whether it’s a Friday or a weekend, depending on when she hears back from a candidate. It would be easy for her to wait until her next workday, but she knows that departments are interested in filling positions as soon as possible to help support the mission of the project. Although she works for all managers on the project, the attention she gives to each one makes them feel like she’s only working for one department.

Nominated by Adan “Donnie” Rodriguez

“A PERSON ALWAYS DOING HIS OR HER BEST BECOMES A NATURAL LEADER, JUST BY EXAMPLE.”

- JOE DIMAGGIO, FORMER NEW YORK YANKEES OUTFIELDER & HALL OF FAME BASEBALL PLAYER
Ismael Duarte - Mine Operations Fabrication Crew

Respect doesn’t come easy without earning it. It can’t be demanded nor expected. Ismael Duarte has proven himself to his crew, his supervisor and the Mine Operations management team. Ask for something simple or throw something difficult in his direction, and he sets out on a mission to accomplish the task. He is humble when thanked for his hard work and dedication. He and the fabrication crew are all very well respected. Recently, they have safely fabricated and installed eight Hazardous Waste Facility Permit closure bulkheads in closed area of the mine. The four south-end closure bulkheads and the Panel 1 and Panel 2 closure bulkheads were all completed ahead of scheduled dates. Ismael has earned the respect of the Mine Operations management team, which values his hard work and dedication and is grateful for what he and the fabrication crew do for the organization.

Nominated by Heath Fowler

Heidi Lowe - Training

Heidi Lowe always takes the time to listen to training coordinators’ needs related to the Learning Management System (LMS) and qualification cards, treating them with professionalism and respect and going out of her way to help. If she doesn’t know the answer to a question, she will take the time to find out. She is very knowledgeable about the LMS and Qualified Watchstanders List (QWL) and is the “go-to girl” when training coordinators need something done or updates made in a timely manner. She is very supportive in searching through training records, both hard copy and LMS, to resolve problems with employee training. She is also very supportive of providing testing and training verifications for employees who are on shift and not always available during normal hours. She always greets you with a smile and a cheerful personality that makes you feel comfortable.

Nominated by Liz Young, Lolly Espinoza & Cindy Woodin

John (Hank) Miller - Operations

Hank Miller has taken time to complete hoist mechanical PMs on a weekly basis for the past several weeks when personnel staffing was short. He is a hoisting crew manager and a qualified hoist mechanic.

Nominated by Bob Kirby

Wendy Lopez - Maintenance-Warehouse

During the COVID-19 pandemic response, Wendy Lopez displayed ownership of the warehouse personal protective equipment (PPE). She provided weekly inventories and weekly burn rates in support of DOE HQ requests for information (RFI). DOE HQ changed their RFIs regularly, and she always responded to questions during and after work hours to ensure that the Crisis Manager had the information needed. Her attention to detail in reviewing the records assisted in identifying incorrect glove counts per box and at one point increased the glove count by more than 15,500 gloves.

Nominated by Katie Sterling

“WHAT YOU DO HAS FAR GREATER IMPACT THAN WHAT YOU SAY.”

– Stephen Covey, Author and Educator
TEAMWORK

DAVID BRIGHT - CONTRACTOR ASSURANCE

David Bright is held in the highest regard by his colleagues and the Contractor Assurance management team. This respect is founded on his willingness and eagerness to help others succeed and doing so with a humble and patient temperament that is inviting and safe. He is very resourceful when it comes to Issues Management, Performance Indicators, and use of software tools. For these reasons, colleagues continually approach him for help or assistance. His response is always swift and on point. He listens well and communicates in a supportive way when explaining things. He goes the extra mile to resolve obstacles or issues, and he does it with a smile. He has proven himself a critical cog in designing a best-in-class toolset for use by NWP and CBFO managers, staff and subcontractors. He is detail-oriented and is dedicated to building better systems, processes and tools to support the WIPP mission. He also works with the WIPP Form process daily, and he has never been heard answering annoyed or angry callers or visitors in any way other than in a polite and courteous manner. He keeps his cool in the toughest of circumstances. He is an example of teamwork that sets the bar for everyone around him.

Nominated by Nicholas Hanni, Valerie Dorr, Carmen Fannin & Darrell Harper

CRETA KIRKES - NWP/NATIONAL TRU PROGRAM-CCP

Creta Kirkes is a leader and a pleasure to work with, with a positive attitude and demeanor that is always refreshing. There is a lot of information to learn and digest in the certification program, and she is a wonderful resource that employees can reach out to anytime. She is always willing to take the time to help anyone out. She answers questions in a way that even those who are new to the certification program can understand, and if she doesn’t have an answer, she helps point employees in the direction of someone who can help and then follows up to see if the question was answered. She goes above and beyond to help the Central Characterization Project (CCP) reach its goals and commitments. Specifically, this past summer a new generator site was coming online with a large inventory of containers that would need to be certified in a relatively short amount of time. Creta and her group not only made sure they were meeting this generator site’s needs for certifying containers, but also kept up with the other existing sites’ needs and expectations for certified containers. On many occasions, Creta and her team exceeded expectations and gracefully handled the added workload.

Nominated by Lisa Calder

KENNETH WALKER, JR. - WORK CONTROL

Kenny Walker has been a big asset to the new lockout/tagout (LO/TO) committee, which performs LO/TO reviews for plant work orders throughout the site on several different types of equipment. As a committee member, he goes over and above to ensure that all related information for a LO/TO review is the most current available. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the site and several committee members started teleworking, he took it upon himself to perform LO/TO reviews, as well as keep up with his regular position as a writer for plant work procedures, and did an outstanding job. He is one individual who truly deserves this award for his ongoing commitment to teamwork. On a regular basis, Kenny truly shows the Salt of the Earth person that he is.

Nominated by Joel Howard

ALBERT CASTILLO - MAINTENANCE OPS

Albert Castillo understands the meaning of teamwork, knowing that each one of us has a role in the success of this project and that the work that each one of us does affects the work that everyone else needs to get done in one way or the other. The hoists at the WIPP site play a very important role in the everyday operations of this site. We cannot succeed in our mission if they are not operational. While we all have been dealing with the COVID-19 situation, the craft has been rotating weeks off to allow for social distancing in an effort to minimize the spread of the virus. Albert volunteered to give up his days off for a few weeks in order to support the hoist PMs while the group was short-handed, without asking for anything in return. That shows his character and commitment to this site and the success of our mission here. Not everyone would do that.

Nominated by John Dickson

“YOU DON’T HAVE TO HOLD A POSITION IN ORDER TO BE A LEADER.”
– HENRY FORD, FOUNDER OF THE FORD MOTOR COMPANY
CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

JESUS NEVAREZ - NWP/NATIONAL TRU PROGRAM-CCP

The Packaging Group has been working to add four new shielded container designs in an effort to get remote-handled waste shipments going again. To accomplish this, prototypes of each design must be fabricated for testing to meet Department of Transportation and Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) requirements. To support this testing, prototype test articles are required to be fabricated, which means fabrication drawings are needed. Enter Jesus Nevarez. Jesus supports the Packaging Group whenever drawings are needed for any project. He exemplifies teamwork through the iterative process of working with a team consisting of a draftsman (Jesus), engineers, quality assurance, project managers and others to develop a drawing. He has supported the group’s shielded container prototype effort over the years by developing the fabrication drawings and most recently by developing Safety Analysis Report (SAR) drawings for the new shielded containers. Ultimately, the drawings describe the containers to the regulators and will be included in the SAR application to the NRC. During the rigorous development of the drawings, he made several important contributions. Since there were four new designs, there were four sets of somewhat similar drawings, which actually made the development and review that much more tedious. In fact, after several iterations, some details were removed but then put back in again. Then the drawings were again revised to reference similar details on the other drawings (i.e., the pallet was removed, put back in all four, and then removed from three of the drawings again). The teamwork demonstrated by Jesus during the development of these SAR drawings is only a small sample of what he does for every project supporting the Packaging Group. The need for drafting support is continuous and significant, but no matter how busy he may be, he always seems to find a way to work a last-minute change or to fit an “emergency” request into his schedule to help the engineers meet their goals. He is dedicated to the success of the team and is truly a Salt of the Earth member of the Packaging Group.

Nominated by Scott Burns & Tony Donner

STEVE TANNER - QUALITY ASSURANCE

You don’t have to look very far in order to come to the conclusion that Steve Tanner is very interested in continuous improvement, as demonstrated by the many certifications he has obtained (and maintained) so he can perform his job duties to the best of his abilities. His resume includes certifications from the American Welding Society and the American Society for Nondestructive Testing, just to name a couple. Both of these require continual performance and recertification in some cases. In addition, he continues to work towards furthering his education and knowledge by pursuing a bachelor’s degree. He is always interested in value-added tasks and eliminating those with little or no value. This is always demonstrated in his document reviews and during discussions on technical and quality-related issues.

Nominated by Steve McGonagill

OUR CORE VALUES

SAFETY

• Take your safety and the safety of others personally
• Speak up and listen up
• Conduct all activities in a deliberate manner
• Stop and question when uncertain
• Actively participate in safety initiatives and improvements

INTEGRITY

• Tell the truth
• Follow through with your intentions and commitments
• Do the right thing
• Set the example

OWNERSHIP

• Own our legacy and successes
• Own your work and learn from your experiences
• Hold yourself and others accountable
• Self check to ensure quality of your work

RESPECT

• Actively listen; value others’ opinions
• Don’t blame or speak poorly of organizations or individuals
• Seek to understand – rather than to be understood
• Recognize the impact your words and actions have on others
• Treat others the way they want to be treated

TEAMWORK

• Work together to achieve the mission
• Actively recognize each other for our contributions
• Think out loud and openly share ideas
• Communicate “why”

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

• Never stop learning; improve every day
• Be curious; don’t just question
• Actively identify efficiencies and implement solutions
• Have a bias for action to find and fix problems