



P.O. Box 389
100-A South West Boulevard
Newton, North Carolina 28658-0389
Telephone: 828-465-8201
Fax: 828-465-8392
www.catawbacountync.gov

October 23, 2012

CATAWBA COUNTY TAX COLLECTOR NAMED EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR FOR PATIENCE, UNDERSTANDING AND LISTENING IN A STRESSFUL ARENA

A twenty-four year veteran of the Catawba County Tax Office, described by her supervisor as “patient, understanding, and an excellent listener” in a very stressful work environment, has been honored as Catawba County’s 2012 Employee Of The Year.



Tax Collector Ona Scruggs was presented with the honor on October 23, at the County’s annual Awards Night at the CVCC Tarleton Complex. Nine County employees were nominated for Employee Of The Year. Scruggs was selected by an Employee Committee composed of representatives of each County department. She was nominated by the County’s Tax Administrator, Mark Logan.

“A twenty-four year veteran of the tax office tells where she has spent her time,” Logan wrote in his nomination. “From office support specialist to front line clerk to delinquent collections to tax collector, defines her advancement in job skills, knowledge and experience. But how has Ona Scruggs specifically made a difference? Instead of using adjectives, let me give examples of her influence on her internal and external customers.”

While taking care of her staff, Ona equally meets or exceeds the expectations of her external customers as well,” Logan continued. “During December, which is perhaps one of the busiest times of the year for the tax collection office, Ona went out front and mingled with those taxpayers standing in long lines to direct them to the appropriate counter personnel, answer questions, and help explain the overall process. Several taxpayers expressed to me their appreciation of her efforts to go above and beyond to meet their needs and expedite the process. Yet another example of Ona exceeding an external customer’s expectations was communicated to me by the Town of Catawba’s Manager. He stated that Ona had gone out of her way to research a challenging mapping issue dating back to 1928. He further stated that her spirit of cooperation in meeting his need was refreshing and to be commended.”

Scruggs came to Catawba County following her graduation from high school. She earned an Associate’s Degree in Business from Catawba Valley Community College and nearly completed an Associate’s Degree in Police Sciences at Western Piedmont Community College. She worked as Records Supervisor for the Newton Police Department in the early 1970s, becoming the first woman to work for the Newton Police Department and one of the first in the Catawba County area to be employed by a police department.

Scruggs began working for the Catawba County Department of Social Services in 1978. She first worked in the Food Stamp Unit and served as a Child Support Enforcement Officer until 1982. She then worked as District Manager for the Charlotte Observer and later as a service representative for Manpower, Inc. before returning to Catawba County in 1989 to work in the Tax Office. She was promoted to various jobs in the Tax Office, including oversight of delinquent taxes, before being named Tax Collector on May 1, 2008.

“I asked Ona’s staff to send me their thoughts concerning her leadership,” Logan said. “One employee described her as

optimistic, a good navigator, and an appreciative person. Looking at Ona's optimism, several of her staff described how she wants nothing but the best for her employees. To say that the Tax Collector's office can at times be a stressful environment may be a bit of an understatement, however Ona is patient, understanding, and an excellent listener. Several of her staff described how she encourages them to work as a team while promoting each person to strive to give their best effort. As a navigator, Ona's vast tax collection and life experience qualifies her to earn the respect as a coach for not only difficult job problems but also personal life issues. Yet perhaps the most mentioned quality that her staff used to describe her was her appreciative attitude toward them. Ona not only liberally uses the words "thank you" but goes the extra step to show her appreciation by acts such as bringing in fresh bagels the next morning after a particularly rough day before."

This past year has been a very challenging year for the collection department due not only to the difficulties of performing their duties in a tough economic climate but also while undergoing a new and very demanding billing and collection software conversion with a smaller staff than in previous years," Logan continued. "Although Ona may be short in stature she, in my mind, exemplifies an employee that is not short in the qualities and actions that make her an outstanding leader and representative for Catawba County Government."

Eight other County employees were nominated for Catawba County Employee Of The Year for 2012. They included: Elizabeth Clore, CPS Supervisor, Social Services; Reid Goforth, Building Services Supervisor, Utilities and Engineering; Linda Greene, Charge Nurse II, Public Health; Marcia Hardy, Web Content/Training Specialist, Technology; Scott Klinger, Programmer Analyst, Public Health; Mary Morrison, Business Manager IV, Social Services; Bernice Saine, Administrative Assistant II/Eligibility Supervisor, Public Health; and Chrissy Triplett, Social Work Supervisor, Social Services.

Another highlight of the night was the presentation of 2012 Team Awards. "These awards honor groups of employees whose combined efforts improve County services," said Catawba County Manager Tom Lundy, who served as Master of Ceremonies for the County's Awards Night. "We certainly appreciate the value of work done by groups of employees who focus their energies on a common goal."

A panel of judges in the government field, independent of Catawba County, selected two teams as winners for 2012:

Foothills Coalition/Operation Pill Stoppers- Team Leader: Cpl. Eric Kanipe, Crime Prevention Officer, Sheriff's Office. **Team members:** Lynette Taylor, Co-Chair, Community Outreach Supervisor, The Cognitive Connection; Sheriff's Office Explorers Post 385; Captain Alton Price, Community Relations Division, Sheriff's Office.

"Operation Pill Stoppers developed as a small group of people who realized an increase in prescription overdoses, and reports of misuse and abuse rising in Catawba County," said Cpl. Eric Kanipe, Crime Prevention Officer with the Catawba County Sheriff's Office, who is the team leader. "The belief behind the mission of Operation Pill Stoppers is that one overdose is too many. Efforts within the last twelve months show signs of success and change that are beginning to occur."

Here are some results of the efforts of Operation Pill Stoppers:

- From August 22, 2011 to August 24, 2012, Operation Pill Stoppers has collected and destroyed 740.7 pounds of medication.
- Although a count of opioid pain medication is not typically obtained, the group took a snapshot of a typical collection count on February 20, 2012, while processing medication. 1187 doses were counted, which had an approximate street value of \$6,000. This is an average for any one pickup day.
- Catawba County is now number one in North Carolina for the number of drop boxes.

"This initiative has helped the entire community take part in disposing potentially accessible medications to youth and decreased crime related to drug distribution, accidental overdoses, and substance abuse by reducing accessibility," Kanipe

added.

Public Health Insight Implementation Team- Team Leaders: Temple Lawing, Technology Department; Scott Klinger, Public Health. **Team Members:** Temple Lawing, Scott Klinger, Lynne Laws, PH Nursing Supervisor, Public Health; Bernice Saine, Administrative Assistant II, Public Health; Leslie Campbell, Administrative Assistant, Public Health; Angie D. Propst, Office Support Specialist, Public Health.

“Public Health was in need of a new billing/scheduling computer system and this team made sure that happened,” said Temple Lawing, IT Project Manager with the County Technology Department and one of the team’s leaders. “The team was comprised of a variety of disciplines from two County agencies to assure a smooth transition. The project involved a huge amount of work in both planning and execution.”

The Insight implementation was seamless for the clinical staff and patients,” Lawing added. “There was very little interruption to clinics due to the intense preparation made by the team. Training was conducted by team members for all staff involved so they were fully prepared to begin when the ‘Go Live’ date arrived. The team prepared written documentation for staff to use after the ‘Go Live’ date, to ensure ongoing understanding of the processes by staff working with Insight.”

This team provided Public Health with a system that:

- Provided a solution to Public Health’s current billing issues;
- Allowed interface with a State system for meeting data requirements;
- Reduced the time that clinical receptionists spend in registering each client;
- Provided more thorough and accurate billing processes, which in turn, increases revenue collection;
- Reduced the County’s overall carbon footprint by improving and/or automating clinical processes.

Twenty-six employees who have retired in the past year were saluted during the Awards Night event, along with County employees who have served for five, ten, fifteen, twenty, twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five and forty years. Eight County employees who passed away in the last year were remembered: Mazelle Bollinger (retired from Finance), Nancy Lee Cline (former Tax Office employee), Bruce Crump (retired from Sheriff’s Office), William Furr (retired from Public Health), Mary Ruff (retired from Social Services), John Michael Saunders (retired from Sheriff’s Office), J. D. Travis (former Finance employee), Tim Watson (retired from Finance).

"Our Employee Awards night is one of the most important events we have each year," Lundy said. "The high quality of services delivered to our citizens is a reflection of the fine work done by our employees. It is always a privilege for members of the Board of Commissioners and me to spend an evening recognizing many of our employees for outstanding work, and thanking each and every one for the part they play in helping make Catawba County a great place in which to live and work."