

2022 Employee of the Year Winners

Winner: Michael Daniels, Veteran Services Officer

From the nomination submission:

Michael is an incredibly valuable asset to Chatham County veterans and their families. His job description states:

Responsible for counseling, advising and assisting military service veterans, veterans' survivors and their dependents in obtaining benefits provided for them by county, state and federal law and performing related work as apparent or assigned.

It is *how* Michael is fulfilling these duties that make him stand out and worthy of the designation as Employee of the Year.

Michael works 20 hours a week, Tuesday, Wednesday, and half a day Thursday. He splits his time, spending 4 hours per week in Siler City to help improve access for veterans in that area. As a new veteran services officer, he was required to undergo certification, and had to obtain that certification in order to file claims with the veterans administration without being reviewed by the state office. The certification included 110 hours of coursework and the passing of multiple exams. He obtained his certification in September 2022.

In addition to work on his certification, Michael investigated, requested, and implemented a new veteran benefits software, VetraSpec, which expedites claims processing and improves benefit tracking. He has worked to transition the veteran services office to as paperless an operation as possible, something he recognized needed to be done and he took the initiative to initiate and implement those processes.

It is in his definition of the term “public service” that puts him in the employee of the year category. He sees his mission as such: “I am a servant and I do my best to find a way to yes” (email 4/21/22). He routinely goes above and beyond to allow veterans and their families to access his service and I get an email at least once a month from him letting me know he is taking his services to people, not just waiting for them to access his services during his office hours. This is absolutely not a job expectation, but rather a fulfillment of what he sees as part of public service. Here is an example of some of the people he’s impacted:

Hey Carolyn,

I need to meet with the spouse of a deceased veteran who is unable to come to my office. I must pick up DD 214 and death certificate and began the claims process. Once I complete the application, I will return the forms and originals back to her. If I complete

them today before 4pm, I will return them to her today. The address is [REDACTED] Pittsboro. (email: 5/24/22)

I need to drop off and pick up documents from a veteran and his spouse tomorrow at Fearrington Village. This will require me to leave Siler City around 11am to meet with her and complete the forms. The veteran is in hospital, and the spouse has no mode of transportation. (email: 8/16/22)

I've also received feedback directly from the veterans and their families. The following is from an email from a veteran that was a direct recipient of Michael's work:

Ms. Miller

I just wanted to let you know that Mr. Michael Daniels has helped me and my wife through the complicated VA procedures to get some of the benefits of my military service

I am a 77-year-old Vietnam veteran who was unaware of the benefits that I could get from the VA for my injuries received during the conflict in Vietnam. My exposure to Agent Orange, my malaria and my wounds from combat have caused some problems in my life.

Mr. Daniels has explained very clearly what actions I could take and has assisted in filling out forms and guiding us through the system. We never could have done this without his help.

He represents Chatham County very well with his professionalism and great customer service.

I wanted you to know how much we have appreciated his help.



Winner: Lucian Stewart, Application Solutions Engineer

From the nomination submission:

Lucian serves the county as every employee should strive to; he provides excellent customer service, he works continuously to improve himself and others around him, he is a team player, and he has a positive attitude every day he comes to work. Setting all those qualities aside, his biggest contributions are those that improve operational efficiency across the entire county.



Lucian has worked on many projects in his short time with Chatham County, but I will highlight three key initiatives that I feel rise to the level of this nomination. 1. Tax Revaluation Online Solutions: While this was a joint effort between the Tax Department & GIS Division, Lucian was the key contributor to the project's success. The project was so successful that Esri just published our customer success story (hot off the presses) explaining the importance to our county. I am including the link to the Esri Customer Success story for further justification and explanation of how impactful the project was.

<https://www.esri.com/en-us/lg/industry/government/stories/chatham-county-expedites-appraisal-process-through-gis-2>.

Public Information Requests: Lucian worked in collaboration with Lindsay Ray, Clerk to the BOC, to identify a better process for aggregating e-mails included in public information requests. This process has long been a cumbersome and time-consuming task for Lindsay's office so the goal was to provide a solution that would make this process repeatable and more efficient. Lucian delivered on the project with rave reviews from Lindsay receiving multiple bouquets in department meetings and additional citations of how impressed she was with the product. The application that Lucian built will inevitably save time for county staff which ultimately means cost savings. Providing a solution is just one part of the equation. Lucian also took extreme care to document the entire process for our MIS staff so that we can pick up the "breadcrumbs" where he left off. Documentation is an integral part of maintaining an application within a large organization like Chatham County. The care Lucian took in creating this documentation should not be understated and speaks to the larger success of this solution moving forward. 3.

Onboarding & Offboarding: While this application is still in BETA testing, it is already another example of the high quality and collaborative work Lucian provides to Chatham County. This project was conceived out of a need to more efficiently onboard and offboard our staff as we continue to grow as a county. There are specific pieces of information that our MIS & HR staff need to know when an employee starts employment or separates employment with Chatham County. Having as much information as possible is valuable to those needing to do the work to

onboard & offboard this staff. Lucian began working on this project by doing a lot of information gathering and listening to what would be important for the impacted staff to know. He then went to work building separate form-based solutions that would easily walk staff through the information they need to provide when an employee is hired or when an employee leaves Chatham County. This easy-to-use interface is important because it guides departments through the process of what MIS needs to know. Too often in the past we would receive fragmented information from the departments resulting in too much inefficiency getting staff ready to do their work. The solution that Lucian has implemented automates this process by creating the appropriate help desk tickets based on how staff fill out the form(s). Lucian also reached out to Human Resources to identify information that may be beneficial to gather in this same process to help streamline some of their workflows. While this application is still in BETA testing it will inevitably provide greater organizational efficiency for our department, HR, and any other department using the solution to onboard or offboard employees. Lucian has been diligent about documenting the solution, aggregating the appropriate feedback, and is already working on process improvements resulting from the ALPHA & BETA testing of the software.

My last and most important point about Lucian's contributions to Chatham County is that all the solutions I have presented above have been completed using existing software licensing the county already had. He was able to craft meaningful solutions for different parts of our organization without spending additional money on software or outside consultants. Lucian has an incredibly powerful and valuable skill set that he provides to this county, and he should be recognized for his achievements.

Employee of the Year Nominees

Brandon Brim, Maintenance Worker
Kara Dudley, Public Information Officer
Leslie Hayes, Administrative Supervisor-DSS
All Detention Staff-Chatham County Sheriff's Office
Kevin Keas, Facilities Manager
Ingrid Castro, Interpreter
Roscoe Milton, Utility Service Worker
Katie Davis, Assistant Finance Officer
Jackie Murchison, Maintenance Worker
Hollie Squires, Watershed Protection Technician
Justin Hasenfus, Sr. Watershed Specialist
Mistie Phillips, Payroll Specialist
Lindsay Ray, Clerk to the Board
Janice Hanner, Parenting Counselor
Elizabeth Plata, HR Analyst
Kaitlyn Cannizzaro, Social Work Supervisor III-DSS