50 Unsung Heroes is a SWANA recognition program giving SWANA members the opportunity to acknowledge individuals or groups in their community that are making a difference in the solid waste industry.

Unsung Heroes are coworkers working within the solid waste industry, volunteer groups, or even people in your neighborhood who often go unrecognized for their efforts, large and small.

The program allows SWANA members to show public appreciation to those individuals and/or groups for their hard work and dedication.
Thank you for all that you do!

Class of 2014

Franz Adler

Page 6

Miguel “Mickey” Angel Ray Chacon

Page 7

John Arwood

Page 8

Tracy Baldry

Page 9

Michelle Bergkamp

Page 10

California Product Stewardship Council

Page 11

City of Charlotte Solid Waste Services Operations Division

Page 12

Study Team

Page 13

Compost TAP Team

Page 14

Mark Cox

Page 15

Foothills Regional Landfill Staff

Page 16

John Doring

Page 17

Les Epperson

Page 18

Bill Gatopoulos

Page 19

Richard Gertman

Page 20

Susie Gordon

Page 21

Linda Grover
Thank you for all that you do!

Class of 2014

dennis guy
Habitat Re-Store Quad Cities
Jan Hamilton
Marlon Hargis
Bob Heider
Barry Hester
Mary Hezekiah
Keith Higgins
James Hill
Keep Tampa Bay Beautiful
Jody Kirkendall
Frank Lama
Frances Lang
Robert Lee
Steve Lippy
Curtis Lundy
Thank you for all that you do!

Class of 2014

Mark Madden
Page 38

Leron McIver
Page 39

Jessica Moore
Page 40

Jennifer Nicholson
Page 41

Lois Nixon
Page 42

Jose Nunez
Page 43

Jesus Perez
Page 44

Carmen Ramirez
Page 45

Richmond Green Ambassadors
Page 46

Lindsey Sampson
Page 47

Manuel Sanchez
Page 48

Tim Schreiber
Page 49

Jessica Seiglie
Page 50

Sheri Shilling & The Green Team
Page 51

Renee Strnad
Page 52

Bill Stullken
Page 53
The Unsung Heroes are recognized at SWANA’s annual conference and tradeshow WASTECON. Several of the Heroes in this inaugural class came out to WASTECON 2014 in Dallas, Texas to celebrate their achievements.
Franz Adler
Recycling Coordinator, City of Margate, NJ

“Franz Adler is the assistant director of public works and recycling coordinator (among many hats he wears) for the City of Margate, NJ; a shore community with a relatively large tourist population. Involved with Margate for 19 years, Mr. Adler realized early on that educating the public, including the tourists, was his best chance of creating a successful recycling program. He provides educational materials to real estate offices, renters, and public and private schools, and improved the recycling of construction and demolition debris by working with local builders. In Margate, under Franz’s direction, the practice of issuing a mercantile license to businesses occurs only after Franz inspects their building and makes sure they will be recycling compliant. A winning combination of business, school, and builder engagement in its recycling program, along with targeted outreach to the tourist population, have contributed to a 28% municipal solid waste recycling rate in Margate.”

Nominated by: ACUA
“We would like to nominate Mickey Ray as one of the “Unsung Heroes” by his availability to our University. After talking with Mr. Ray in our visit at his compost project at the PR Horse Race Track, we ask him that our University was interested in developing a pilot compost project, as part of our curriculum of Natural Science School. Our budget was limited, but it needed to meet the reuse our trimming and pruning of the University grounds. The available area, had many difficulties, is adjacent to a residential area and we feared of possible complaints cause by odors, noise in the use of the area. Mr. Ray designed, developed the Operational Plan and the education of the staff for only $2,500., has already passed a year since the project started and he has inspected and track the progress of the Project during all this period, without charging extra. He designed a project that addressed positively all our concerns and needs, most of all he understand the importance of the role of the university to develop professionals that could develop solid waste projects.”

Nominated by: Universidad del Sagrado Corazon, Carlos J Rodriguez, and Julio Gonzalez Fortuño, MSEM, P.E.
“Arwood Waste was started by John Arwood senior in the late 1970’s. John D has been working with his dad all of his life and several years ago took over as President. He has produced remarkable growth with this regional Jacksonville Fl. company and additionally has established himself as one of the premier Internet waste service providers nationwide. While doing this John created a web site garbagemanday.com and proclaimed June 17th as a day to celebrate all garbage workers nationwide. The success and acceptance has been tremendous and many cities, communities, and solid waste departments are recognizing their employees on this day. There is a lot of momentum and this celebration will continue to grow. Thanks John for taking time to recognize thousands of waste employees for the crucial role they fill. John is definitively an Unsung Hero wanting everyone to be appreciated in the industry we love.”

Nominated by: Steve Goode
“Tracy who has worked for me the last 12+ years in the Leadhand of Waste Collections continuously on a daily basis goes above and beyond your scope of duties. Through the dedication Tracy shows towards her job, waste collection operators and the residents of the City shines in the outstanding service that comes from her. Tracy truly is a team player and is relied upon heavenly by the supervisors. Tracy’s professionalism and dedication to her job is second to none. I could not think of another employee more deserving of this title of “Unsung Waste Hero”.”

Nominated by: Colin Vidler - Superintendent Waste Collections, City of Hamilton
“In her current position, Michelle Bergkamp leads the Agency team in the implementation of the Ulster County Partners in Composting Program that has a goal of diverting over 15% of the commercial organic waste from landfill disposal in five years. During her seven year tenure with the Agency, Ms. Bergkamp has developed and implemented an expanded county-wide recycling program and varied educational and promotional programs for reuse, recycling and organics recovery and established a Business & Commercial Property Recycling and Waste Reduction Compliance Program that has led to an increase in the County’s MSW recycling rate from 30% to 45%. Ms. Bergkamp coordinates all components of the County’s Household Hazardous Waste and Pharmaceutical Waste Collection Programs and the Electronics Recycling Program. She is also on the Board of Directors of the New York Product Stewardship Council and New York State Association of Reduction, Reuse, and Recycling and several working committees.”
“California Product Stewardship Council (CPSC) is a non-profit organization focused on shifting responsibility for the end of life costs of products away from solely local government and sharing it with others in the product chain through Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). By shifting the cost responsibility, manufacturers will be encouraged to produce greener products. CPSC has helped pass EPR legislation in California, including AB 2347 in 2008 for mercury thermostats; AB 1343 in 2010, creating a statewide paint stewardship program that has diverted 632,652 gallons of paint and added 495 collection locations in the first eight months of operations; and AB 2398 in 2010, which created the first carpet stewardship program in the world and saved LA Fiber, the country’s largest carpet recycler, from going out of business. To support innovation that drives the CPSC Design-It-Green-Take-It-Back ethos, they hold annual “Arrow Awards” to recognize businesses that are leaders in product stewardship.”
“The Operations division of the City of Charlotte Solid Waste Services is nominated for the SWANA Unsung Hero Award. Outside of the everyday collection services they provide, the 240 men and women who make up one of the City’s most visible departments go above and beyond in a variety of capacities to ensure essential city services are delivered and a clean city is maintained. During recent inclement weather, staff kicked into high gear and assisted in any and every capacity they could. From shoveling piles of snow, to hauling 2,000 tons of snow and assisting with emergency maintenance services, staff helped ensure a safe and efficient process to allow for continued collection services. Though their work goes unnoticed at times, the daily dedication to the job and exceptional customer service shown is worthy of recognition.”

Nominated by: City of Charlotte Solid Waste Service
“Our research team used a Technology Advancement Program grant from the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District to run a full scale production test of a new composting system in Central California. The system economically solves environmental problems related to air pollution, greenhouse gas, energy and water conservation, siting, and food waste recycling. California’s 75% recycling plan needs over 50 new compost facilities. However, new facilities were nearly impossible to open under strict New Source Review air rules, due to biogenic air emissions from compost and diesel exhaust from heavy equipment. This research effort enables the industry to move forward again. The new system replaced long windrows with rectangular compost piles on a smaller field, aerated by solar powered blowers. A 12 inch compost cap layer served as a bio-filter. Materials were moved by electric conveyor rather than by diesel trucks. A full report is available online at http://www.valleyair.org/Grant_Programs/TAP/documents/C-15636-ACP/C-15636_ACP_FinalReport.pdf”
“Georgetown County provides paper-based products recycling to more than 150 commercial locations throughout the county. This program contributes immensely to our growing recycling rate as we process approximately 2,000 tons of recyclables per year through this initiative. The continued success of this program is largely attributed to the unending efforts of Mark Cox. He single-handedly operates the collections truck that services multiple locations across 1,035 square miles of Georgetown County. Mr. Cox categorically stated that the most fulfilling aspect of his job is ‘to offer the commercial community an opportunity to become environmentally friendly by making recycling as convenient and relevant as possible.’ This positive work ethic is evident among his professional colleagues as well as among the many customers he serves.”

Nominated by: Georgetown County Environmental Services Division

“I am nominating the Foothills Regional Landfill Staff as Unsung Heroes. John Deagle and his staff at the landfill worked tirelessly in the aftermath of a devastating flood in which 90% of the Town of High River was flooded. They came to work each and every day, worked longer hours and more days, even though they themselves were impacted by the flood. They found ways to efficiently move trucks of debris through the scale house and keep them moving at the landfill, even when the weather wasn’t cooperating. They handled thousands appliances including fridges and freezers full of food. Landfill operators are often forgotten for the service they do in times of natural disasters. John and his crew truly showed what it means to be a public servant in a time of need.”
“John Doring has recently been promoted to the position of Superintendent of Public Works for the City of Brigantine, where he continues to serve as the Recycling Coordinator. John has faced incredible challenges in the wake of Super Storm Sandy, which devastated many homes in the town of Brigantine. He spearheaded efforts to quickly provide disposal options for residents as they dealt with the storm’s aftereffects. John has been an incredible asset to the town’s newly formed Green Team, working to improve recycling in the schools, at the beaches, and with residents and businesses. John’s colleagues speak with respect for this character; affirming that John works tirelessly and without complaining, actively serving on a variety of town committees, wearing many hats and always lending a hand.”

Nominated by: ACUA
“Lester is an individual that show dedication and passion in all that he does. He gives 200% back to his community in effort and time alone. He gives a service that most citizens overlook until it is missed. He is at work when the sun comes up and when the sun sets. He is truly an over achiever. He is my Unsung Hero.”

Nominated by: Solid Waste Services
“Custodian Bill Gatopoulos simply goes above and beyond. He believes that waste management is more than just collecting recycling, organics and garbage from classrooms, but rather an opportunity to educate, engage and empower students. At his former assignment (Sunningdale Public School), Bill was instrumental in developing a waste collection program that resulted in increased recycling and composting. He actually removed garbage cans from classrooms to foster a “rethink” attitude about waste. Actively involved with the school’s environmental education efforts, he assisted students with visual waste audits, delivering educational messages to other students, and ensuring three waste streams were collected effectively with minimal contamination. The decreased garbage at the school resulted in financial savings to the school board. At his new assignment (Eastview Public School), Bill continues the waste minimization tradition, engaging an eco club of over 50 student members! He coordinates waste diversion presentations and fosters an environmental focus among students, teachers and administrators. Bill is often called upon by the school board to share his expertise with other custodians and teachers about the importance of waste minimization. You can read more about Bill and his efforts at http://bit.ly/Mcbu0F”
“Richard Gertman has been a leader in the recycling industry for over 40 years. Much of that time he has innovated in stealth; after starting the Davis recycling program in 1970 and California’s first citywide curbside recycling program in 1974, he has helped others implement leading edge programs; San Jose’s first big city recycling program which was copied by Seattle; California’s first truly Zero Waste Program in Portola Valley in 2002 which achieved an 84% diversion rate within 6 months, and is currently at 96% - less than 4% of the wastes collected by GreenWaste are disposed of in landfill; to the Republic Services wet-dry commercial program in San Jose that is currently diverting over 70% of the commercial waste stream, and similar programs in Fremont and Fresno; and now developing a residential wet-dry garbage program with the City of Sunnyvale to recover organics.”

Nominated by: For Sustainability, Too
“Susie Gordon and her staff embarked on the 2013 strategic plan for waste reduction and recycling after reaching the 1999 goal of 50% waste diversion. Zero Waste Associates consultants assisted Susie, project manager, to establish new community goals. A series of Community Conversations were conducted and broadcast that addressed composting, reduce & reuse, recycling, and waste-to-clean-energy. The resulting Road to Zero Waste Plan contains strategies to reach the City Council adopted goal of Zero Waste by 2030 and a per-capita goal of 2.8 pounds of trash/day by 2025. Fort Collins’s vision is to consciously invest in new ways to manage its “discards”. Charting the course for Zero Waste will steer the community away from traditional landfill technology and toward new opportunities that create jobs, conserve resources, and reduce greenhouse gases that would otherwise be emitted from manufacturers and landfills, which saves taxpayers’ money. Susie Gordon is leading the charge.”
Linda Grover
Waste Sector Marketing Specialist, Golder Associates, Inc.

“When you pass by or stop at Golder Associates’ booth at WASTECON, the person with the great smile and engaging conversation is Linda Grover. With over 25 years of experience that started in the waste industry and now with Golder Associates, Linda is always finding ways to make Golder Associates and her colleagues shine, never looking for the spotlight. Linda takes great pride in her many friendships in the waste field and it shows when she is “working the booth” as Waste Con. Linda is also an excellent Marketing Specialist who routinely receives high marks from her “internal clients” for marketing and proposal support, especially with time sensitive schedules. I am proud to nominate Linda Grover for this recognition.”

Nominated by: Golder Associates
“Dennis Guy has industriously promoted SWANA and SWANA activities. Dennis has been an active member and a Director on the Board of the Ontario Chapter of SWANA. He has also contributed to the SWANA organization. For the Ontario Chapter, Dennis sits on the Board of Directors and was instrumental in organizing the 6th Canadian Waste Symposium in Niagara Falls, Ontario – his work and creativity around the development of an Ontario logo as well as the symposium brochures was highly successful. He is currently assisting with the development of an updated Ontario Chapter website. Dennis was the Past Director of SWANA’s “Communication, Education & Marketing” Technical Division and was the representative on the International Board. He has also helped to organize SWANA’s Young Professionals initiative. As well as advocating the first “Ignite” event at WASTECON which has now become a regular, fun opening event at the conference.”
“Since December 2002, Habitat ReStore Quad Cities has diverted new and gently used building materials from landfills by accepting them from residents and businesses and selling them at low prices. All proceeds benefit Habitat for Humanity, which builds houses for people locally and abroad. In the 11 years since it opened, ReStore has diverted over 8 million pounds of building products from landfills. In 2012 ReStore opened a Health & Home division that collects and sells durable medical equipment and consumable healthcare items. Over 20,000 pounds of this type of material already has been diverted from landfills.”
“Founded by local environmental activists in 1990, CARTM provides the communities of North Tillamook County with a unique commitment to “lead our community to zero waste.” Initially only a waste transfer station located on a former dump and burn site, CARTM has evolved into a full-service community hub, drawing visitors and customers from throughout the county and the state. CARTM is now an organization of 7 FTE staff and 30 volunteers providing not only waste disposal services, but recycling for more types of waste than anywhere else in Tillamook County, perhaps within the State. CARTM also operates a Thrift Store: The Refindery. CARTM continues to develop and evolve, uniting citizens and visitors to minimize the impact our actions have on our environment. CARTM’s actions influence all of Tillamook County, and it is through this vision that Tillamook County can significantly improve not only recycling, but all its waste management goals.”

Nominated by: David McCall
“Your Choice the Peoples Choice (YCTPC) is a grass-roots little abatement group from South Jersey, led by Marlon Hargis. YCTPC is incredibly active in the community. They have grown from litter pick up volunteers into an influential environmental group. They clean their adopted road multiple times a week, and do other volunteer cleanups of local areas for both the county and local municipalities. They are also a part of the NJ Adopt a Highway Program. They leaders of YCTPC are extremely motivated and always take the initiative to make improvement. They speak at the local schools and take students out for cleanups to raise awareness and teach them about the importance of keeping the community clean. They have also worked hard to acquire donations of trash and recycling containers for areas in need. YCTPC regularly services the containers themselves to prevent them from overflowing. As a result, the litter in the area has greatly decreased. Marlon and his group do all of this work as volunteers, because they are so dedicated to improving the environment.”
“In October of 2013 our Recycling operation moved from a 12,000 square foot building processing 1 ton per hour maximum, to a 48,000 square foot facility capable of processing up to 10 tons per hour. Bob was hired as the line supervisor, responsible for keeping the processing equipment operational and make sure that personnel and equipment are used to the maximum efficiency possible. When equipment began arriving Bob was there to personally see and assist with the installation and calibration of every part to the sorting line. By the time the equipment was set in place Bob understood what each piece of the processing line did and how it worked. Prior to the opening of the center Bob had not worked with processing of recyclables at all. He stepped up to the plate, learned what to do and has been the key factor in making this new facility a success.”
“Barry is the best representative the department has. His customers frequently call to compliment his high level of customer service. They frequently site his willingness to go above and beyond the normal scope of his job duties. Barry has worked with the department for 17 years and is truly an unsung hero worthy of recognition.”

Nominated by: City of Durham, Dept. of Solid Waste Management
Mary Hezekiah
Scale Master, Georgetown County Environmental Services Division

“Ms. Hezekiah has provided outstanding customer service and solid waste data management for the past 19 years at the Environmental Services Division (ESD). For the past fiscal year she aptly managed personnel and tonnage data for 21,000 vehicles transporting more than 88,000 tons of solid waste to various locations at the ESD complex. She is also a certified South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) Class III Landfill Supervisor and is instrumental in day-to-day operations, education of the public on current programs and the expansion of new services offered by the division. She exudes a charming and warm disposition with clients and coworkers alike and is very adaptable as she encounters different personalities and situations.”

Nominated by: Georgetown County Environmental Services Division
“Keith is an individual that shows dedication and passion in all that he does. He gives 200% back to his community in effort and time alone. He gives a service that most citizens overlook until it is missed. He is at work when the sun comes up and when the sun sets. He is truly an over achiever. He is my Unsung Hero.”
James Hill
Equipment Operator, Collierville Public Services Sanitation Division

“James Hill began career in Solid waste in 1998 with the Town of Collierville Public Service Department as a Brush Truck Operator in the Sanitation Division. James is an employee that has rarely ever missed a day of work, and is prompt in the morning heading out to this routes without delay. During his employment with the Town James has built a reputation for being reliable, friendly, and someone that is always ready to lend a hand to a fellow employee. Over the past 16 years our Department has received numerous letter and emails from customers in regards to the quality service James provides often going above and beyond what is required on a daily basis. James has always been the first to volunteer for additional work when needed, is an asset to our Department, and a model employee that is an example to others in his division.”

Nominated by: Town of Collierville, Public Service Department
“KTBB’s mission is to provide environmental education and volunteer opportunities that develop individual responsibility and environmental stewardship. They accomplish this by organizing massive efforts to clean up our parks, neighborhoods and shorelines, with an emphasis on recycling and litter reduction. To date, they have recruited over 22,600 volunteers, removed 332,757 pounds of trash, improved 938 acres and cleaned 708 miles of road. They do all of this with a minimal staff of 6 people, but the reason I’m nominating them is that they do it tirelessly and happily. They are a joy to work with and a treasure to our community!”

Nominated by: Tammy Hayes
“Jody Kirkendall is the Sanitation Superintendent for the City of Kissimmee. He has worked for the City of Kissimmee for a total of 23 years, starting out as a utility worker and working his way up to his current position as Sanitation Superintendent. Jody is a great example of leadership to his employees. His work ethic is undeniable as he often takes on multiple tasks in order to get the job done. Jody freely shares his knowledge and experience, allowing others to grow within the organization as well. He is also a great example in his personal life. He has spent countless hours volunteering at Give Kids the World here in Kissimmee. In January he helped to organize the massive debris removal for the Extreme Village Makeover. These are just a few of the reasons Jody Kirkendall should be recognized as one of SWANA’s 50 Unsung Heroes.”

Nominated by: Jennifer Trogdon
“Frank Lama is an unsung hero whose high work ethic, excitement for the job and dedication to superior customer service is provided behind the scenes. Frank progressed from driver to superintendent in North Port’s Solid Waste operation and genuinely loves his work. He is well respected and doesn’t ask drivers to do anything he would not do himself. Drivers know they can count on him. Taking calls at night, offering help, or giving advice when asked is second nature. Frank also pushes drivers to reach their full potential and supports them any way he can. Frank’s pursuit of efficiencies has led to innovations such as one side of the street garbage collection, increased recycling participation and streamlined routes. He also shares his knowledge with other agencies. Frank understands that Solid Waste touches the lives of citizens every week and does not want to miss an opportunity to make a difference.”
“Frances Lang is a mother, grandmother, two time breast cancer survivor, and waste reduction extraordinaire. She works part-time at JoAnn’s Fabric. She volunteers her time for many different local organizations – Project Linus, Hat Day, Athens-Area Emergency Food Bank, Athens Women’s Club – Conservation Chairperson, DAR – Conservation Chairperson and the Athens-Clarke County Recycling Division. She received the Athens-Clarke County (ACC) Recycling Division award for Recycler of the Year in 2008 for her tireless effort in spreading the word about all the ACC recycling programs and literally self-hauling non-traditional recyclables to the recycling facility. Almost weekly she delivers film plastic for recycling from her work place and from her friends. Additionally, she is a regular volunteer and contributor to the Teacher Reuse Store. The Teacher Reuse Store provides usable individual, business and industry discards to local teachers at no charge. My favorite example of the impact Frances has on the Athens-Clarke County community is one that ACC staff experienced at a recent Shred and Med Collection Event – ¼ of all participants listed Frances as the source of the event information when asked by staff at the entrance gate. Frances is a recycling treasure to the ACC community and worthy of the SWANA Unsung Hero recognition.”

Nominated by: Susan “Suki” Janssen
“Robert ‘Captain Trash’ Lee has been employed to Environmental Services for 5 years after serving Waste Management in Miami, Florida for 15 years. As Heavy Truck Driver he has set a high standard for solid waste transportation; hauling an average of 65 tons per week from 5 collections centers throughout the county. He displays exceptional leadership skills and team spirit and as such was named Georgetown County’s first Crew Chief of Recycling. He takes great pride in his professional conduct and his truck affectionately known as ‘Brenda Jean’ that is always impeccably maintained. His commitment to his unit and his role in the local municipal solid waste industry is exemplary and highly valued by ESD and the community at large.”

Nominated by: Georgetown County Environmental Services Division
"The Mid-Atlantic SWANA Chapter bears the DNA of Steve. As a founding member (and first president) of the Chapter in 1983 (then affiliated with the Governmental Refuse Collection & Disposal Association), Steve has passionately served, and continues to serve, the Chapter and its associates by elevating the level of solid waste education in the Region. Steve was Chapter President in 1984, 1985, 1988, 2007, and 2008. Steve served as the Chapter Director from 1993 through 2006. Steve assists the Chapter through service on several planning committees (e.g. WASTECON (co-chair in 1994, 2001 and 2013), Mid-Atlantic Road-E-O (2013 and 2014) Scholarship, By-Laws). Steve keeps abreast of developments in the industry and is active in his community through various volunteer efforts (speaking at schools, working with his homeowner’s association and in a service ministry that assists needy families in Baltimore County). The BOD views Steve as a true unsung hero.”
Curtis Lundy
Board Member, Community Volunteer, Xstream Cleanup, Living Lands & Waters, Nahant Marsh

“Curtis Lundy is a retired banking executive who continues to work full-time on a volunteer basis as a leader (really a servant) to many local environmental groups. He is the chair of Xstream Cleanup, an annual b-state cleanup of local waterways that has removed nearly 1 million pounds of trash since 2003. In addition, he has played a role on the board of Living Lands & Waters, a locally-based national educational organization whose founder, Chad Pregracke, was named CNN Hero of the Year in 2013. In addition, Curtis serves Nahant Marsh, a local environmental gem whose transformation from a lead-filled area used by sportsmen to an EPA Superfund Site to a healthy wetland has been supported and championed by Curtis and many others. For these efforts and many more, we believe that Curtis Lundy deserves recognition as a SWANA Unsung Hero.”

Nominated by: Waste Commission of Scott County
“Having been introduced to the engineering and science of landfill operations 7 years ago by Mr. Madden it has been a learning experience to realize that when experts said to this young engineer you are to cold to produce gas in any quantity. As I was told he then went about undertaking a study to prove them wrong. We at Anchorage Regional Landfill are at the forefront of gas production in my estimation with the most northern landfill. We have surpassed all models in development that to date have been projected on this landfill I would like to see the faces of these same experts who once said your to cold of a climate to produce any sustainable quantity of landfill gas, when in fact we are now thanks to his knowledge and negotiations are selling enough gas to generate 7.1 megawatts of electrical power and climbing. I want to thank Mark here openly for the introduction to a fascinating science and engineering marvel and a career I am proud of. The SWANA organization is one I am now proud to say I am a part of.”

Nominated by: Shane Christiansen
“Leron is an individual that show dedication and passion in all that he does. He gives 200% back to his community in effort and time alone. He gives a service that most citizens overlook until it is missed. He is at work when the sun comes up and when the sun sets. He is truly an over achiever. He is my Unsung Hero.”

Nominated by: Rodney Jamison
“Jessica Moore works for University of Maryland. Since she started working in the Recycling and Solid Waste Unit, the recycling rate and diversion rate have increased, and the landfilled waste has decreased. She has streamlined the safety curriculum for the unit to ensure all employees receive the proper equipment and training for all aspects of the jobs. She requires all employees to have in-depth vehicle inspections turned in each month, as well as day-to-day feedback on vehicle performance. UMD has changed contracts for construction and demolition debris from one landfilling the waste to one with an eighty percent recycling recovery rate. She is currently working to vastly increase campus composting as a primary choice in waste disposal. She is chairing a committee to change the tailgating mindset for the upcoming 2014-15 athletic season by working toward a zero-waste philosophy.”
Jennifer Nicholson
Assistant to the Director, City of Kissimmee

“Jennifer Nicholson has done an outstanding job with the Recycling Program in the City of Kissimmee. She has spent many hours working on events and programs to help with getting Public Education distributed to our citizens. She has even gone so far as to volunteer time to do events on the weekends to show her spirit for recycling. One of her latest ventures was her commitment to the Give Kids the World Extreme Village Makeover. She came up with a flyer that was given to the contractors of the project to show how and where to recycle and where to place other debris. She also led volunteers through the village to assist with breaking down cardboard and separating it from the other debris to help ensure that there was as little or no contamination as possible. She is very committed to the environment and does a great job showing it.”

Nominated by: Jody Kirkendall
“As the Wake County Keep America Beautiful Director, Lois Nixon started a recycling program in the 1990s in the local school system, initially with igloo recycling containers on school campuses, that also were used by the community. Before she retired in 2005, the Feed the Bin program for mixed paper was piloted in 25 schools, with school presentations, lesson plans, etc. The program is now in 186 schools, recycling 750-800 tons of paper per year.”

Nominated by: Sue Bumpous
Jose Nunez
Crew Leader Solid Waste Collection, Spherion Staffing SErvices

“Mr. Nunez has diligently worked as a temporary employee at the City of Lubbock landfills since 1997. He proudly picks up windblown material, mows, and takes care of the property in order for the City to remain in compliance with state regulations. The total tonnage collected under his leadership is about 1,296,980 pounds. Mr. Nunez is dedicated to the City; his work ethic is impeccable. He rarely misses a day, except to visit his family in Mexico. He stringently trains incoming temporary employees to meet his high expectations to keep the property in excellent condition. He takes diligent care of equipment and expects it to be in the perfect condition he left it. He is a compassionate person as well, leaving water out during drought for the coyotes. I am proud to have Mr. Nunez as a part of our team. Please consider Mr. Nunez as an Unsung hero”

Nominated by: City of Lubbock Solid Waste
Jesus Perez
Solid Waste Truck Driver, City of El Paso

“Jesus Perez demonstrates bravery, quick-thinking and safe work practices. On October 15, 2013, Jesus and his collections trainee returned from their route. After parking their Automated Side Loader (ASL), his trainee headed back to the office but quickly noticed flames shooting from the bottom of another ASL that was parked nearby. The trainee ran to Jesus for help. As Jesus rushed over to the burning truck, he spotted a pair of fellow employees struggling with a fire extinguisher, as the flames threatened to jump to two adjacent ASLs. With a calm head, Jesus took hold of the situation, grabbing the extinguisher and putting out the fire. Jesus had recently completed fire safety training by the City’s Fire Department as part of his driver training program. In his act of heroism, Jesus prevented injuries and further equipment damage, potentially saving his department approximately $780,000, the cost to replace the ASL on fire and the two adjacent trucks.”

Nominated by: Richard Adams
“Mayor Pro Tem Carmen Ramirez has been a diehard supporter of the City’s Zero Waste Planning efforts. She has attended every public outreach meeting and even facilitated the workshop to develop the City’s vision for Zero Waste. She is an advocate of environmental stewardship and seizes every opportunity to promote recycling and waste reduction. She is a supporter of solid waste employees across the board and has advocated for living wages for MRF sorters. Her support for the City’s MRF and transfer station was essential to efforts to increase diversion while reducing cost. These efforts led to a 100% increase in floor diversion in two months. She was instrumental in making staffing and equipping the facility a high priority at a time when resources were stretched very thin. In short, Mayor Pro Tem Carmen Ramirez has been the number one advocate of good waste management in the City of Oxnard.”

Nominated by: City of Oxnard
“The Richmond Green Ambassadors (RGAs) are a group of volunteer secondary school students, facilitated by the City of Richmond in partnership with the Richmond School District. These energetic and environmentally conscious individuals manage green initiatives in their school and in the Richmond community. They help organize the annual Richmond Earth Day Youth (REaDY) Summit and since 2010, have supported waste diversion and recycling at all major special events. They help and direct event attendees on appropriate sorting of waste, pick up litter and empty/sort recycling materials from collection bins. They have achieved impressive recycling results: in 2013, they helped divert 83% of waste at Ships to Shore Steveston, 75.5% at Steveston Salmon Fest and 86% at Richmond Maritime Festival. They are unsung heroes who demonstrate environmental leadership and stewardship of our natural environment.”
“Mr. Lindsey Sampson has spent the last 22 years building Lee County’s Integrated Solid Waste Management System from the ground up – literally. Originally hired to oversee construction of the county’s controversial WTE facility, Sampson advanced his career to developing and managing the county’s entire system. In the intervening years and with little fanfare, Sampson has implemented curbside single-stream recycling, C & D recycling, a compost program utilizing yard waste and biosolids, built a single-stream MRF, a household hazardous waste drop-off facility, and a green-field class I and III landfill. He has negotiated contracts to sell both electrical power from the WTE plant and carbon credits. Under his direction, garbage rates have remained stable and affordable. The success of these programs led to overwhelming community support for an expansion of the WTE plant in 2007. Lee county residents owe a lot to this unsung hero.”

“He deserves the recognition. As I recall, he was the driving force behind building the incinerator when many people were opposed to it. We are all fortunate that he had the foresight that he did. He is a visionary and an unsung hero of Lee County. I admire him for all he has accomplished in his career.”

Nominated by: Lee County Solid Waste Division and Dave Collins
Manuel Sanchez
Garbage Truck Driver,

“Every Monday morning for the past year, our five-year-old son, Daniel, who has autism, waits outside for the arrival of the garbage truck, and his favorite driver, Manuel Sanchez, with a wave and a mile. February 10th was no ordinary trash day. That is the day that Manuel stepped out of the cab of his truck – and his comfort zone – and stepped into our lives, carrying a toy garbage truck for Daniel. I captured the moment on tape, posted it to Facebook, and entitled it “The Gift.” He taught us all that kindness matters. He caused the autism community to stand up and cheer. He helped the world forget about their troubles for a moment. Had it not been for that one-minute-and-forty-second video, no one but us would have known about it. And that’s exactly why he’s an unsung hero – because that would have been just fine with him.”

Nominated by: Robin Newberger
“Mr. Schreiber does a job that often goes unnoticed in our industry but is vital to ensure that the new solid waste landfill cells and old landfills closures are constructed properly so as to protect public health and the environment. This job has required Tim to often work in excess of 60 hours per week all over the US and in Puerto Rico. His experience includes on-site observation of over 70 solid waste cell and closure contraction projects which involved the placement of over 15 million cubic yards of clay liner material and over 50 million square feet of geosynthetic materials. This includes two landfills for Camden County.”

Nominated by: Camden County Solid Waste
“She is a teacher who did a lot of voluntary work at a non-profit organization “Basura Cero” (Zero Waste, in Spanish). She coordinates conferences promoting recycling at schools, encourages municipalities for zero waste events, created a video for reducing waste. She also connect people for promote exchange of materials.”
“Ms. Shilling is a Green Team Leader for Benton Junior High and has a Green Team of about 20 students. This Green Team is the most active Green Team in Saline County. I can always count on them when we have projects and need volunteers. This Green Team alone has put in over 100 volunteer hours so far this year with volunteering at the Saline County Fair to help educate citizens about recycling, volunteering with clean-up projects in their community, and their own school campus clean-ups. In my opinion the Green Team is an Unsung Hero for the dedication they have to their school and community to have a cleaner and more environmentally friendly place to learn and play.”
“Aside from Renee’s duties as the Project Learning Tree state coordinator for the state of North Carolina, she is also involved with efforts to help citizens better understand issues surrounding solid waste. In cooperation with the state office of Environmental Assistance and Outreach, Renee developed a workshop series on municipal solid waste. This workshop series trained over 50 teachers to use environmental education resources to boost their knowledge, skills, and confidence in teaching thousands of students about issues related to municipal solid waste. Renee also served the Raleigh community as a member of the Board of Directors for The Scrap Exchange, a non-profit creative reuse center whose mission is to promote creativity, environmental awareness, and community through reuse. While her Board term is now over, Renee continues to volunteer countless hours to The Scrap Exchange because she is eternally committed to both the cause and the community that supports it.”
William “Bill” Stullken
General Manager (Retired), Southeastern Chester County Refuse Authority (SECCRA)

“Bill Stullken recently retired from SECCRA (Southeastern Chester County Refuse Authority) after 25 years of service. It was the late 80s. SECCRA needed to evolve to meet new challenges. Public expectations and changing regulations required us to constantly adapt. A professional leader was needed to guide us and change course as needed. Bill was hired to lead SECCRA. He ran a fiscally responsible organization, and kept the organization financially self-sustaining. He kept up with a challenging regulatory environment while operating in a manner which protected the environment. Bill also planned for SECCRA’s future with a long-term development plan, and during his tenure, total assets went from $300k to $26M and disposal capacity is secured for at least the next 30 years. I nominate Bill for the unsung hero award, as he did his job well, serving the waste disposal needs of the 100,000 residents to SECCRA’s service area. His job was often a thankless, since no one wants to think about their trash after it gets to the curb.”

Nominated by: Southeastern Chester County Refuse Authority
Jerry Tancil
Heavy Equipment Operator III, Georgetown County Environmental Services Division

“Affectionately known as ‘Tiny’, Jerry Tancil plays an indispensable role in the day-to-day operations at the Georgetown County Landfill. As Heavy Equipment Operator III for the past 5 years, he operates and maintains the compactor; a 40-ton, spike-wheeled, all-steel, monster machine responsible for crushing and compacting all solid waste disposed of at the landfill. The maneuvering of this kind of landfill equipment demands constant focus, physical agility and unending valor. This skill and effort had been a strong contributor to the division’s landfills exceeding density industry standards by as much as 25%. He has also showed a strong commitment to safety regulations earning him several awards within the division and the county. Although conditions in the field are often risky and demanding Mr. Tancil believes he ‘has the best job in the world’ and professionally embraces his responsibilities as Heavy Equipment Operator.”

Nominated by: Georgetown County Environmental Services Division
Rich Thompson
Director, Environmental Compliance, Republic Services

“Rich Thompson is the Corporate Director of Environmental Compliance for Republic Services. In this role he manages Republic’s environmental compliance programs through the development of compliance tracking systems and proactive management of environmental issues as well as supporting special waste management programs. Rich joined Allied Waste in 2006 after working in various environmental management positions. He was named to his current position following the December 2008 merger of Republic Services and Allied Waste. In those years since he joined the company, Republic Services has successfully reduced environmental enforcement actions by 75% through durable and proactive measures to improve company operations. Rich holds a Master’s Degree in Environmental Engineering and a Bachelor’s Degree in Zoology, both from the University of Iowa.”

Nominated by: Republic Services
“Martha and Bill Treece are unsung heroes that have quietly helped implement recycling services for hundreds of thousands of citizens throughout Arkansas. They are recycling brokers by trade but ‘recycling’ angels in action! They had a dream of dramatically increasing recycling rates in Arkansas. They achieved this dream by focusing on rural areas of the state. They assisted dozens of fledgling recycling programs to begin collecting material in areas where recycling was not previously available. They operate more as coaches and cheerleaders than brokers. Martha and Bill actually help in all phases of starting these municipal programs - even teaching a new center’s staff how to sort material, how to load the balers and how to store the material! Our recycling program would not have been possible without the time, effort, energy and caring that Bill and Martha provided! We are blessed to have them as a partner!”
“Mr. Mehal M Trivedi, Engineer, Division of Utilities and Solid Waste Management, Frederick County, Maryland, has been with the local government managing solid waste capital projects since 1989 - this would be his 25th year. With possessing a Master of Environmental Engineering from Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and a Bachelor of Civil Engineering degree from India, the projects that he has managed include a complete array of solid waste management - Landfill closures and Lined Cell constructions, Transfer Station and Landfill Gas To Energy projects. Permits & Regulatory Compliance of active & closed landfill groundwater, leachate and gas management, waste tonnages and landfill capacity. He has brought a Bronze Excellence Award for Composting Systems. SWANA-Long Beach, CA in 2009. He received special achievement award Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) in 1996”
“Jeff has taken the City of Clinton from a city with almost no recycling to one of highest performing programs in NC in one year. His efforts have started curbside residential, school, and small business single stream recycling. As well as the collection of some special waste recycling including used cooking oil and mercury products. This has Clinton out performing many larger cities across NC. Jeff has also been able to do this with a much smaller budget than larger cities. The City of Clinton continues to increase its waste diversion each month and to grow its programs under the guidance of Jeff, that is why Jeff in a recycling unsung hero in North Carolina.”

Nominated by: NCDENR
“Mr Wellenstein has saved Lowell $1 million annually and soon to be $2 million. In 2006 Lowell (a city of 106,500, 40 mi. northwest of Boston) disposed of 44,500 tons of trash. March 2nd 2014, was the 5th anniversary of implementing automated curbside trash collection. At the start (CY09) the City disposed of 39,500 tons of MSW. Through Gunther’s team work and programmatic oversight the CY13 disposal dropped to 28,700 tons (a 27.3% reduction in 5 years - 35.5% drop since 2006); lowering the municipal SW&R budget from $7.4M to $5.1M (FY15). During the same 5 year period curbside (dual-stream) recycling improved from 7.5% to 12.5%. Under Gunther’s direction the City began another 5 year waste reduction program. During December 2013 Waste Management delivered 25,000 (automated) single stream recycling carts. Early indications (one month of data) show recycling is up 25% and MSW is down 15%. For January 2014 the recycling rate is 13.5%. Gunther’s next goals are to improve organics and textile diversion.”

Nominated by: Stephen Greene
“Terry Wiley has been with the Abbeville County Public Works Dept. since 2005. In that time Solid Waste Collection & Recycling in Abbeville has grown tremendously. That growth is a direct result of Terry’s hard work and dedication. He is a key figure in our community, educating both young and old about the importance of recycling, making sure the solid waste collection needs of the County are always met, and seeking new ways to improve the service which he provides. In short, wherever Abbeville County’s solid waste collection and recycling future takes us we will not have gotten there without Terry leading the way.”

Nominated by: Abbeville County Public Works Department
Herman Wilson
Crew Leader Solid Waste Collection, City of Eden

“Mr. Wilson has been employed with the City of Eden since May of 1998 he has always gone above the call of duty to work with the citizens of Eden to make sure that their needs and concerns are met. All of his special stop residents always tell me what a great job that he does.”

Nominated by: Rodney Carter
“Stanley Witherspoon became an ACUA employee in 2000, Lead driver in 2003, Recycling Group Leader in 2004 and he presently holds the title of Collections Manager (Outreach is not one of his job specs). Throughout the ACUA career STanley has extended his reach into the community to positively affect recycling rates wherever he happens to be. He single handedly developed a school assembly that he has presented to many schools to students of all ages within Atlantic County (Hamilton Township, Brigantine, Absecon, Atlantic City, Pleasantville) and also to Ocean City. Recently he worked with EHT High School; bringing administration, custodial staff, teachers and students together to bring about a recycling change so profound that the school was recognized for the most improved school recycling rate in the entire country during the national Recycle Bowl competition. Stan is the Man! He is indeed an Unsung Hero who deserves to be recognized!”

Nominated by: ACUA
“Sarah is the founder of Zero to Go, a different kind of removal service. She picks up unwanted materials, such as furniture, and gives the materials to those in need. In 2013 she also started picking up recyclables and food scraps from neighboring businesses in the City of Beacon, Dutchess County, NY. She started a small anaerobic digestion system at a community garden and has collected and composted over 1,200 gallons of food scraps so far. In addition, she collected almost a ton of recyclables, both from businesses and two local events. She has been the driving force in initiating zero waste at large community events, staffing collection stations, providing education, and transporting the materials to the compost location or the Beacon recycling facility. Nearly every single item was transported to its next home by bicycle! As she has stated, “This means no carbon emissions, no fossil fuel usage, and double the fun and exposure of our work. And we stay in shape!” I believe she deserves to be recognized for her efforts and her success, and no longer be an “Unsung” Hero.”

Nominated by: Lindsay Carille, Deputy Commission, Dutchess County Division of Solid Waste Management
“Chris Wynn has served the Environmental Services Division for a total of 13 years where he is responsible for maintaining solid waste grade in the Subtitle D Landfill. Over the years he has garnered a wealth of experience and has played an integral role in exploring and assessing new approaches to improving efficiencies in trash disposal operations. For instance he spearheaded the implementation of recycling old road material to construct new access paths throughout the ESD complex. This innovativeness has now become standard procedure at ESD and resulted in significant economic and environmental benefits. He considers his service to the community and adhering to environmental and safety regulations pivotal in his profession and work code.”