

SHRM NM HR Professional of the Year 2016 Nominees

(As presented at the first annual SHRM New Mexico Human Resources Professional of the year Award ceremony March 9, 2016 at the SHRM NM State Conference.)

We believe that Human Resource professionals dedicated to elevating others and their organizations deserve to be celebrated. So we asked the New Mexico HR and business community to nominate HR practitioners who demonstrate excellence in Human Resources.

HR typically is the department that develops award and recognition programs for their organizations. This was an opportunity to pay it forward and reward and recognize a well deserving HR professional in New Mexico. We challenged the nominees to tell us more about themselves as HR professionals.

We asked nominees to share with the judges how they go beyond their job description to support their organization and its employees. We asked them how they have elevated the HR profession, and to provide testimonials written by stakeholders and colleagues that enlightened us as to how others experience their Integrity, Leadership, Innovation, Strategic Thinking, Character, Objectivity, Passion, Influence, and Knowledge.

They shared their greatest professional achievement in HR, a breakthrough moment in their career. They told us what they believe needs to happen in order for HR to be regarded as a strategic business partner, how to secure that proverbial “seat at the table.” They told us what they believe needs to happen for employees to say, “I get to go to HR” instead of “I have to go to HR.”

Finally, they shared with us what prompted them to start a career in HR, what compels them to stay, and what they hope for in the future.

We’d like to thank our fellow volunteers on the State Council who helped us shape and promote this award, and all of you who recognized a colleague by submitting a nomination.

Judges

- Ann Rhoades (was introduced as a speaker after the ceremony).
- Audrey Arnold is the Director of Executive and Professional Education for UNM’s Anderson School of Management. Audrey connects exceptional students, renowned faculty, accomplished alumni, prominent business partners, and dedicated staff to provide high-quality educational resources such as accelerated MBA programs, professional development certificates, and customized training

for New Mexico's business community.

- Jason Espinoza is President of New Mexico Association of Commerce and Industry, a statewide business advocate, which works to promote commonsense, pro-business policies to grow New Mexico's economy and create better opportunities for all New Mexicans.
- Randy Crutcher holds a Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership and Development. He is the Director of the Passion Test, co-founder of Quantum Leap Coaching, and author of The Passion Principle.

The judges loved getting to know the candidates and learning all that is being accomplished in the New Mexico HR community.

We noticed several themes as we read through the applications. All of our nominees are passionate about the profession, the organizations and the people they serve. They are constantly working to implement new solutions to improve their processes. Many paid tribute to the HR leaders they "grew up" under, some who served as inspiration for how we want to be, some who served as a model for how not to be. Our nominees described how they make a point to get out from behind their desks and walk the floor to get to know and be accessible to employees. They also emphasized the importance of HR learning and demonstrating that they understand the ins and outs of the business operations, and can even jump in when necessary.

The amount of experience, credentials, and combined volunteer work these nominees perform is staggering. We heard over and over how these nominees demonstrate integrity, overcoming adversity, how they model positivity, yet hold people accountable when necessary, including themselves. It was clear from the testimonial letters written on their behalf that they all have big fan clubs, and now they can add all of us on the judging panel to that fan club.

It was an incredible challenge to choose just one winner.

Finalists

(in alphabetical order by first name)

Blair Boyer is Director of HR for Dion's, and is President-Elect for HRMA, your Albuquerque SHRM chapter. Blair is most proud of a payroll/HRIS implementation because of how badly he says he botched his first attempt with a system that created more work and did not fit their culture. So next time he involved all departments and employees at all levels and implemented a successful system which then allowed his team to get out from behind their desks and engage with employees. Blair shared a mantra with us, which goes, "We are what we tolerate". Blair systematically set out to meet with all department heads and store management to find out what was broken

with their relationship with HR and took action to fix it. “I have patiently and intentionally grown an HR department that the company cannot live without.” Blair’s CEO, Mark Herman calls Blair “honest, accountable, loving and consistent”.

Dana Burdick is the Senior HR Manager for Tempur Sealy’s Central Region, including the 800 thousand square foot facility in ABQ, the world’s largest mattress factory. During the plant’s expansion, Dana led the labor-intensive New Mexico Job Training Incentive (JTIP) Program, and participated in other cost saving and employment tax credit programs for Tempur Sealy, which yielded \$350k in reimbursements, transforming HR from an expense center into a department that effectively paid for itself, twice over. But Dana’s proudest achievement occurred when Productivity was increasing, resulting in the plant no longer supporting two full shifts. There was a plan to cut all employees from the night shift, employees Dana had personally recruited, and Dana was concerned about the stress excessive overtime would put on the day shift. To make an incredible story short, Dana put together a plan to meet all productivity requirements without losing a single employee that also reduced costs, and enabled supervisors to spend more time on developing and coaching. Dana prevented the lay off of an entire shift of employees. The VP of Manufacturing said, “Dana has shown the old guard that she can outperform and lead all different work teams in a male dominated industry.”

Daniel Gutierrez serves as the Executive Director of Human Resources & Professional Development for Santa Fe Community College and serves as its EEO Officer. SFCC’s president said that HR is a field that is highly valued at their institution. Among Daniel’s many accomplishments at SFCC, he created a Center for Diversity and Integration. The coordinator for that center said that under Daniel’s leadership, “For the first time in all my years here, HR is now firmly situated as a trustworthy resource.” He launched a Supervisor Series and Graduate Leadership Program in SFCC’s Academy for Teaching and Learning. As a Hispanic male from Southern New Mexico, Daniel is proud to serve as a mentor for Hispanic Male Students.

Dixie Colvin is Director of HR for X-Ray Associates. An executive said of Dixie, “In all my interactions with Dixie, she has maintained a positive attitude, and always seems to be able to balance her concern for the well being of employees with the interests of the organization.” A colleague said, “Dixie is one of the greatest hires we have ever made.” The ‘defining moment’ of Dixie’s HR career happened in 2010 while she was employed at Emcore which experienced a shooting rampage by a former employee that left 2 employees and the shooter dead, and 4 employees wounded. Dixie was one of those wounded. Dixie shared, “I pledged to myself, lying on a gurney in the ER, that this experience would not define me as a ‘victim’. I worked hard to heal physically, to forgive the shooter and those who might have prevented it, and to emotionally transcend the fear, the PTSD, and a sense of victim’s remorse. I delved deep into how HR might have prevented this tragedy from happening, I learned about preventing violence in the

workplace, and I spoke openly and honestly about overcoming fear and blame. I live joyfully most days, and feel very blessed to serve as a model of triumph over trauma.”

Jamie Wagoner is the Benefits and Compensation Manager for the City of Farmington and President of the Four Corners SHRM chapter in Farmington. Her director said of Jamie, “Managing the benefits plan against uncertain external factors, Jamie made almost prophetic decisions in managing the plan, saving an enormous amount of money for the City, and our employees who essentially own the plan.” One of the highlights of Jamie’s HR career was being quoted by Senator Heinrich on the Senate floor during his speech regarding the Cadillac tax. Jamie says she worked very hard to turn around the very dreary reputation of the City of Farmington’s HR Department, known for strict adherence to the rules, and anti-employee sentiment. Jamie said, “The moment I knew all the hard work had paid off was the day our Fire Chief stopped in my office to tell me how strange and wonderful it was to hear laughter coming from the HR department.”

Jill Avey is owner of Southwestern HR Consulting, where she leads a team of consultants who along with Jill provide full spectrum Human Resource expertise and advisement to dozens of CEOs and business owners throughout New Mexico. Jill says, “Working as Consultants allows us to work objectively and without influence that can sometimes occur within a team, to hold true to what we know and believe is right, even when we know it won’t be popular. My single greatest opportunity and blessing is to offer relief to overwhelmed, sometimes scared, confused, angry, or embarrassed (for-what-they-don’t-know) business owners. Our greatest rewards are responses like, “I slept last night”, “thank you for not making me feel like an idiot”, “thank you for being by my side”, and “I don’t know how we got along before you”.

(Winner) Melonie Parker previously served as the Strategic Staffing Manager for Sandia Laboratories and returned to now serve as the VP of HR and Communications, leading over 350 people who serve the 10,000 employees of Sandia. Melonie recently led the effort that “broke the glass ceiling” by selecting the first woman to ever lead a national laboratory. The president of Sandia said this of Melonie, “During an executive meeting, after Melonie described a team building event she hosted, the entire executive team admitted they wished they worked for Melonie.” One of Melonie’s own employees described her as “the most impactful and effective HR leader” that she has worked with in her own 30 year HR career. Another wrote, “I constantly observe Melonie working to elevate our mindset by challenging our paradigm and asking us to think differently about the way we provide service to the organization. Melonie has broken down barriers that have existed for years, improving our credibility as HR professionals. Melonie’s debut meeting is fondly remembered by the entire organization. She entered the room dancing to Pharrell Williams’, song Happy – a true reflection of the contagious joy and enthusiasm she brings to work each and every day. She gets the team excited about what we do.”

Sue Byrne is the HR Manager for the Peters Corporation in Santa Fe known for its real estate holdings. And if you've set foot in a gallery or restaurant in Santa Fe, it is likely you were served by one of the 900 or so employees over which Sue is the sole HR person. 3 years ago Sue became the first HR practitioner for the 45 year old company. As her COO said "Because of Sue's expert knowledge and interpersonal skills, she gained the respect of senior management, and her dedication has led to a much improved company with uniform treatment of employees, better morale and efficiency. Sue created change with integrity and grace, and without turmoil. Sue is also the current president of the SHRM chapter in Santa Fe, and leveraged her role to help Senator Heinrich gather sources for the speech he made on the Cadillac Tax on the Senate floor.

Tamara Gordon is the HR Manager for New Mexico Heart Institute. Her COO had this to say about Tamara, "In May of 2015, decisive changes needed to be made in the HR department, and where there were 3 people, Tamara was the only remaining staff member in HR. Tamara accepted the challenge of building a new department, and did so in less than 9 months. Even more extraordinary, she built a department that is trusted and respected. Tamara changed culture." Tamara herself said, "HR is not the Principal's office, but a safe place to vent or just enjoy a nice conversation. I like that most employees will not say, 'uh oh, HR is here' when I walk by, but will say, 'Hey Tamara, how's it going?'" As the saying goes 'happy wife, happy life'. 'Happy employee, happy organization' also rings true."

This was a tough decision for the judges because of the high caliber of the nine nominees. These individuals are all impressive HR professionals; passionate about the work they contribute in their organizations.
