



The Chief 8811 Award



Dedicated to the Memory of Tom Plasch

Tom Plasch worked at Washington County in the Building Services department for 25 years as a Building Technician. Tom was known throughout the County as a dedicated craftsman, a selfless teacher, a team-oriented co-worker, a devoted family man, and a loyal friend. On July 19, 2019, Tom's story ended too soon along with his loving wife, Miriam. His loss was felt not only throughout his family at home and his family in Building Services, but was felt throughout the Washington County workforce.

Dedication

Tom Plasch started his career with Washington County in 1994 as an entry-level technician. Tom worked tirelessly over the next 25 years to prove himself to his managers, co-workers, and the customers he served. By lunchtime each day, Tom was rarely seen with a clean uniform. Unless he was in a training that day, Tom would be covered in grease, dust, soot, or any other type of grime due to his determined effort to keep his assigned buildings running smoothly and efficiently. Tom never hesitated to help out whenever needed, even on weekends and evenings when duty called. He would stay after his shift ended if the need arose. Even if Tom was at his cabin, 100 miles away, he would answer the phone if called and talk the caller through a solution to their problem. After his many years of serving the County as the least-experienced technician, Tom's dedication did not relent when he became the most senior technician on the staff. Even then, Tom always had a dirty uniform by noon.

Positivity

Tom will be remembered by his co-workers as always having a smile on his face. Even when faced with the most difficult or most disgusting of jobs, as can happen often in his field, he always maintained a positive attitude. As in any profession, moments occurred when Tom would become frustrated or even momentarily angry when a task did not happen the way he wanted. (He was human!) But after the moment faded, if Tom was asked how his day was going, he always smiled and said it was going good, even if that was a little white lie. This unwavering positivity was contagious around his co-workers resulting in improved employee morale.

Friendly – Natured

Tom never hesitated to share his personal life at work. He took the time to talk with all his co-workers, from the County Administrator to the newest member of frontline staff. Tom shared stories about his children, spoke about his weekend at the cabin, or conversed about the latest sporting event. As willing as Tom was to share, he was an equally good listener, always taking the time to get to know his co-workers on a more personal level. Perhaps most memorable for some of his co-workers were the famous egg rolls he brought for all to share made by his wife, Miriam. Tom adhered to the notion that his co-workers were truly his "work family."

Teacher

Tom took his role as the most experienced technician very seriously. His mindset was to share all of the knowledge that he amassed throughout his years, rather than to make less experienced employees struggle to learn on their own as he had to. Tom took new employees under his wing and provided an environment where they could feel comfortable reaching out to Tom for questions and advice, which benefited their individual development and in turn, strengthened the overall effectiveness of the Building Services team. This selfless approach, in which Tom so gladly engaged, was the impetus that prepared his co-workers to carry on effectively after his passing.

Team Player

Tom always understood his place on the Building Services team. He was always eager to help anyone in need, regardless of which group that happened to be. He never worried about performing a task that may not have been in his job description. It was common to see Tom grabbing a shovel in winter and assisting custodians with snow removal. He regularly volunteered to help out with the annual jail cleaning over a series of weekends. Tom assisted with the set-up of mechanical systems with the Project team. Whenever he came across Admin staff stacking items on the loading dock, he never let them struggle alone. In addition to helping his team in Building Services, there are countless stories of Tom stepping out of his traditional duties to assist staff throughout all County staff whenever a need was presented. Anyone carrying a radio would regularly hear someone calling for "8811," which was Tom's call number. That call for help was always answered by Tom with enthusiasm, which is why the call number "8811" has been retired by Washington County Building Services and why it is memorialized in the name of this award.

Pride

Despite his humble and team-oriented nature, Tom definitely took pride in his work. Tom was proud of a job well done. Tom was proud to carry the Chief Boiler's license for Washington County. The title of this award was given due to Tom's pride in his title of "Chief" boiler operator. Tom often challenged the contracted experts brought in for specifically licensed work when he felt something could be done differently and often times, Tom's wealth of experience proved to provide the right answer. Without bragging or gloating, Tom took delight in those contributions. Tom is the one of the rare few who could show pride and humility simultaneously.

These qualities that Tom possessed provide the basis for the Chief 8811 Award dedicated to the Memory of Tom Plasch. The honor of receiving this award means that the recipient excels at each of these qualities. Nominations for the award will be reviewed on an annual basis with a maximum of one winner per year, however, the award may not be given every year if there are no nominees worthy of receiving this prestigious honor.

