Reni McBride July 2018  
Employee of the Month  
Cimaron Neugebauer  
07/01/2018

Reni McBride was chosen as the Employee of the Month for July 2018. (Photo: Cimaron Neugebauer)

Reni McBride was chosen as the Employee of the Month for July 2018. Her boss, Ann M. Berghout Austin, Ph.D., director for the Center for Women and Gender spoke highly of McBride.

“The [Center for Women and Gender] is a highly visible, very active unit. Reni’s desk is in our outer office, and she is typically the first person people see as they come to our office. Our Center and our programs are very public and often have some measure of controversy about them. We deal with topics and issues about which many/most have very strong feelings. In fact, on Reni’s second day on the job she and I met with the FBI to discuss 17 death threats center employees had received the day before. Thereafter, Reni received dozens of calls from the media, the USU president’s office, and others asking about the death threats and requesting statements. Reni handled everything professionally, calmly and with great dignity. I do not know what we would have done without her. Despite the many opportunities to misspeak or misrepresent the Center, Reni is exceedingly circumspect and has never said anything to anyone that has put us in jeopardy or for which I have had to run interference. She has that unique sixth sense that enables her to know the hidden agenda and act accordingly. She is always highly professional while still conveying a warm, welcoming presence. I have had a number of gifted administrative assistants in my career of 37 years, and Reni is among the most astute and interpersonally gifted.

When I hired Reni, I asked about her problem solving skills. She confidently replied, “If I don’t know how to do it I will always find a way to learn.” This response has been true across the several years she has been in the Center and across several very thorny problems.

As with any office, there are sometimes tensions and stresses, but Reni is a master psychologist. She is completely able to analyze and evaluate student, faculty, and staff needs in a sensitive and organized manner. She deals with issues quickly and confidentially and never carries stories from person to person. I often ask her for advice if one staff member or another shows behavior I find confusing or unhelpful to the team; the advice she gives me is always spot-on.

Reni works well alone and in groups. She uses logic and reasoning in all approaches to problems, never defaulting to emotional outbursts, angry silences, etc. Prior to accepting the position at the Center, she had not worked previously in higher education. Even in the first few days at USU, it was clear to her that there were deep structure “rules” within the university culture that she needed to understand. Through her many contacts on campus and through conversations with me she has become a wise navigator of university culture and deep structure. Reni is a cut above many in terms of her remarkable ability to navigate problems with delicacy and aplomb.
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Reni works closely with our on-campus advisory board and the off-campus development board. She interacts with deans, department heads, faculty, and staff in a professional manner. She mentors a number of students, both in our office and otherwise. Whenever I introduce and thank her at our events (guest speakers, award ceremonies, brown bags, etc) she always receives a roar of applause attesting to her many skills of building relationships and teams. Reni never makes enemies; she never ruffles feathers; she just gets the job done in the most pleasant and efficient way possible.

In sum, Reni is a great gift and blessing to me, to our office, and the campus. She is resilient, efficient, professional, and a self-starter. I appreciate so much that she is a competent problem solver. Her life-experiences have given her the “creds” with our students, our faculty, donors, and all others. She is a remarkable person whom we appreciate very much.”

If you know someone whose hard work should be recognized, you can nominate them to be the next employee of the month. All nominations are considered by the SEA Employee Relations Committee for an entire calendar year. Learn more about other qualifications to be nominated as an employee of the month.