Thirty Fourth Annual

Virginia Hart
Special Recognition Award

May 19, 2017
1:00 p.m.

Senate Parlor
State Capitol
Madison, Wisconsin
Virginia Hart, Wisconsin’s first woman cabinet member, served as Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing, chairperson of the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, and chairperson of the Labor and Industry Review Commission.

Ms. Hart was a superb advocate for workers’ rights from the very start of her career. First as a social worker in Rochester, New York, later as a worker for the International Garment Workers Union in Tennessee during the 1940’s. When she moved to Wisconsin, she taught at the UW-Madison School for Workers while earning a master’s degree in labor economics in 1947.

In the 1960’s, Ms. Hart helped set up the Community Welfare Council, which later became the Community Action Commission of Dane County. She served as its president from 1967-1969.

She was appointed to two terms on the Police and Fire Commission where she worked to improve opportunities for women both in the Madison Fire Department and the Madison Police Department.

She helped to form the Group Health Cooperative of South Central Wisconsin, was executive secretary of the Democratic Party of Wisconsin, and more recently was involved in the Dudgeon—Monroe Neighborhood Association in Madison.

Ms. Hart was a world traveler. She and Henry Hart, her husband of 67 years, backpacked in the Rockies, the Andes, and the Himalayas. She also worked as a labor education specialist at the University of Hawaii and for the Agency for International Development in New Delhi, India.

Upon Virginia Hart’s retirement from state service in 1983, friends and colleagues established a fund so that each year a woman in Wisconsin state service could be recognized for exemplary performance and contribution to the citizens of the state. On March 24, 2007, Virginia Hart passed away at age 92.

With the generous help of contributors, the fund has been able to sustain the program for 30 years. With continued support, we hope to create an endowment to keep the Virginia Hart special recognition award alive for many years to come.

The recognition award is administered by the DOA-Division of Personnel Management.
About the Award

The Virginia Hart award recognizes “unsung heroines” in state service, thus providing encouragement and recognition to all women in state government. The award seeks to recognize women who share the following qualities: esteem from peers, acceptance of responsibility beyond the limits of their job descriptions, sustained, extraordinary achievement of assigned tasks, performance recognition from clients, community service, self-improvement, and the ability to overcome obstacles to performance.

Awards Program

Welcome
Gregory L. Gracz, Administrator
DOA-Division of Personnel Management

Remarks
Linda Seemeyer, Secretary
Department of Health Services

Presentation of Honorable Mention Awards

Presentation of Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award

Concluding Remarks
Gregory L. Gracz

~Please join us for light refreshments after the program has concluded~
Roxanne K. Gray
Department of Military Affairs

Mitigation Section Supervisor
Division of WI Emergency Management

Roxanne Gray is an outstanding public servant who has dedicated 40 plus years to the field of emergency management. Her career is a superb example of a woman’s upward progression in the civil service system through hard work, compassion for those she serves, and competency in fulfilling her responsibilities. Virginia Hart would have been honored to have her as an award recipient.

Roxanne started her career with Wisconsin Emergency Management (WEM) as a receptionist at the age of 18. As a new employee, she completed every task in a timely and accurate fashion, volunteered to help with assignments outside of her area, and was recognized by management as a “go to” person. She continually proved her competency and soon became the secretary to the WEM Administrator. Her great organizational and administrative skills served her well in this position and helped her make the Administrators she served successful. In this position she was exposed to and quickly grasped all aspects of the agency, including all of the various programs, fiscal and budget matters, and personnel issues.

This broad range of knowledge allowed her to effectively serve the many entities that had contact with the Administrator’s Office including the Governor’s Office, other state agencies, the federal government, county and local entities, and private and non-profit organizations. She treated each and every one of these groups with the utmost respect and ensured that each contact with them was addressed promptly. The knowledge and experience she gained as a support staff person would serve her well as she advanced to entry level and eventually to supervisory positions.

Most of Roxanne’s early professional experience is in disaster response and recovery, including damage assessment and requesting and administering disaster assistance programs. She started out administering the Public Assistance Program and also worked directly with homeowners and businesses receiving assistance through the Individual and Family Grant Program.

Since starting her career, she has worked through more than 35 major events, including 28 Federal Disaster Declarations. In general, disaster response and recovery activities involve working long hours in stressful situations to ensure the health and safety of individuals and communities affected by a disaster event. Roxanne always put their needs before her own and was patient, understanding, and empathetic in helping them work through the maze of Federal disaster assistance programs. She quickly earned the respect of the local government officials she served, as they knew she would do her best to obtain the maximum possible amount of assistance for them.

WEM’s Federal partners were impressed with her knowledge of the program regulations and knew that she could be trusted to administer the programs with little oversight or assistance. Most importantly, WEM management was continually impressed with her work ethic, program knowledge, and dedication. They constantly and consistently received positive feedback from her “customers.” As a result, Roxanne has received many exceptional performance and merit awards.

In an effort to broaden her experience, Roxanne later accepted a position in the Radiological Emergency Response Program. She was responsible for developing exercises, conducting training, and writing plans to deal with potential incidents at the nuclear power plants in the state. In this position Roxanne also performed her responsibilities at an exceptional level and earned the respect of the various communities she served.

In the early 1990s, Roxanne transitioned to a Planner position in WEM’s Hazard Mitigation section before becoming Wisconsin’s State Hazard Mitigation Officer in 1994. She was eventually promoted to Mitigation Section Supervisor, and continues her unwavering commitment to making individuals and communities safer through mitigation in this position today. Many of her accomplishments in the Mitigation Section ultimately shaped disaster response and recovery at both the state and national levels for years to come.

Roxanne has been personally responsible for bringing almost $104 million in mitigation funding into our state, leading to the implementation of 178 plans and 176 projects that protect Wisconsin communities from natural hazards. She has written every State Hazard Mitigation Plan since the planning requirement was first established, and went above and beyond to make Wisconsin eligible for additional post-disaster mitigation funding by achieving Enhanced Plan status. Since the 1993 Midwest Floods, Roxanne pioneered our state’s buyout program, overseeing the removal of more than 600 flood-prone properties from harm’s way. Acquisition and demolition continues to be one of the state’s top mitigation priorities.

Roxanne’s legacy further includes spearheading the 1993 Interagency Disaster Recovery Group, which laid the foundation for the Wisconsin Recovery Task Force (WRTF) later formed in the wake of the devastating 2008 floods. Under her continued leadership, the WRTF still provides interagency disaster recovery support for current events such as the two federally declared flood events that occurred last year.

Additionally, she was a founding member of the Wisconsin Association of Floodplain, Storm Water, and Coastal Managers (WAFCSM), a professional organization that promotes improved water resource management in our state. In 2008, she received WAFCSM’s Chapter Service Award for “extraordinary and continuing leadership, including service as Chapter Secretary, Treasurer, Committee Chair, Newsletter Editor, Conference Planner, and Presenter.” In 2012, WAFCSM presented her with a Lifetime Achievement Award.
Roxanne was also recognized at the national level when she was invited by the National Emergency Management Association (NEMA) to participate in the 2011 Mitigation Planning Review Workgroup led by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). The workgroup consisted of mitigation staff from seven states, as well as national and regional FEMA staff. The group evaluated the hazard mitigation planning review process used by state government nationwide and developed recommendations for streamlining and improving the process.

Roxanne has also traveled the country providing training to fellow emergency management professionals, including multiple presentations of the Wetlands, Wildlife Habitat, and Flood Hazards in the Rock River Basin webinar series through the Environmental Law Institute.

As she worked to the benefit of our state and country, Roxanne also made innumerable positive contributions within our agency. In recognition of her sustained success in whatever position she held, WEM management has given her increased responsibilities and promoted her whenever possible. She served as a technical expert on several Governors’ Task Forces, including those dealing with drought and rising water levels on the Great Lakes. She shared her expertise as part of WEM’s Strategic Planning Committee in 1996 and again in 2014. In preparation for WEM’s accreditation through the Emergency Management Accreditation Program (EMAP), Roxanne led the development of the Wisconsin State Recovery Plan.

Roxanne has also played a key role in developing and conducting WEM’s annual Governor’s Conference on Emergency Management. Initially, she was responsible for the registration process and eventually helped to develop the conference agenda, coordinated with the conference host facility, obtained speakers, and presented workshops. This year, those efforts culminated with a special presentation marking the 50th anniversary of the conference, which she presented in addition to conducting pre-conference training and leading breakout sessions. WEM management knew that only Roxanne could develop and deliver this presentation successfully, and used the opportunity to publicly recognize her for her service.

Roxanne is greatly admired by her colleagues and employees for her experience, dedication, and leadership. She demonstrates a rare ability to delegate tasks while also working hard on each project herself. She leads her employees to the path, but trusts and empowers them to complete their work without micromanagement. She inspires others with her hard work and commitment to assigned duties.

She is WEM’s "walking encyclopedia" of institutional knowledge, with an uncanny ability to recall names, dates, locations, details, and specific regulatory language at the drop of a hat; in fact, her memory of Wisconsin road maps proved to be critical in coordinating last-minute helicopter flight details during the September 2016 southwest flooding. She exhibits unparalleled energy and drive, and is known for taking virtually no sick days over the course of her career. Her door is always open to anyone, and she takes pride in mentoring junior employees, students, and members of outside groups. Her overall goal is to improve communities in our state, to make them safer, stronger, and more resilient, and she genuinely cares about this mission and the people she serves.

Honorable Mentions

Patricia Benesh
Policy Advisor
Department of Health Services
Division of Quality Assurance

Pat Benesh is the epitome of an "unsung public servant heroine" whose exemplary performance and contributions to our state's most vulnerable citizens is deserving of the Virginia Hart Recognition Award. Pat has been a public servant for 33 years, mostly working for the Division of Quality Assurance whose role and responsibility is to protect the health, safety and well-being of Wisconsin citizens through the survey, certification and licensure of health care organizations.

Although Pat has been exemplary in many facets of her work, the work she has done with the Wisconsin Music & Memory Program is well beyond the limits of her job description and has been created and sustained with extraordinary achievement. Because of this work Pat is held in high esteem by her peers, key stakeholders across the state as well as professionals from numerous states she has helped.

This work began with Pat in 2013 when she watched a six minute video clip of Henry, a resident of a nursing home. The video changed her life. The video shows the power personalized music has on a person with profound dementia.

Henry comes alive; communicating with his family, sharing long-locked memories and expressing the joy he is feeling. Pat wondered, "Could Wisconsin bring this joy and excitement to the citizens of her state?" Pat discovered that the Music & Memory program was founded by Dan Cohen, from New York with a simple idea: Someday, if he was living in a nursing home he would want to be able to listen to his favorite 60s music. He thought why not bring new and used iPods into nursing homes to provide personalized music for residents.

Pat facilitates and chairs a committee that reviews applications to receive grants for a federal Civil Money Penalty (CMP) program. Dan and Henry inspired Pat to make a difference in the lives of nursing home residents living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia.

Pat contacted Dan, and told him Wisconsin had a creative funding source to train and support staff and purchase equipment for nursing home residents. At the time, Dan had certified approximately 80 facilities across the United States and Canada. Even though he was getting lots of interest from the Henry video, a significant barrier to other facilities joining was the start-up cost. Dan had not heard of CMP funding, although it was available in all states.

At approximately the same time, then DHS Secretary Kitty Rhoades called for a redesign of Wisconsin’s dementia care system to provide appropriate, safe and cost-effective care to citizens throughout the course of the disease. Currently Wisconsin
has 397 nursing homes with almost 16,000 residents or 55% with a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or related dementia. To help nursing homes become more dementia capable, DHS has a goal to increase training opportunities for facility caregivers, implement effective strategies to reduce reliance on antipsychotic medications, reduce the use of bed and chair alarms and enhance resident engagement and socialization.

The Wisconsin Music & Memory Program became one of Secretary Rhoades key initiatives and was co-led by Pat. Inspired by the 'Henry' video, DHS staff applied for and received funding through the CMP program to certify 100 nursing homes as Music & Memory facilities and equip 15 residents in each nursing home with a diagnosis of dementia with their own iPod loaded with personalized music. Although facilities made no monetary investment, they were expected to commit staff resources to participate in the certification training and ongoing implementation of the program. Facilities were also expected to commit staff time to participate in the research and evaluation components of the Music & Memory program.

During tight state budgetary times, it is difficult to find funding to support projects to improve the lives of citizens we serve. Wisconsin DHS was the first to use this creative funding source to improve the quality of life for nursing home residents through the power of personalized music.

With approval from the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), on April 23, 2013, the program was launched. DHS staff recruited 100 nursing homes to participate in the State's Music and Memory Initiative. Pat also helped create a website, an electronic mailbox, facilitated monthly webinars, created forms, brochures, resources and a communication process to help support the nursing homes throughout their implementation.

The recruitment was a success with 231 nursing homes applying to participate in the program. As a result, DHS established a wait list for 131 homes that became the genesis for Phase II of the Music & Memory Initiative.

Pat helped create an extremely effective Music & Memory program that was implemented throughout the state in phases; and has evolved with each successive phase using the lessons learned to modify the next phase and advance the success of the program.

Phase I of the Wisconsin Music & Memory Initiative was launched in the fall of 2013 and included 100 nursing homes certified as Music & Memory facilities and were provided with the equipment to bring personalized music to 1,500 residents. Six months into the implementation almost 50% of the facilities, through fundraising and community outreach, had expanded their program to bring personalized music to more residents.

Phase II began in the fall of 2014 and included 150 nursing homes, many that were waitlisted from Phase I, certified as Music & Memory facilities and were also provided the equipment to bring personalized music to 1,500 residents.

Phase III Student Volunteer Program launched in the fall of 2015 and included 61 nursing homes certified as Music & Memory facilities with the equipment to bring personalized music to over 500 residents. This phase of the program also includes collaboration with high schools and colleges bringing an intergenerational approach to the program. An evaluation conducted by the national Music & Memory organization will assess the impact of this intervention on residents and students.

Phase IV was just approved to expand the highly successful pilot student volunteer program to all the state's nursing homes.

Through Pat's leadership Wisconsin Music & Memory has grown across nursing homes, assisted living facilities and people's homes bringing immense joy to elders with dementia and their families along with the decrease in harmful medications. Wisconsin's leadership has helped the program sweep across the country with replication in 21 other states. People from all over Wisconsin and other states are so grateful for what Pat has helped build in Wisconsin and for being so generous with her time in advancing improved dementia care across the United States.

Response from staff has been equally enthusiastic. Feedback indicates an improved quality of life; residents are more alert, eating better, and are calmer. Staff report increased engagement with families and connection with loved ones.

When Pat first embarked on this program she wanted to make sure that this program could eventually become evidence-based practice and be sustainable. Whenever possible she wanted an evaluation connected to the project.

The personalized music intervention decreased overall caregiver distress, including emotional burden, relationship distress, and feelings of helplessness.

Residents in M&M NHs demonstrated greater 180-day improvement in behavioral symptom frequency and less antipsychotic medication use than pair-matched controls.

Over the past three years, Pat has collaborated with a growing number of assisted living facilities, trade associations, community organizations, universities and other states to bring personalized music to persons with dementia and their caregivers. There have also been dozens of articles, radio shows and TV news coverage of the Wisconsin Music & Memory Program which continues to bring enthusiasm and helps sustainability. Under Pat's leadership, the Wisconsin Music & Memory Program received three very special honors.

One of the Phase I nursing home's director of social services was the Music & Memory lead. She was one of the stars and became a model and mentor for many of the early facilities. This person's family also has a family-run foundation. They were so impressed with the program they gave $10,292 to start a Music & Memory and iPad program with six assisted living facilities. This program has an evaluation underway and has great potential to go beyond the music by using a variety of apps to further improve the lives of people with Dementia.

Secretary Kitty Rhoades supported and talked extensively about the Music & Memory Program. This program became one of the key initiatives within the overall system
redesign. Pat invited Secretary Rhoades to be a frequent guest on the DHS-sponsored Music & Memory webinars and the Secretary even had the Governor’s Cabinet members watch the Henry video trailer. Secretary Kitty Rhoades unexpectedly died in June 2016. The family, knowing how fond Kitty was of the Music & Memory program, gave over $12,000 for the Music & Memory program to be expanded in assisted living facilities.

The success of the Wisconsin Music & Memory program has led several states to contact DHS and ask how Wisconsin created and implemented their program. To date, 18 states have followed Wisconsin’s lead and replicated the program using CMP funds to start a Music & Memory program in their state. In addition, Pat has collaborated with 8 other states to answer questions and provide guidance on program funding and implementation. Pat has also collaborated with Canada, Australia, and Holland.

The Wisconsin Music & Memory Program was submitted in the prestigious Harvard Innovations of American Government Competition. The Program has made it to Round 2 and is under consideration as a finalist.

Pat has achieved all in a very humble manner, shying away from the spotlight. She has stated that her work with the program has been the best thing she has ever done in all her years as a public servant. Bringing joy to a person with dementia has been priceless.

**Ronda Hitz**

**Social Worker**

**Department of Health Services**

**Wisconsin Resource Center**

Ronda Hitz graduated from UW-Oshkosh in 1995 with a Bachelor of Social Work degree. She began working as a social worker at the Wisconsin Resource Center (WRC) in 1998, initially working with the Sexually Violent Predator population on the High Management unit. Since beginning work at WRC, Ronda has become a highly valued and respected coworker and social worker to all that have had the pleasure to work with her. Ronda co-facilitated sex offender groups until the Chapter 980 population moved to Sand Ridge Treatment Facility.

In June of 2001, Ronda began working on Unit H15 Admissions unit which completed admissions for the entire institution of inmates referred for treatment services. In 2012, Unit H15 transitioned from admissions into the Acute Psychiatric/Admissions unit.

Ronda's passion for mental health treatment began as a young woman when she tragically lost her brother, Randy. Her personal experiences with tragedy led her to learn how to process grief and tragedy but she also gained insight into healthy coping strategies, finding personal and community support, resources, and healing. She gives that professional care and guidance to each client she serves and she works tirelessly to put that support system in place when they are returning to their communities.

Since 2012, Ronda's unit still completes all admissions for the psychological services area with emphasis and focus on stabilizing the acutely mentally ill inmate population. Ronda now splits her time between holding individual client-centered unit staffing, creating treatment learning plans, as well as release planning for her caseload of twenty-three offenders. In addition, Ronda co-facilitates an on-unit group for the chronically mentally ill to engage them in prosocial activities.

Ronda's responsibilities have grown exponentially over the past four years when she volunteered to oversee and coordinate the Treat to Competency Program (TTC) that works with the acutely mentally ill to assist in restoring competency to proceed with pending legal matters. Ronda not only manages her unit responsibilities for her caseload of twenty-three but she has fostered very positive partnerships with the psychological evaluators, attorneys, partnering mental health facilities and her TTC clients. As acting program coordinator of TTC, Ronda is required to collect data, coordinate client visits and meetings, as well as case notes and educationally appropriate materials that serve her clients’ needs. This requires many hours of the work week. Ronda receives glowing feedback from satisfaction surveys evaluators. She is currently in charge of creating a new curriculum for the mental health facilities usage to better serve our vulnerable clients with severe and persistent mental illness. The program has grown from nine clients per year to about fifty clients annually.

Prior to her State service, Ronda was a manager at Homes for Independent Living providing personal care and maintaining daily household schedules and activities for
clients with cognitive and developmental disabilities. In addition, Ronda also worked for Lutheran Social Services prior to her employment at Homes for Independent Living.

Ronda is also a doting mother and wife and all of her life's roles don't come close to capturing her true empathy for others and strength as a woman working for the State of Wisconsin. She is the embodiment of what women and men should strive to be within their State service to truly uplift and protect the needs of the clients we serve.

Lorrie Simmons
Training Coordinator
Department of Workforce Development
Division of Administrative Services

There is not a more deserving person than Lorrie Simmons to receive the Virginia Hart Award, having dedicated her life to serving the citizens of the State of Wisconsin for the past 37 years, both at the Department of Health Services (DHS) and at the Department of Workforce Development (DWD).

The foundation of her professional career began as she worked her way through college, for three years, studying medical subjects and psychology. She put her medical skills and her compassionate nature to good use, starting her state career as a Resident Care Technician, providing care to severely disabled individuals at Central Wisconsin Center. From there she transferred to an administrative role—eventually advancing to the Training and Employee Assistance Coordinator for the DWD.

What makes Lorrie an "Unsung Hero" is that in her 17 years of working in the field of Employee Education, Development and Training, she has consistently added value and contributed to promoting a positive, healthy, productive work environment at the agency, both by her excellent example and by her work contributions. When budget and staff cuts occurred, reducing training staff from over ten people to three, Lorrie was committed to maintaining the same level of service, creatively finding resources to continue to provide training opportunities to 1500-1800 department level staff. She maintained this level of service for close to ten years!

Lorrie is known for her cheerfulness, sense of humor, kindness and for treating others with dignity and respect.

As the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) Coordinator, she has promoted the services and reached out to supervisors statewide to schedule on-site training sessions: In the past year, 300 staff attended EAP sessions in person and 365 staff by Webinar.

In 2014, when all staff in our building had to be relocated due to a fire, Lorrie scheduled many crisis response sessions for staff, helping reduce stress.

Since 2005, Lorrie has organized 210 lunch time learning events "Brown Bags" on a variety of topics: financial, health, nutrition, safety, assisted with "Take your Daughter or Son to Work Day" events, securing presenters and providing presentations. She helped plan and present Leadership Conferences; Diversity events, Flu shot clinics, Health Fairs, Wellness events, Retirement Information and Deferred Compensation sessions, and benefit fairs, and traveled to many DWD offices throughout the state, delivering True Colors training to over 700 staff.

Lorrie is well-respected by her co-workers and colleagues and is often the "go-to" person due to her level of knowledge and willingness to help. She has developed outstanding working relationships with others, and therefore has accomplished projects well beyond the scope of her job. She strives for a "win-win" in the difficult situations she has faced.
Lorrie is known for consistently providing "above and beyond, going the extra mile" exceptional and helpful customer service to both our internal and external customers.

For over a decade, Lorrie has organized a department-wide yearly donation drive to collect highly needed pet items for the Dane County Humane Society. She also accepts items year-round and promptly delivers them to the shelter. Because of her efforts in personally leading this initiative, our department has been recognized for those contributions.

As one who loves nature, she also has advocated for clean-up of the Warner Park Marsh after fireworks rubberized jeopardized the area wildlife.

Despite life challenges she has encountered throughout her career, Lorrie has remained positive and upbeat as a steadfast, reliable employee.

As a training professional, Lorrie is committed to a philosophy of being a life-long "learner," constantly seeking new opportunities to improve and grow personally and professionally.

Lorrie is humble and honest - willing to admit and correct mistakes, receive feedback and constructive criticism - and then move on...continuing to improve on her already exceptionally high standards of performance!

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Denise Symdon
Administrator
Department of Corrections
Division of Community Corrections

The starting point of any significant movement is often credited to an event or a person which causes larger groups to take up a cause and move it forward. Sometimes it is called a ground zero and the person is sometimes referenced as a trailblazer or pioneer.

Denise is truly one of the most talented and remarkable public servants in state service. Since her appointment to the position of Administrator, Denise has been the catalyst and cheerleader to the division's move toward implementation of evidence based practices. In 2010, Denise began to provide the vision, framework and support to change the way in which our staff worked with offenders and victims within the community. She used research and science to guide her indecision making and strategic planning.

Culture change is never without struggle, criticism or consternation. It is a true leader who stands strong in the face of adversity and is guided by an unwavering belief that the changes made will lead to better outcomes for all involved. It is because of Denise's experience, convictions and beliefs that she has been successful in implementing the changes made in community corrections.

In 2005, a conference for the Department of Corrections was held focused on reentry in which Dr. Richard Stroker told a story of the Apollo 11 mission. He stated that in 1969, during one of the press briefings in the NASA command center in Houston, Texas, the reporters were waiting for the NASA officials when they noticed a janitor with a broom. A reporter asked the janitor what his job at NASA was. The janitor replied - "I help put a man on the moon". It is with that same perspective that in 2010 when Denise was appointed as the Administrator of Community Corrections that she set about involving everyone in the division to work for better community safety, offender success and victim support.

Some of the specific changes included: implementation of a risk/needs tool to assess likelihood of reoffending, Motivational Interviewing, Four Core Competencies (professional alliance, skill practice, case planning and management, and effective use of rewards and violation responses), Briefcase Training ("real-time" skill practice in delivering the modules, and tips and strategies for conducting effective meetings), 10 Steps to Risk Reduction, Dosage-based Probation, and Trauma Informed Care.

Also during this time, Wisconsin was picked by the National Institute of Corrections (NIC), in partnership with the Center for Effective Public Policy who built the Evidence-Based Decision Making Initiative (EBDM), to create game-changing criminal justice system reform.

According to the NIC, EBDM is a strategic and deliberate method of applying empirical knowledge and research-supported principles to justice system decisions made at the case, agency, and system level and seeks to equip criminal justice local
and state policymakers with the information, processes, and tools that will result in measurable reductions of pretrial misconduct, post-conviction reoffending, and other forms of community harm resulting from crime. Eau Claire and Milwaukee were the first two sites to be chosen in which DCC played a substantial role. Since then, NIC has identified six more Wisconsin sites to Phase V Building EBDM Capacity at the individual, agency, and system levels. In Phase V, states will begin the process of planning system wide change strategies to achieve evidence-based decision making at the state level and in multiple local jurisdictions.

The Division of Community Corrections is an active and important member of these sites. Denise has been the leader and champion within the state-wide Criminal Justice Coordinating Council and is respected by criminal justice partners far and wide.

Anyone who has ever worked in this field can tell you, Denise's work history is quite impressive; in its length, increased responsibilities and impact. She has been guided by her core beliefs of honesty, integrity, doing the right thing, and treating both staff and offenders with dignity and respect. Those who have worked with her have experienced her insatiable curiosity, otherworldly memory and recall, as well as having one of the best strategic minds in the business.

She is also a caring and committed public servant who isn't afraid to face criticism or defend people or practices that deserve defending.

Selecting Denise will solidify her imprint on the Department of Corrections and the Division of Community Corrections for decades to come. It is validation to someone who has sacrificed much while expecting very little in return.
Past Award Recipients

1st Award  Ellen Vogel
2nd Award  Ruth Louise-Hine
3rd Award  Mabel Smith-Reed
4th Award  Ruthe Badger
5th Award  Jean Kioski
6th Award  Daisy Cubias
7th Award  Evie Duesterbeck
8th Award  Vicki Bennington
9th Award  Mary Ellen Franson
10th Award Debra Schwab
11th Award Annette Weissbach
12th Award Loriann Wunder
13th Award Jeanne Meyer
14th Award Celeste Hoze and Amy Rivers
15th Award Delores Ducklow
16th Award Sandee Pease
17th Award Lady Campbell
18th Award Harriet Schoenebeck
19th Award Janice Cummings and Kristine Martineau
20th Award Karen Morgan
21st Award Roxanne Nelezen Chronert
22nd Award Joan Sanzen
23rd Award Gena L. Jarr
24th Award Peggy Meyers
25th Award Shawna Stringham
26th Award Diane Siegler
27th Award Gail Mills
28th Award Sylvia Cantu Smith and Sharon Hunter
29th Award Janet Smith
30th Award Deb Brucaya
31st Award Patricia Banks
32nd Award Tamra Oman
33rd Award Jennifer Grimes

Congratulations to all the Virginia Hart Award Nominees!

Division of Personnel Management
A proud supporter of the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Awards

Award Program Manager
Dee Surillo

Award Committee
Kitty Anderson
Anna M. Biermeier
Susan Buroker
Jack Lawton
Nominees for 2017

April J. Belshaw
Patricia Benesh
Leanne Bergstrom
Heidi S. Corro
Lili Crane
Catherine Eskridge
Miriam S. Falk
Jo Futrell
Roxanne K. Gray
Linda Himsel
Ronda Hitz
Jill Moksouphanh
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($1000 or more)

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**Virginia Hart Gold Sponsor**
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Women’s Council of Wisconsin
We have joined with other Wisconsin leaders to create an endowment to keep the Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award alive. We hope you will join us.

Virginia Hart was Wisconsin’s first woman cabinet member. She also served as Secretary of the Department of Regulation and Licensing, Chairperson of the Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations, and Chairperson of the Labor and Industry Review Commission. On March 24, 2007, Virginia Hart passed away at the age of 92.

Upon her retirement from state service in 1983, friends and colleagues established a fund so that each year a woman in Wisconsin state service could be recognized for exemplary performance and contribution to the citizens of the state. The Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award emphasis is on recognizing “unsung heroines” in state service, thus providing encouragement and recognition to all women in state government. The award seeks to recognize women who share the following qualities: esteem from peers; acceptance of responsibility beyond the limits of the nominee’s job description; sustained, extraordinary achievement of assigned tasks; performance recognition from clients; community service; self-improvement; and overcoming obstacles to performance. The recipient is recognized at an award ceremony with a plaque and cash award. With the generous help of contributors, the fund has been able to sustain the program for 30 years. Help us establish an endowment so the award will live on for years to come.

We welcome your tax-deductible donation. By joining the Friends of Virginia Hart, you will help ensure her legacy continues and that women in Wisconsin State service are recognized for their contributions.

Name________________________________________________________
Address______________________________________________________
City___________________________ State___________ Zip____________
E-mail _______________________________________________________ 
Phone Number (______)_________________________________________
How would you like your name to appear in the Award Program?

☐ I am interested in hearing about women’s networking opportunities.

Please make checks payable to: Wisconsin Women’s Network
Return this card with your check to: Friends of Virginia Hart c/o DPM 101 E. Wilson St. 4th Floor, PO Box 7855, Madison, WI 53707-7855. The fiscal agent for the Friends of Virginia Hart is a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.

For more information, please contact Dee Surillo, DOA-Division of Personnel Management, at (608) 266-9820 or email domingo.surillo@Wisconsin.gov.

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The Virginia Hart Special Recognition Award is available because of generous contributors.

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Hal Bergan
Fran Bicknell
June Weisberger Blanchard
Helen Bruner, Friend for 65 years
Susan Davis Canty
Roxanne N Chronert
Carin Ann Clauss
Sheila Conroy
Janice L. Cummings
Charlene Dwyer
Sandi Danowski
Gail and Gordon Derzon
Margie Devereaux and David Hall
Jennifer Donnelly
Jean Druckenmiller
in memory of Marjorie Hurle
Marlene A. Duffield
Roberta Gassman
Jennifer Gebert
Amie Goldman
Paulette Harder
Henry C. Hart
Jesus B. & Nancy Hart Hernandez
Jill Hjelsand
Frances Huntley-Cooper
Celia M. Jackson

Edwin Kehl
Mary Jo Kopecky
Bill Kraus
Michelle Kussow, The Capitol Group, LLC
Jack and Bonnie Lawton
Christine Lidbury
Governor Patrick Lucey
Katharine Lyall
Rose M. Lynch
Margo Melli
Eileen D. Mershart
Mills Family
In memory of Gail Mills
Katie Morrison
Tess Mulrooney
Mary Louise Munts
Ann S. Nelson
Jennifer A. Ortiz
Mary Panzer
JoAnna Richard
Fred & Nancy Risser
Hannah Rosenthal
Marilyn Slautterback
Russ & Lauri Steeber
Shelly Sterling
Rev. Debra Trakel
Martha Vukelich-Austin & George Austin
Nancy Wenzel and Robert Bartlett
Barbara Wyatt Sibley