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Service recognition dinner honors long-serving staff

By Nancy Doolittle

President David Skorton, senior administrators and guests gathered at Bartels Hall March 31 to recognize 268 long-serving staff members who have worked at Cornell for 25 or more years and were celebrating a fifth-year milestone. The 56th Annual Service Recognition Dinner included remarks by Skorton, Vice President for Human Resources Mary Opperman and Dean of the College of Veterinary Medicine Michael Kotlikoff; a performance by soloist Mark Lawrence; and a retrospective musical program by the Backtalk Band.

In his remarks, Skorton recognized Clayton Ball and David Bowman for having each served 45 years, and Sandy Davenport, Martha Lyon, Carin Rundle and Karen Wilson for having each served Cornell for 40 years. He also recognized his own "colleague and mentor," staff writer Connie Kintner, celebrating 35 years of service, and awardees attending from the New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, from Cornell offices in New York City and from the Arecibo Observatory. Also recognized were 19 staff members who have given more than 40 years of service to Cornell, but were not celebrating their 45th or 50th milestone.


Jason Koski/University Photography

From left, Pam Dollaway, guest, and Julie Addy, 25-year awardee.


Robert Barker/University Photography

The BackTalk Band entertains Service Recognition Dinner attendees.

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Jason Koski/University Photography

Service Recognition Dinner, 2011

"As you know, the university is a complex organization," Skorton said. "Tonight's awardees include accounts representatives, custodians, administrative assistants, student services professionals, programmers, analysts and research support specialists, gardeners and graphic designers, technicians and teaching support specialists, coaches and cooks -- and many, many more," he said.

"All of you contribute your skills and your knowledge, your history of the place and your knowledge of the people in the place, to make the education, the outreach and the discovery that we do possible," he said.

Opperman acknowledged that the university has "been through some challenging times recently," but said that the loyalty and determination of its staff members have helped the university rise above those difficulties. "Your contributions make a difference," she said.

Cornell's staff members were also thanked for helping the university exceed its United Way Campaign goal, volunteering for such events as Commencement, Employee Day and Slope Day; and working with youth groups, the Elves Program, food banks and other community services.

Skorton and Opperman wished those awardees who will soon be retiring "the brightest of futures."

As the Backtalk Band played songs from yesteryears, Kotlikoff recalled events in each of the years that awardees first came to Cornell.

Staff members reminisced as well. "Over the last 30 years, I have been very fortunate to work in positions that have allowed me to meet students, parents, alumni and volunteers, not to mention a large network of exceptional co-workers," said Sue Detzer, program assistant, Athletics and Physical Education.

Celebrating 25 years of service, Paul Streeter, assistant dean for finance and administration in the Vet College, said, "My fondest memories actually come from the most challenging times. The willingness and ability of colleagues to work creatively, quickly and in a very supportive manner was tremendously satisfying."

"I have a kaleidoscope of memories, from 'Shantytown' behind Day Hall to the great pumpkin on the clock tower, to our windows rattling in Morrill Hall on Slope Day, and going out to watch the great Dragon Day parade on the Arts Quad," said Sheila Haddad, administrative manager, Asian studies, celebrating 30 years. "Never a dull moment here. ... It's a place like no other."

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