

Adam Gaub

Adam is Gaston County's Communications Director. It may be hard to believe now, but Adam was a new employee at the beginning of 2020. By March he was propelled into a chaotic COVID world with constant press releases, press conferences, marketing, and more.

But Adam's greatest impact may have been working with Public Health. In his role at the time, just assisting would have been sufficient. But Adam stepped up and filled a void - he jumped right in, showing leadership, building trust, and collaborating with the Public Health team. Perhaps his greatest achievement was his work with vaccinations. Almost overnight, Adam led getting a website up for vaccination appointments, repurposed his office to assist the effort, brought people together from different areas and even from the state to assist with the phone bank, and worked well into the night helping citizens get the information or appointments they needed. As one nomination put it, Adam has been a godsend.

For his huge impact on Gaston County and his efforts in serving our community during a pandemic, Adam Gaub is Employee of the Year.

Chelse Harris

Chelse is a Branch Library Assistant at the Mount Holly Branch Library. In 2020 Gaston County needed innovative ideas to reach our residents during a pandemic, and that's exactly what Chelse Harris provided. Chelse has a passion for working with teens. In 2020 she used technology to engage teens, including transitioning traditional programming to digital platforms, did virtual outreach to Mount Holly Middle School Exceptional Children's classrooms, and created engaging craft videos, virtual teen book talks, and special effects makeup for beginners, to name a few.

Chelse's biggest accomplishment did not involve technology, but instead partnerships. Chelse worked with Lowe's Home Improvement and the City of Mount Holly to create a Story Walk at Tuckaseegee Park. It was so successful she's been asked to bring Story Walk back twice already. In 2021, Chelsea was promoted to Manager of the Dallas Branch Library.

For her innovation in reaching our area's youth, Chelse Harris is Employee of the Year.

Erin Hines

Erin is the Environmental Educator for the Natural Resources Department.

One of the challenges for parents and teachers in 2020 was finding online educational resources, and balancing those with hands-on activities. Knowing this, Erin developed a YouTube series of fun and engaging educational videos called Gaston Natural Classroom. She also developed a series of virtual field trips designed to guide small, socially-distanced classes in outdoor activities in their schoolyard.

Additionally, Erin was a key contributor to the Southern Piedmont Envirothon, a natural resource education program and competition designed to challenge students. Davidson County's Director of Soil & Water Conservation said, "Erin was the leader in developing new processes to make the Envirothon possible for students in Area 8. Her work was essential in making the Southern Piedmont Envirothon a reality for this year."

For creatively finding ways to reach out to area students to keep them learning during a pandemic, Erin Hines is Employee of the Year.

Sgt. Matt Johnson

Sgt. Matt Johnson is a Sergeant with the Gaston County Police.

Sgt. Johnson showed his initiative in 2020 leading several changes and projects. Some of those included creating a standard narrative form for police officers and implementing its use among his officers and the Field Training Officers, creating guidelines for some of the most difficult calls to handle like domestic calls and involuntary mental commitments, and identifying problem areas and initiating projects such as Operation Undivided Attention and Operation Yard Sale.

According to his nomination, "Sgt. Johnson constantly goes above and beyond what is expected of him. He helps others learn and become better at their jobs. He strives every day to make himself better. He helps make Gaston County Police a better department so that the department can better serve the citizens of Gaston County."

For his initiative in making Gaston County a safer community, Sgt. Matt Johnson is Employee of the Year.

Julie Lane

Julie is an Accounting Technician II with the Landfill.

2020 was an interesting year for the Landfill to say the least. Volume continued to rise as the pandemic brought more tonnage. At the same time, several employees needed to be out for extended periods. This is when Julie stepped up. While still doing her accounting duties, Julie worked the scales non-stop for over two months. She stayed late and came in on Sundays to make sure the accounting was done. She also spent considerable time helping administrators and co-workers plan for the addition of new scale house staff.

For her hard work and extra effort in helping a critical function like Landfill stay operational during a difficult time, Julie Lane is Employee of the Year.

Mike Lee

Mike Lee is the Facilities Maintenance Division Administrator for Public Works.

In his role, Mike is responsible for taking care of many things day and night to keep our facilities running. Throughout the pandemic, Mike and his staff have continued to make sure our buildings are operational and in good condition so County business could continue.

In 2020, Facilities experienced a lot of work outside normal activities. Mike led several projects including the renovations of several departments in the Administration Building, the Jail Infill project, which created additional bed space for inmates, and the transition of the Animal Care facility, and more.

For his project management skills, the hours worked, and maintaining a good attitude through a difficult time and through several plan changes, Mike Lee is Employee of the Year.

Bobby Maxwell

Bobby Maxwell is an Animal Care & Enforcement Specialist with the Gaston County Police.

For years, Bobby has provided excellent service to the citizens of Gaston County. In 2020, he continued to provide this service during a pandemic, but also during some emotionally charged cases.

One of those cases saw Bobby receive intense scrutiny from some members of the community. He sought case reviews from three separate veterinarians and interviewed the parties involved to ensure the process was done professionally, ethically, and fairly.

He stood by the evidence he knew was right, and not only weathered the pressure from those in disagreement, but also helped the pet owner work through the issues caused by the publicity of the case.

For his strength, leadership, and caring service to the citizens and animals of Gaston County, Bobby Maxwell is Employee of the Year.

Alisha Summey

Alisha is a Research Specialist with EDC.

Alisha twice played a critical role in the Apple Creek Corporate Center project, completing two tasks that needed to be completed successfully or there could have been serious consequences.

Gaston County needed all six property owners in the subdivision to sign the plat or a lengthy and costly process would have delayed construction. Alisha worked with the owners, explaining the situation and building a relationship with them. All six signed.

Similarly, at another point in the process, it became apparent that another piece of property needed to be purchased for the project to continue. Alisha facilitated a survey, a contract, and ultimately the purchase of this property, which saved the project.

For her focus and drive in stepping up to help EDC in a busy and challenging year, Alisha Summey is Employee of the Year.

Deputy Charles Ross

Charles Ross is a deputy with the Sheriff's Office who works security at Social Services.

While working security, Deputy Ross has his share of upset or troubled clients. He consistently deescalates the problem, redirects, and calmly puts an end to the drama.

But what makes Deputy Ross so special to Social Services is his caring service. He builds relationships with employees and is very observant often recognizing problems before they start. Where Deputy Ross truly goes above and beyond what is asked of him is his role in helping with situations with children, or simply speaking to our children. We received many examples of this including the time he talked to a foster child who had barricaded themselves in a room until they were ready to calmly walk out.

For protecting our staff, protecting our building, and protecting our children, Deputy Charles Ross is Employee of the Year.

Rachel Whitaker

Rachel Whitaker is the Benefits Manager for Gaston County.

In 2020 when the pandemic hit, Rachel's responsibilities increased significantly. Rachel was an influential member of the Continuity of Operation Taskforce, ensuring that proper plans and procedures were in place allowing us to continue serving the community through the pandemic. She also had full responsibility for overseeing the Families First Coronavirus Recovery Act which guaranteed pay for employees who met the criteria for being impacted by COVID.

But Rachel's greatest contribution to Gaston County was to employees. There were days where Rachel did nothing but speak to employees on the phone about COVIDrelated issues. She listened to many stories from employees about how they were suffering and consoled those who had lost family and friends. And in her leadership role, Rachel actively advocated on behalf of all Gaston County employees ensuring that they had a voice in the room.

For her compassionate service to Gaston County and our employees, Rachel Whitaker is Employee of the Year.

Courageous Service Award

Deputy Casey Tignor

Deputy Casey Tignor is a deputy with the Sheriff's Office.

Deputy Tignor is already known as a three-year veteran in Field Operations who has a wealth of knowledge and experience whose energy and positive attitude help motivate the rest of the shift.

But on November 11, it was Deputy Tignor's quick thinking and action that stood out. There was a shooting call and Deputy Tignor was the first on scene. He found the victim who had been shot in the leg and was losing a dangerous amount of blood. Deputy Tignor was able to administer aid and control the bleeding all while finding out more information about the suspect.

Once GEMS arrived and took over, Deputy Tignor continued to question witnesses at the scene. He realized the suspect was still on scene, took him into custody, and turned him over to the County Police for charges related to the shooting.

For his quick thinking in helping a shooting victim and still having the presence of mind to resolve the case on scene, Deputy Casey Tignor is the winner of the Courageous Service Award.

Teamwork Awards

Angela King, Ellen Wright, Khristie Jackson, and Kyle Gamble are members of the Communicable Disease Team. **Lesley Sellers** is our Vaccination Coordinator. Together, their outstanding teamwork has been critical to Public Health's COVID response.

The Communicable Disease or CD Team of DHHS has been instrumental in the COVID-19 pandemic since the beginning in March 2020. This team has displayed an unwavering response to meet the needs of the Gaston County community by providing contact investigation and tracing, accurate information, education, and resources during this time of much uncertainty.

This team approaches every challenging day with professional attitudes and fortitude even when confronted with dizzying amounts of emails, phone calls, questions, and daily new positives to contact. The team has had to remain current on ever-changing information and guidance from the state and national public health organizations. Their ability to remain the subject matter experts on guidance and protocols is essential in assuring the communication disseminated to the public is accurate.

In Lesley's role as Vaccination Coordinator, she has been at the center of all COVID vaccination clinics and played a critical role in partnerships with other vaccine providers in the community. She is an expert around all things related to the vaccine and a resource for both Public Health and the community.

Through the pandemic this team remains on call and available 24 hours a day 7 days a week. They have worked alongside Gaston County Schools in maintaining a safe learning environment for teachers and students and they have also supported local colleges, businesses, and churches in managing outbreaks and triaging concerns.

Most impressive about all these team members are their positive attitudes and their caring, passion, and humility as they perform this tireless work.

Congratulations to Angela King, Ellen Wright, Khristie Jackson, Kyle Gamble, and Lesley Sellers – our 2020 Teamwork Award Winners, and thank you!

Public Works/Facilities Management Team

Alex Davis, Andrew Allen, Chris McSwain, Dan Whetstine, Danny Yarborough, Justin Barnes, Kenny Palmer, Neil Barnes, Tyler Swink, and Wayne Gentry are members of Public Works/Facilities Management.

The pandemic may have slowed some functions of County government, but it did not slow down Public Works or Facilities Management. Throughout 2020 this team completed numerous projects including the renovation of the Register of Deeds office, the transition to the new Animal Care and Enforcement facility, renovations at multiple branch libraries, the Jail Infill project, and several major renovations and department moves at within the Administration Building, just to name a few.

While their long hours of physical work were outstanding, it was their patience that really stood out. Several times they had to react to plan changes, special requests, and had to be conscientious of fellow County employees remained in place while the renovations were being completed.

The Manager's Award - Tommy Jenkins

Tommy is a Client Service Technician III with IT, but for years County employees have known Tommy as a customer service superstar. This alone has almost won Tommy an Employee of the Year Award in the past, but in 2020 Tommy took his game to another level.

Tommy played a major role in the IT Business Continuity Plan for the COVID-19 Remote Rollout. As Chief Information Officer Ricky Johnson put it, "when COVID hit, Tommy really showed us what he is made of and what extent he will go to do his job. Tommy was crucial in IT's response to the pandemic and was most instrumental in providing remote desktop capabilities to staff."

Between March 9th and April 3rd the County went from about 100 employees to 600 employees who could work virtually. Tommy was a huge reason for this success.

Tommy continued to come into the office during the Work From Home phase allowing other technicians to remain home to reduce the number of IT staff in the office. During this phase he also manned the Service Desk After Hours phone for over six months on call 24-7. Tommy also helped set up laptops for Health and DSS for Telemedicine and helped set up the temperature screening stations

Tommy's role during the pandemic continues to be critically important as he serves the employees who serve our community. Thanks to his outstanding efforts Gaston County was able to get employees back to work as fast as possible to serve our community as fast as possible. For this, Tommy Jenkins is the recipient of the 2020 County Manager's Award.