President’s Our Common Ground Award 2014

Jeffrey C. Bukowski

May 5, 2014

This university is a better place because Jeff Bukowski is a part of our community. Jeff lives and breathes social justice, respect, integrity, fairness and openness for the community of UVM. In his role as Staff Council Administrator, Jeff encounters a wide assortment of issues on a daily basis, including newly hired employees who are seeking information about Staff Council, staff who may be having difficulty navigating employee benefits, or a staff member who would like to apply for a loan from the Staff Council Emergency Loan Fund. In every instance, Jeff listens patiently and empathetically. He is both tenacious and diplomatic in fact finding and marshaling resources, and doesn't consider a job done until everyone feels heard and the problem has been resolved.

Not only does Jeff speak to the qualities of "Our Common Ground" but also he lives and models them, especially respect and justice. He teaches by example and encourages others to uphold these values as well. He best exemplifies the Common Ground statement, “…we believe in the transforming power of education and agree to help create and foster an environment where we can discover and reach our true potential”. Jeff has assisted hundreds of UVM staff in understanding that not only do they individually have a voice that deserves to be heard, but that collectively all staff voices can contribute to a more successful work and learning environment at UVM.

Whether you drop in to the Staff Council Office, call him on the phone, or send him a quick email, Jeff will always make you feel that you are the most important person on his schedule. Listening to others, making sure voices are heard, and creating successful outcomes are his commitments. Jeff is an unquestionable advocate of servant leadership and social justice, and he truly demonstrates that every day through his support and genuine belief that UVM staff are given a voice and are treated fairly.
Apart from his Staff Council responsibilities, Jeff donates many of his nights and weekends to causes and groups that have special meaning to him. A particular example is a family that Jeff works with that moved to the Burlington area several years ago. The parents of the family work for UVM Custodial Services. They did not speak or have much understanding of English or of how life worked in the US. Jeff has spent the last few years working with them and their children to help them understand and navigate life in VT. He has explained everything from legal paperwork, to US holidays and customs, to how to balance checkbooks. Jeff is now a part of their extended family. Recently, the family invited him to be at their naturalization ceremony since Jeff has played an important role in their success in VT and at UVM.

In closing, I would like to quote from one of the support letters something that all of us who work with Jeff believe:

“I have been with Jeff when things are going well and I have been with him when there is turmoil and stress and he is under pressure, and there is not a lot of difference in either case in the way that he operates or the manner in which he treats people. He is a good man with a number of great qualities: the heart of a servant, the mind of a teacher, the hands and feet of a friend, and he is deserving of recognition—both for who he is and for what he does.”

Jeff, thank you, and congratulations.

Renee Berteau
Financial Administrator
College of Arts and Sciences