



EXTRAORDINARY EMPLOYEES

Margie Lawrence credited with bringing residence hall housekeeping into 21st century

by LAURA NEFF-HENDERSON, APR

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"Margie embodies the essences of a true model employee," said Tim Gift, associate director of facilities management and Lawrence's direct supervisor. "She cares deeply about the students, her employees, and the university."

Lawrence came to Virginia Tech more than 33 years ago, in 1980 and has worked her way up the professional ladder from a janitorial supervisor to the assistant director for housekeeping and furnishings for the residence hall system. She's stayed, she says, in part because the students and staff here are wonderful. And, she has no immediate plans to retire, she says.

"Knowing that we are providing a successful cleaning program that keeps our facilities clean and healthy, and provides a pleasant environment in which our students can live and learn is the other part of what I enjoy most about my job."



Margie E. Lawrence, right, talks with two of the university's residence hall housekeepers.

Professionally

As part of her day to day responsibilities, Lawrence supervises 92 people, including 75 housekeepers, six special project employees, seven supervisors, one assistant manager, and three managers. The group is responsible for cleaning 2.2 million square feet of residence hall space.

Although she doesn't have to be in her office in the basement of Owens Hall until 7:30 a.m. each morning, she typically arrives on campus by 5 a.m. In addition to having her pick of the parking spaces around the Drillfield, She enjoys getting a head start on the day's work.

In addition to being tasked with writing housekeeping policy and procedures, maintaining discipline and order, overseeing the Integrated Pest Management Program, and developing training programs for her staff, Lawrence also interacts with vendors and tests and evaluates the latest cleaning products and equipment.

The majority of her time though, is spent on staffing. It's also the hardest part of her job, by far, she said.

Housekeepers, she said, are some of the university's least appreciated employees, and yet, they do some of the hardest, most back breaking work on campus. It's also repetitive work. And yet, their work is vital to the experience that more than 9,000 students have in their homes away from home.

"Margie continually advances Housing and Residences Life's Housekeeping and Furnishings operations by staying current with the latest cleaning technologies, process and supplies," said Gift.

Among her more recent accomplishments, Lawrence is credited with spearheading the state's effort to transition from harsh cleaning chemicals to biodegradable, sustainable products.



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Associate Director
of Facilities Management

In 2010, Virginia Tech's Residential Housekeeping Department was awarded the Level III Clean Zone certification for the Green Cleaning Program through the JanPak Company for Responsible Solutions and Healthy Environments. Virginia Tech was among the first institutions of higher education in the southwestern United States to be certified.

She hasn't taken a sick day in more than 10 years and, perhaps most importantly, she takes care of her people. "You cannot be as successful as Margie has been if you don't have real compassion for people. Margie has always taken a special interest in all her staff, as well as her co-workers," said Walthall.

Her good work doesn't go unnoticed

Lawrence is a registered executive housekeeper an active member of International Executive Housekeepers Association (IEHA). She served as president of the Central Virginia chapter in 1994, 1996, and 1999. She's also a graduate of the adult marketing program with more than 330 hours of IEHA coursework and is a graduate of the Virginia Supervisors Institute. Lawrence also taught IEHA adult classes in Roanoke City Public Schools and completed courses at New River Community College in the Business and Industrial Supervision program after her children graduated from high school.

She has received numerous accolades over the years for her efforts within her profession and adult education. She has received the:

- IEHA Executive Housekeeper of the Year Award (1994)
- Educator of the Year Award for Adult Education from Roanoke City Schools (1995)
- Division of Student Affairs Heroine Award (1995)

She has also been featured on the cover of Executive Housekeeper Today magazine (March 2011) and Cleaning and Maintenance magazine (April 2011).

"Margie really is an asset to Virginia Tech, said Glenn Walthall, housekeeping manager, Student Affairs. "She truly has a passion for her service to the university in the true spirit of *Ut Prosim*. She constantly looks for better safer ways of doing things and translates this to good housekeeping policy and procedures to everyone's benefit."

The accolades... the awards... the recognition's... they have not gone to her heard. While's she proud of what she's done, she's a humble woman and admits that her success is the result of a team of talented and dedicated professionals who take pride in what they do.

Community

Lawrence volunteers with the American Society and the American Heart Association as they need help throughout the year, canvassing the community. In addition to handing out flyers, she makes phones calls, and does anything else the organizations ask her to do to raise awareness.

In years past, she has manned the nursery at Faith Baptist Church in Christiansburg, Va. These days, she does whatever they ask of her, which most often involves two of her passions, cleaning and cooking. Lawrence also enjoys reading, when time allows, and spends a fair amount of time on the road, following her 12-year-old granddaughter's softball team.

One of eight children, it's clear that her faith and her family are among those things most important to her in life. Her crew comes together for dinner every Sunday.

In addition to their love of sports, the family also shares a love for the United States military.

Being patriotic, she said, is in her blood.

Lawrence first met her husband, James, when he began writing to her in 1963 while he was deployed and living aboard a ship in the Mediterranean Sea.

The two were pen pals for year before he returned to the United States where he was assigned to the Norfolk Naval Station in Norfolk, Va. It was then that the couple met in person for the first time and, after three dates, over the course of nine months, they were married in a Georgia courthouse at 2 a.m., two days after Christmas in 1964.

Over the course of their 38 years marriage, the couple had three sons, before her husband died from liver cancer in 2002. Each of their sons are married and each has a daughter. The oldest two, Terry and Mike, served in the United States military, carrying on in their father's footsteps.

Their youngest son, Randy, played in the minor league, for the Boston Red Sox from 1992 – 1996, during the baseball strike. He now coaches Christiansburg High School's junior varsity baseball team and manages the Harkrader Sports Complex in Christiansburg, Va.

Their middle son, Mike, was a police officer for many years. He's now a truck driver and a member of the National Guard.

Terry, the oldest, has been a warehouse supervisor for a trucking company for many years.

Lawrence is clear that she has no plans to remarry.

"I had the best husband," she said. "There's no need to try again." □

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About this series
The Extraordinary Employee series highlights the achievements of Virginia Tech employees who go above and beyond, making a difference in the lives of others on campus and in the community.