Lylah Shelor creates community through day-to-day interactions and commitment to excellence

by LAURA NEFF-HENDERSON, APR

During her time at Virginia Tech, Lylah Shelor has remained a steady fixture in the Department of Information Technology. During those same 30 years, she’s traveled the country, visiting more than 43 states and improved the lives of hundreds of people who’ve never met through her year-round community service initiatives.

During her 30 years at Virginia Tech, Lylah Shelor has become a fixture in the Department of Information Technology. During those same years, she’s traveled the country, visiting more than 43 states, and improved the lives of hundreds of people through her year-round community service initiatives.

Although originally a native of Akron, Ohio, Shelor has lived in the New River Valley for more than 50 years. The mother of an adult daughter, she and her husband, Mac Shelor, live in Blacksburg and have five grandchildren. Mac retired from Virginia Tech after 30 years at a project coordinator for Facilities Services and now works part-time at the university in facilities commissioning.

Shelor came to Virginia Tech in May of 1983 as a computer operator, in a wage position. Within a year, she was hired into the salary position and since then, has worked her way up to a senior computer operations technician, operating systems analyst, and to her current position as the IT facilities manager in 2001.

Working at Virginia Tech, she says, was a dream come true. When she came to the university, she was a single mom looking for a dependable job with benefits. “There was something about the prestige of saying you worked at Virginia Tech,” said Shelor.

“My love job” No two days are exactly alike and the people here are wonderful, she explained.

“The people I work with every single day are just great people. No one is too busy to share a word of kindness or offer to help you in some way. We care about each other—and that just makes for a pleasant working environment,” said Shelor.

The feeling’s mutual, according to her colleagues, and that’s not just because she’s known to bring in popcicles or occasionally host an ice cream social.

Shelor is reliable, proactive, tenacious, and dedicated, according to Stewart.

“If there’s a way to do something, I know Lylah will find it and get it done,” said Stewart.

Shelor studied computer operations at New River Community College and has maintained students at the college in the past. She’s also a member of APPA, a national organization for educational facilities professionals. In 2005 she co-founded the Virginia Tech Facilities Managers’ Development Group and remains an active member today.

People matter

People are what matters, according to Shelor. She has also made it her job to make sure employees in both buildings take time every now and then to get to know each other.

Throughout the year she coordinates and supports holiday events and social gatherings.

When the group comes together to enjoy a meal, Shelor makes sure all of the leftover food is delivered to either the Westonia Resource Center of the New River Valley or low-income housing. She also leads the effort for employees in both buildings to support McClellan’s Backpack with frequent donations of peanut butter and plastic bags.

The AISB break room has turned into a hangout of sorts, thanks to Shelor. It’s there that employees can stop to add a few pieces to the community puzzle or look through items that have been added to the “free” table. Periodically, Shelor holds open house on the table for an extended period of time and donates them to charity.

Giving back is what it’s all about

Shelor has always been passionate about her desire to give to others.

“If I feel that I’ve been very blessed and it’s my responsibility to do for others,” said Shelor. “It also just brings me a lot of joy.”

Throughout the year, she organizes dozens of community service efforts for the employees in AISB and 1770 Fuscott Drive.

Her colleagues often drop bottles of hand sanitizers into the donation basket that sits just inside her office door. When the basket is full, Shelor delivers the goods to the Ronald McDonald House in Roanoke. Families staying at the house are typically caring for children who are being treated in the neonatal or pediatric intensive care units at Roanoke Memorial Hospital.

Each November, Shelor solicits employees to donate canned goods to the Marching Virginians’ Hokies for the Hungry campaign. In 2015, they donated about 600 cans.

“The people in these buildings are incredibly generous,” said Shelor.

Personally, Shelor also supports the Rescue Mission in Roanoke, and she and her younger sister, Parry, visit the Children’s Home periodically. She’s also active in her church, New Mount Zion Lutheran Church, in Blacksburg.

Exploring the country

When she’s not serving others, Shelor and her husband enjoy traveling. The map hanging on the wall in her office is dotted with push pins marking all of the locations they’ve visited – 43 states in less than 10 years.

The couple, along with a few close family members, often travel by train or van for about three weeks at a time. Some of their favorite destinations include Jackson Hole, Wyo., Durango, Hla., and Las Vegas.

Their vacations are fast paced, and follow an itinerary that her husband plans months in advance. The goal, she says, is to do and see as much as possible, as quickly as possible, so they can identify the locations to which they’d like to return later on. She says that they would like to see all of the United States while they are still healthy and financially able.

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-Jeb Stewart, Chief of Staff and Deputy Chief Information Officer for Information Technology

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.

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“The people I work with every single day are just great people. No one is too busy to share a word of kindness or offer to help you in some way. We care about each other—and that just makes for a pleasant working environment,” said Shelor.

Shelor’s day-to-day responsibilities include oversight of the Andrews Information Systems Building (AISB) and 1770 Fuscott Drive, located in the Corporate Research Center. A bridge connects the two buildings and they collectively house the university’s entire computer infrastructure, including the student, alumni, financial, and massive generators required to run the data center during a power outage.

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Professionally

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Shelor oversees the building’s security, maintenance, and renovations, while maintaining the IT emergency action and operations plans. She’s on call 24/7, and is responsible for the three massive generators required to run the data center during a power emergency. She is also tasked with supporting the facilities needs of the IT employees who work in the vice president for information technology suite in Barrows and Torgerson halls, as well as an off-site warehouse.

“Shelor is a superb employee,” said her direct supervisor, Jeb Stewart, chief of staff and deputy chief information officer for Information Technology.

Shelor has unofficially accepted the role of welcoming all new employees to the building and, just a few years ago, developed a handout to help new employees learn the ins and outs of the facility.

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Shehor’s office in the Andrews Information Systems Building (AISB) serves as home base for many of the community service initiatives she coordinates.

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