MESSAGE FROM CHARLES KENNEDY

As you know, one of the main reasons that we started a FS employee newsletter years ago is to provide opportunities to recognize our employees and showcase the great work that all of our departments and shops are doing.

This month is no different, but along with sharing news from around our organization, in this month's newsletter we're turning our spotlight on one department in particular: Building Services.

As the FS Training Center was a dream turned into a reality for me, Building Services Director Gene Woodard dreamed of giving his employees opportunities to expand and grow their leadership skills. That dream became a reality for him when the new Stepping Stones training program launched its first cohort of students in the spring.

In June, 10 of our department's custodians graduated from the first phase of the program, and the second phase is already underway. With Building Services leading the way, we expect that Facilities Maintenance and Construction, Campus Engineering and Operations, and Transportation Services will follow suit, launching their own versions of this training program in the near future with help from Training Manager Mary Jo Blahna and the FS Training Center.

This is just one of the ways our department is building capacity. Together, when we train and develop our employees, when we focus on our people, we become the world-class institution that others aspire to be.

RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE IS NOW UW RECYCLING

Building Services is pleased to announce that UW Recycling & Solid Waste will now be known and branded as UW Recycling. While they will continue to provide efficient collection services and programs, this re-naming really helps support the key role the unit plays in raising awareness about recycling and waste reduction to help campus reach waste diversion goals.

As always, the UW Recycling team is ready to help you with your waste diversion efforts. Contact them at recycle@uw.edu with questions, service needs, ideas or feedback.
“In the last few years, we’ve received a number of applications from custodians for supervisory positions, but they haven’t met the position qualifications,” said Building Services Director Gene Woodard. “We know we have some potentially excellent candidates, and we wanted to find a way to give them those skills, to glean supervisory experience through training.”

Stepping Stones is a training program offered by the FS Training Center, in conjunction with the sponsoring department, which gives frontline staff opportunities to learn leadership skills that are necessary for moving up to lead, supervisor and management positions.

In June 2015, Building Services graduated its first cohort of custodians through the first phase of the Stepping Stones training program.

“I actually applied and interviewed for a supervisor position, but through the experience of that interview it became clear to me that I had no supervisory experience,” said Custodian William (Bill) Garl, a Stepping Stones student. “I have tons of knowledge about Building Services, being a custodian and how campus works, but that practical experience did not translate to supervisory experience. All of the practical knowledge in the world couldn’t prepare me, but this class can.”
Custodian Francisca Flores with AVP Charles Kennedy and Building Services Director Gene Woodard at the Stepping Stones phase one graduation ceremony, and flatmopping floors in Schmitz Hall.

For others the class is more than just the opportunity to become a supervisor, but the chance to hone in on important life skills.

“Stepping Stones is a program for employees like us to learn new thing about how to be leaders, like supervisors or leads” said Custodian Julius Bello, a Stepping Stones student. “But it's not just about the supervisor position—it's about improving myself and becoming a better person, a leader and a better employee.”

CREATING THE PROGRAM

For Woodard, this program is the result of idea development and partnership with other FS directors over the last two years.

“I was at a Big-10 conference maybe 12-15 years ago, and the University of Indiana talked about this comprehensive training program they have for frontline staff” said Woodard. “I wanted to bring that kind of visionary, empowering training here, but at the time we didn't have the FS Training Center.”

When the FS Training Center opened its doors in 2013, Woodard's dreams started to become a reality.

“This is what I had in mind all along,” Woodard said. “We want to fully engage our staff in lean, in training and development. I want to invest in our employees and provide opportunities for those who want upward mobility. It's not for everybody,
and many of our custodians are happy in their current positions.”

The Building Services leadership team began meeting with Training Manager Mary Jo Blahna and Training Specialist Mary Mahon of the FS Training Center to begin coordinating details.

“His entire staff, in concert with Mary Jo and Mary, have done a really great job of creating curriculum and outlining all of the classes,” said Facilities Employee Services Director Patricia Colaizzo. “I’m so glad that my team could be a part of helping make Gene’s dream a reality.”

Traditionally, frontline employees gain managerial experience by being assigned higher-level duties (HLD) or working in a lead position. Building Services doesn’t have many lead positions, and HLD only provides so much experience.

“We also wanted this class to represent our incredibly diverse workforce.”

In the end, 14 custodians were invited to join the program through a letter from Woodard and an informational session about Stepping Stones. Eleven of those invited agreed to join, although one later dropped-out and switched to part-time.

“We also wanted this class to represent our incredibly diverse workforce.”

“Deciding who to invite was an incredibly difficult decision. We wanted to include folks who had already assumed de-facto leadership roles on their teams, or by volunteering on committees—the people who go the extra mile to get involved in their workplace and are comfortable in providing feedback to leadership,” said Woodard.

In late winter, early spring 2015, Building Services’ leadership team began considering Custodial Services employees to see who might make a good candidate for the first Stepping Stones training session.

“Management gave us this chance because they believe in us,” said Custodian Francisca Flores, a Stepping Stones student. “I know a lot of people who have retired from their jobs without ever getting these kinds of opportunities. From free English classes during working hours to Stepping Stones—it’s not just ordering the tools and cleaning materials we need to do a good job, but giving us the opportunities to improve and grow as employees.”

“This kind of training is what we aspire to as an organization,” said Associate Vice President of Facilities Services Charles Kennedy. “It’s rewarding to see our department grow in this way.”

INVITATIONS

“When I got the letter saying that I was chosen, I thought, out of everybody, me? I consider myself lucky!” said Flores. “I had never heard of this program from management before, but suddenly, a letter from Mr. Woodard. I thought, well, I want to try this!”

In the end, 14 custodians were invited to join the program through a letter from Woodard and an informational session about Stepping Stones. Eleven of those invited agreed to join, although one later dropped-out and switched to part-time.

“We also wanted this class to represent our incredibly diverse workforce.”

“Those 11 employees agreed to join the program almost on-the-spot,” Blahna said.

Building Services hopes to launch Stepping Stones training sessions every year, with an application process for future sessions.

Stepping Stones continues on the next page
Custodian Julius Bello with AVP Charles Kennedy and Building Services Director Gene Woodard at the Stepping Stones phase one graduation ceremony, and vacuuming in the Bank of America Executive Education Center.

“If given the opportunity, I definitely think my coworkers should try it!” said Flores. “This is a huge opportunity. Some might think that management doesn’t care, but if you join a safety committee, or get involved on your lean team, there are so many ways you can be heard and have an impact. Workers doing the work know best how to make improvements—opportunities come when you get involved.”

**HOW IT WORKS**

The first piece of Stepping Stones began in the spring, and culminated in a small graduation ceremony in mid-June. The class covered communication and self-awareness, leadership styles, and differences in attitudes between frontline staff and supervisors.

“There are a lot of leadership activities, exercises and role play scenarios. I’ve been surprised by a lot of the self-awareness stuff—you learn a lot about yourself in these courses,” said Garl. “It’s not stuffy or tedious stuff, it’s hard work, but it’s fun. Mary Jo is really high-energy. She has a lot of fun doing what she does, and it really shows. I didn’t really know what to expect going into the course, but it exceeded any expectations I might’ve had. The curriculum was well-planned and in-depth.”

“We still need to develop our criteria,” said Woodard. “I expect to see a lot of applications as our first cohort talks with their colleagues about the opportunities this program provides.”

“There are so many high-potential employees around Building Services, who, if given the right opportunities, could make a world of difference in how we serve the University,” said Blahna.
“Before I took the class I thought being a supervisor was easy—just divvy up jobs and assign them—but they have a lot more to do than just that,” said Custodian Emebet Safara, a Stepping Stones student. “They have responsibilities not only to custodians who report to them, but to the department. They need to stay organized, stick to a schedule, divide jobs and assign them, plan out sick leave and vacation, and handle complaints and disagreements.”

Many of the custodians were surprised about how much work goes in to being a supervisor.

“Through this class I was able to learn about things from management’s side of things. It’s easier to understand now why someone might get written up, why it’s a big deal to go over on break time, or stopping for a rest or snack,” said Flores. “Before Stepping Stones I only saw things from my perspective, but now I see it from all perspectives.”

Many echoed similar comments about supervisors just assigning duties.

“I thought being a supervisor was merely checking out keys and assigning open runs, but it’s a lot more than that,” said Garl. “There’s conflict resolution, confrontation, approving things, keeping track of compliance and roles, and so much more. Much more than I had ever imagined.”

For others, the leadership skills they’ve learned translate into life skills, not just management skills.

“This class has given me more information about how to respect people, how to actively listen and not interrupt,” said Safara.

“How I communicate something seems natural to me, but it might come across as an insult to someone else!” said Bello. “Everyone has different backgrounds and ways of communicating that are natural to them—this class helps me to have better communication with others.”

“In this class I’ve learned that I really communicate with my hands and facial expressions,” said Custodian Diana Webber, a Stepping Stones student. “So right now, well, this sounds weird, but I’m trying to do a better job of controlling my face. I need to work on changing my reactions because I want to be a calming presence and de-escalate situations, and not let my emotions get involved.”

The second phase of Stepping Stones includes computer training and practical applications, to help custodians become computer proficient and ready to manage using a computer, and to use tools they would use as supervisors. The final piece of Stepping Stones includes completing the Practical Leader six-course series from the FS Training Center.

“A lot of supervisory job duties require computer proficiency, so we’ve assessed each of our students and are providing customized training from Microsoft,” said Blahna. “It’s self-guided and pre-packaged, so each of our students can work at their own speed, and Mary Mahon and I are here to troubleshoot along the way.”

WHAT COMES NEXT

For Building Services, filling supervisory positions is a challenge. It’s a difficult and demanding job.
“After this program, I’m hoping we receive some really competitive applications,” said Woodard. “Our current supervisor to employee ratio is 1:25, and that’s really difficult for our supervisors. With a richer pool of candidates, which we’ll have with this training program in place, we could lower that ratio and better support all of our Custodial Services staff.”

For other departments within Facilities Services, the program has proved inspirational.

“I see this program expanding to other departments around Facilities Services. Campus Engineering & Operations as well as Facilities Maintenance & Construction have already talked about it. Transportation Services is also exploring a customized version of Stepping Stones for their staff,” said Blahna.

“I think Gene has inspired other Facilities Services directors about how a thought, an idea, can become a reality,” said Colaizzo. “This is where we’re going—providing more opportunities for internal hires and promotions, giving people the tools they need to succeed, to move up,” said Colaizzo. “We’re stronger when our employees have boundless opportunities to succeed and move up in the workplace.

But regardless of how the program evolves in the future, the first cohort of Stepping Stones students is just thankful for this opportunity.

“I just think Stepping Stones is really great. I want to give thanks to Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Woodard for having the foresight to put this training together, to put the pieces together to help promote from within,” said Garl. “The work they’ve done to create the training center, to create this program, it shows that we truly are a world-class organization, and I’m grateful to be a part of it.”

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**UW RECYCLING’S ANNUAL SCRAM AND HUSKY NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP EVENTS A SUCCESS**

*GUEST POST BY ALLISON NITCH, BUILDING SERVICES*

UW Recycling hosts events that benefit both the campus and community throughout the year. Two such annual events are SCRAM (Student Cleanup, Recycle and Moveout) and Husky Neighborhood Cleanup.

In collaboration with UW Housing & Food Services (HFS), SCRAM donation stations are set up at each residence hall during finals week, which took place this year on June 6-12.

Bedding, clothing, emergency red backpacks, non-perishable food, small appliances, school supplies and toiletries are collected and sorted throughout the week before being redirected to local charities and non-profit organizations.

In total, students donated 28.7 tons of reusable materials—a 60% increase from 17.9 tons in 2014. UW Recycling has established partnerships with groups including U-District Food Bank, Friendly Earth, Northwest Center, Real Change and UW Surplus.

“I’m thrilled with how the increase in service coupled with the increased awareness among residents really helped to make this year’s program the most successful one yet in terms of coordination and donations collected,” said Jessica Lisiewski, UW Recycling program coordinator.

“This year’s SCRAM event was truly a remarkable one for our organization. For Northwest Center and The Big Blue Truck, SCRAM week marks the kickoff to our busy summer donation season and is one of the largest collection events that we participate in throughout the entire year,” said Kalyn Brady, marketing and outreach coordinator of Northwest Center. “With the help of University of Washington students, we are able to provide early intervention, inclusive early childhood education, teen programs and after school programs for children and supported employment, job training and placement for adults.”

Husky Neighborhood Cleanup (HNC) prevents illegal dumping within the north campus neighborhood by encouraging students to drop-off their unwanted items for free disposal before leaving campus. On June 11, 12 and 15, UW Recycling partnered with Goodwill and Waste Management to collect reusable items, furniture, electronics, recyclables and garbage. In all, 9.8 tons were collected, which consisted of 3 tons of trash; 1.1 tons of recycling; and 5.7 tons of clean, reusable goods for donation. This shatters the previous record of 2.8 tons collected in 2009.

“Part of the explanation behind why this year’s donation totals were so high was that one of the nearby fraternities on Greek row donated 43 desks, which equated to 6,728 pounds!,” said Erica Bartlett, UW Recycling program coordinator. “Overall, we’ve also seen a decrease in total garbage tonnage collected at this event. This means we’re capturing more reusable material and preventing it from ending up in the landfill.”
V’ELLA WARREN RETIRES AFTER 28 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY

On July 10, University of Washington Interim President Ana Mari Cauce announced Senior Vice President V’Ella Warren’s retirement.

Warren led Facilities Services’ parent organization, Finance & Facilities, and served as a vital advocate for Facilities Services over the years.

From Interim President Cauce:

V’Ella first joined the UW in 1987 and created a new Treasury function to strengthen the University’s financial and project management capabilities, to her more recent work to make the UW a leader in sustainability, V’Ella has devoted her career to serving the faculty, students and staff of the University.

Enhancements to our ability to review investments, efforts to improve the effectiveness of Finance and Facilities and using employee ideas to reduce inefficiencies and avoid costs are just a few of the UW’s accomplishments under V’Ella’s leadership. Her tenure also spanned many challenging times for the University, including several national economic downturns. V’Ella’s leadership was vital to enabling the UW to respond to these challenges without compromising excellence or our ability to serve our constituencies well.

V’Ella will be greatly missed, but her legacy of service to the UW is sure to continue through the programs and employees she has fostered and mentored over many years.
Annual Renewal, the process by which Transportation Services renews products for some 15,000 employees for the upcoming fiscal year, completed another year without major issues because of a dedicated team from the department’s Sales and Administration workgroup.

“Annual renewal is like a cuckoo clock,” said Sales and Administration Assistant Manager Jazmyne Green. “You only see the little bird coming out on the hour, or in this case, once a year, but there’s a lot going on in that clock. Our team is like the little gears and mechanisms that keep that bird chirping.”

At the beginning of April, Transportation Services sends out renewal notices via post and email to its customers, reminding them to renew parking permits, U-PASS, bike lockers and bike house membership, Pay-Per-Use-Parking memberships and more. Customers are given a month to renew their products using an online portal.

“Our website really is the flagship process of Annual Renewal,” said Analyst Matt Clark. “Campus has so many other things going on, and departments might have individual transportation arrangements. We want to make it easy for our customers to go online and renew in just a few clicks.”

After the renewal portal online closes, the Sales and Administration team hits the pavement, hard.

“Crunch time occurs for us after the online renewal portal closes at the end of April. We order our permit stock, verify the information given to us, contact Creative Communications and Mailing Services, and look at outstanding citations or other items that might cause a hiccup with renewal,” said Green.

Once all of the renewal information has been compiled, sorted and sent, the office is calm for a few weeks while the plastic permits are printed off-site.

“Once we receive everything we’ve ordered there’s a lot to do,” said Green. “The permits we receive are sorted by numerical order, which is great for inventorying how many there are, but we have to make sure the permits stay in that order or it’s possible that someone gets mailed the incorrect permit. The stack needs to be perfect.”

After TS staff sorts the stack for Mailing Services, the nearly 5,000 permits are carefully transported over to the Publication Services building to be stuffed into envelopes and sent out to customers.
Like many teams around Facilities Services, the Annual Renewal team is always looking for ways to improve its processes.

“This year we’ve conducted phone blitzes to try and notify customers without email addresses, and remind them to renew their product,” said Green. “We also mail them a renewal notice with a pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope already inside.”

The team has also begun mailing permits directly to customers at their home address, rather than at campus boxes with help from payroll coordinators across campus. The idea came from an Annual Renewal team member, straight off of their lean board.

In addition, Sales and Administration’s violations team, which handles campus’ parking citations, has beefed-up its outreach to customers with outstanding citations by sending individualized emails rather than blanket reminder messages.

Other improvements for this year included a new vehicle registration webform, for customers who changed cars but still need to renew a permit; a new color-coded calendar for mapping out tasks weeks and months in advance; and a new data filtering system, allowing Clark to categorize and sort through data quicker than ever before.

While this year’s Annual Renewal saw a number of improvements, the team was quick to point out gaps they’re already working on for next year’s renewal process.

“Our annual renewal website definitely needs a facelift! Its back-end uses an older system and we don’t have a lot of room for customization,” Green said.

While the bulk of Annual Renewal falls to TS’ Sales and Administration team, other workgroups provide assistance throughout the process.

In March and April, Transportation Services’ communications and marketing workgroup helps draft and design all of the renewal notices and any other communications collateral tied to Annual Renewal, such as postcard reminders and social media posts.

In June and July, TS’ Parking Operations workgroup – those employees out at the gatehouses and issuing citations – are key to the process, placing warning notices on cars for customers who may have forgotten to swap out their old permits for their new ones in the first few days of July.

Throughout Annual Renewal, TS’ Commute Options workgroup coordinates extra details for customers using Vanpools, carpools and bicycles. Shared Use Mobility Specialist Tam Kutzmark, who helps coordinate vanpool subsidies with King County Metro, and Active Transportation Specialist Ted Sweeney coordinates all of the bike locker and bike house membership renewals.

“Annual renewal really is a year-long process for us, but it’s heaviest during late Spring and early Summer,” said Green. “We’re a small team, but we try to do everything in our power to make this process as easy as possible for our thousands of customers.”

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From Top to Bottom: Sales and Administration Assistant Manager Jazmyne Green looks at the Annual Renewal team’s color-coded calendar and task list.

Green and Program Coordinator Alex Phetsadakone sort through the numerically-ordered permits and sort them into the proper categories for mailing.

Sorted, stacked, rubber-banded and labeled permits are ready to go to Mailing Services.

Mailing Services stuffs envelopes with permits, taking care to make sure the address, name and details on the inside match the permit number (Photo by Tom Roselyn).