

Celebrating unsung heroes

States prepare for State Employee Recognition Day May 7

BY LISA R. COLLINS

All good bosses know that recognition is a powerful motivator. It contributes to higher employee morale, increases organizational productivity, and aids in recruitment and retention. For state governments facing some of the worst budget shortfalls in history, recognizing employees is more important than ever.

“Public employees serve their states every day, often with little or no recognition,” said D. Sue Roberson, director of Indiana’s Department of Personnel and president of the National Association of State Personnel Executives. “Whether it’s educating our children or keeping us safe, we need to recognize the importance of the work public employees do. With nearly every state facing a budget crisis, it’s more important than ever to show our dedicated state employees how much they are appreciated.”

To help states celebrate these often unsung heroes, NASPE is sponsoring State Employee Recognition Day on Wednesday, May 7 to recognize the outstanding work of the more than 2 million state employees across the country. This is the third year NASPE has sponsored the event, which is celebrated in conjunction with Public Service Recognition Week, May 5-9, sponsored by the Public Employees Roundtable.

Third annual event

State Employee Recognition Day was initiated in 2001 under the leadership of Donna Traywick, former NASPE president, and Jim Hodges, former governor of South Carolina, in partnership with the National Governors Association. NASPE and NGA joined forces to ask the governors and state human resources officers to coordinate their efforts during National Public Service Recognition Week to recognize the important contributions of state employees.

In 2002, response to the initiative grew

significantly, with several states sponsoring recognition events. At least 10 governors signed proclamations recognizing the day in their states, to emphasize the dedication and commitment of all state employees. These states were Georgia, Idaho, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nevada, Oklahoma and South Carolina.

Receptions and awards ceremonies were held in Arizona, Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri and Nevada. Colorado moved its Governor’s Star Awards Program from October to May, to coincide with NASPE’s State Employee Recognition Day.

With nearly every state facing a budget shortfall and the possibility of state employee layoffs and furloughs constantly looming, the 2003 recognition day will be an especially important opportunity to express appreciation to all state employees.

During the NASPE 2003 Mid-Year Meeting in Arlington, Virginia, state personnel executives discussed the importance of public service and how states are being forced to do more with less during tight economic times.


“If we have fewer public workers, then we’ll have to have the best public workers,” said Mollie Anderson, director of Iowa’s Department of Personnel and past president of NASPE.

Recognition day guide helps states plan

In an effort to help states plan for the day, NASPE published the *Guide to State Employee Recognition Day* in January. The guide provides specific information on preparing for and implementing recognition activities and events. In a time when state government budgets are tight, special activities may seem too expensive, but there are several low cost activities that states can do. The publication includes slogans, suggested activities, Web sites,

posters and press releases that can be tailored to all states’ needs and situations.

The guide suggests that states celebrate May 7 with awards, radio interviews, newspaper articles, and various other celebrations. It encourages governors to release proclamations and press alerts in late April or early May declaring May 7 as State Employee Recognition Day.

For more information on State Employee Recognition Day or to obtain a copy of the recognition day guide, contact the NASPE staff at (859) 244-8179 or visit <http://www.naspe.net>. 

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Internet Resources

National Association of State Personnel Executives, <http://www.naspe.net>. NASPE is the recognized authority on state government human resource issues, trends, practices and policies. It serves as a leader and catalyst for the development of state human resources and is dedicated to enhancing the image of state public service.

Public Employees Roundtable, <http://www.theroundtable.org>. PER is a nonprofit, nonpartisan coalition of organizations representing nearly 2 million public employees. PER takes a proactive approach in creating programs that offer the maximum opportunity to promote a positive public attitude toward government employees.