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**Governor recognizes State employees for their public service**

**Denver ­—** Governor Jared Polis and Department of Personnel & Administration Deputy Executive Director, Tobin Follenweider recognized 20 state employees for their superior service to the people of Colorado. The lunch at the Governor’s Mansion on Tuesday, May 7, 2019 was part of [Public Service Recognition Week](http://publicservicerecognitionweek.org/), for which the first full week of May each year is designated by Congress and the Governor to honor public employees and to educate the public about the many ways government workers make life better for all Americans.

To celebrate the important contributions of our State employees, the Governor’s Office and the Colorado Department of Personnel & Administration (DPA) asked each State executive branch agency to select a single employee who most exemplifies the significant and invaluable contributions public servants make to the quality of life in our State. Honorees were selected for regularly demonstrating bold, consistent, and joyous service to the people of Colorado with no unforced errors.

Please view a brief narrative about each of the honorees below:

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**Colorado Energy Office – Mirka Della Cava – Senior Program Manager**

Mirka was selected for her dedication to the success and growth of the Energy Performance Contracting program at the Colorado Energy Office. Mirka has shown thoughtful leadership throughout her tenure at CEO. Her work has greatly contributed to the integrity of the EPC program and helped build strong partnerships with program stakeholders. The Colorado EPC program is ranked 7th nationally in total construction project investments, in source energy saved, and is a shining example of a successful public/private partnership. Mirka was also recently nominated and selected for the National Energy Service Coalition Board of Directors. The ESC plays an important role in supporting and facilitating the development and implementation of energy savings performance contracting programs in states throughout the country. Mirka's selection is a testament to her work and reputation within the EPC sector, and the achievements she's made on behalf of Colorado.

**Department of Agriculture – Kate Smetana – Metrologist**

This past year Kate Smetana has become a shining star for the CDA, as she has elevated the quality of the state's Metrology Laboratory to a new level of excellence. Within the last year, she was the prime subject matter expert in the design and development of the new metrology lab. This was an immensely technical challenge for someone who was recently promoted into a leadership position. Relocating the laboratory required Kate to orchestrate the movement of highly-technical instruments into the new laboratory facility with minimal customer interruption, which she flawlessly executed! In addition, Kate has taken a key role representing Colorado in an important national discussion regarding the development of national measurement standards that will be applied to packaged marijuana. Kate's leadership and hard work show why the CDA and Colorado are considered the gold standard in agriculture.

**Department of Corrections – Tony Jaramillo – Sergeant, Intake &** Receiving

Tony Jaramillo is the department's designee for Public Service Recognition Week based on his dedication and commitment to his work as a Receiving and Intake

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Sergeant, his community involvement, and outreach coaching youth sports. As a sergeant supervising facility intake and receiving operations, Mr. Jaramillo is involved with assisting offenders with the intake process, and assisting with preparing the offenders for successful release. Mr. Jaramillo is known for accepting additional assignments and projects and is known for being a positive role model for new officers at the Arkansas Valley Correctional Facility. Mr. Jaramillo ensures there are efficient operations between receiving, and housing and security functions.

Unfortunately, Tony was unable to attend today’s ceremony.

**Department of Education – Jhon Penn – Executive Director, Field Services**

Jhon Penn is the resident historian, the wise all-knowing educational expert, and the go-to man for almost everything at the Colorado Department of Education. Jhon is director of field services – the unit that provides general support to the state’s 178 school districts. He is known and respected by all superintendents. They know him as an able “CDE navigator” who can cut through all the red tape. He is a model of customer service both within CDE and throughout the entire state. Before coming to CDE in 2001, Jhon served in educational roles throughout rural Colorado, including district director of student achievement, principal, and teacher. The Department of Education is fortunate to have such a kind and knowledgeable man working on its team, and the department appreciates his kind and helpful spirit, and his role as a dedicated public servant for the state of Colorado.

**Department of Health Care Policy & Financing – Eric Kuhn – Senior Assistant Attorney General**

Eric Kuhn’s recognition here today is a bit unique in that he is actually an employee of the Department of Law. But Eric demonstrated outstanding work representing the State of Colorado in The TABOR Foundation versus The State of Colorado lawsuit regarding the Hospital Provider Fee, and the subsequent Healthcare Affordability and Sustainability Fee. Denver District Court’s favorable decision is evidence of Eric’s dedication, hard work, leadership and wise counsel. The ruling protects critical

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attributes and programs that impact hundreds of thousands of Coloradans. Medicaid and Child Health Plan Plus expansions will continue and more than 450,000 Coloradans will sleep better knowing they have health insurance – funded through the Provider Fee. Medicaid can continue to pay higher reimbursements to hospitals, which is especially important to rural hospitals. His work has protected the State from a significant fiscal impact - $4.6 billion to start - and it will total much more in the future. We recognize Eric's service to the State of Colorado and for his outstanding leadership.

**Department of Higher Education – Michael Vente – Director of Research**

As Director of Research, Michael Vente has dedicated his career in higher education to embodying bold, consistent, and joyous service to the people of Colorado. Michael leads with curiosity, and practices quality assurance to minimize errors to a nearly inhuman-level. As the author of the department’s annual report on Concurrent Enrollment (among others), Michael seeks out opportunities to champion strategies that work for students, and our state. Time and time again, Michael embodies the department’s mission, eagerly volunteering for duties above and beyond his responsibility. We are grateful for his service!

**Department of Human Services – Markus Portillos - Youth Services Specialist III**

Markus has worked for the Division of Youth Services since January, 2013 and has been promoted twice. Markus deserves this nomination because of his endless work to improve the lives of youth in DHS’ care, and his commitment to improve the professional development of staff. On May 6, 2018 Markus demonstrated heroic efforts to protect the lives of both youth and staff when a loaded gun made its way into the facility. Markus never left the scene, and engaged with the youth involved in the incident to ensure all remained safe. Markus played an instrumental part in developing the new division policy on active threats. Markus is a trainer in Motivational Interviewing, and Protective Supports and Interventions. He works hard to provide staff with quality mentoring and role modeling. He supports a trauma

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responsive environment and has worked to reduce fights, assaults, use of seclusion, and physical interventions within Gilliam (GIL-yam) Youth Services Center. Markus is currently working to improve the State’s physical intervention program to provide improved practices for everyone onsite. Markus does not settle for good enough, he wants the very best for the youth in his care, and his teammates.

**Department of Labor & Employment – Jose Negron-Rivera – Unemployment Insurance Auditor**

Jose is extremely successful in his role as an Unemployment Insurance Auditor for CDLE. He has a great respect for our State and the citizens he serves. Through strategic collaboration with partners and customers, Jose organizes and presents information to Spanish speaking communities in rural Colorado. He has been continually commended for "teaching people in terms that they understand." He takes a complicated topic and makes it seem easy, while establishing rapport in a culturally sensitive way, earning the audience’s trust quickly. His audits are complete, accurate, and exceed the standards set for auditors at his level. Jose proactively adjusts his work schedule to include nights and weekends, to meet community and employer outreach needs. Feedback from his supervisor and accolades from customers exemplify qualities of consistent, bold, and joyful service. Jose loves his community and it shows through his commitment to exceptional customer service.

**Department of Local Affairs – Andy Hill – Community Development Office Director**

Andy Hill has devoted her career to improving land use planning and governance throughout the State of Colorado. She has made countless contributions over her 23 years working at Colorado Department of Local Affairs that have had lasting impact. She is well known throughout Colorado communities for her success in providing local government training to elected officials and staff; leadership of the Main Street Program; and commitment to small and rural communities. During her tenure at DOLA, scores of successful Main Street communities have been improved. Andy has brought tens of millions of dollars in CDBG-Disaster Recovery funds to improve

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resilience in communities devastated by the 2012 and 2013 fires and floods. Andy's leadership and organization have also resulted in successful training of countless local elected officials, planning commissioners, and planners. She has been a skilled and thoughtful leader, building collaborative partnerships and mentoring and empowering her staff, further amplifying her impact. Andy’s consistent and joyous service make her well-deserving of this public servant recognition.

**Department of Military & Veterans Affairs – Renee Pace – Veteran Service Officer**

Renee’s 26-years of service as a Veteran Service Officer has exemplified the highest levels of bold, consistent, and joyous service to Colorado veterans, families, and their survivors. Her most recent and notable initiatives are best demonstrated through her efforts in spearheading property tax exemptions for our state’s veterans , and partnering with other state departments and the Veteran’s Administration in identifying opportunities to reduce healthcare costs for our veterans, while simultaneously reducing state Medicaid costs. Renee has earned a reputation for consistently enhancing the customer experience and improving the lives of all the veterans she serves. She is the recognized subject matter expert, and mentor of choice for many Veteran Service Officers. Perhaps her most infectious and uplifting attribute would be her attitude and way she makes life better for all those she engages with on a daily basis. Bold, Consistent, and Joyous are just a few of the many qualities that best describe Renee’s public service to our fellow Coloradans and the Department of Military Affairs.

**Department of Natural Resources – Brock Bowles – Environmental Specialist**

Brock’s work ethic, attitude, and contributions to the Department, the Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety’s Coal Program, and people of the state of Colorado are a model for all public servants. A major part of the job is interacting with members of the public including mine operators, landowners, and concerned citizens. These groups often have opposing views and Brock has been masterful in bringing these often disparate groups together to build consensus and come up with bold

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solutions. Brock consistently volunteers for additional projects. He has served as the primary mentor for two Arrupe students in the Division of Reclamation, Mining, and Safety Coal Program, launched the Division’s drone program, and conducted flight training classes for other specialists. Brock truly demonstrates excellence and leadership in public service.

**Department of Personnel & Administration – Erin Brodeur – Budget & Policy Analyst**

Erin Brodeur is an extremely smart, dedicated budget analyst who is always willing to take on new projects for DPA. Erin listens to the needs of the programs, anticipates issues that may arise, and provides analysis and support that allows program managers to focus on their other high priorities. She is thorough and intuitive. Erin's role as the Total Compensation and Common Policy budget analyst is critical, and she has become the key analyst involved in all high profile projects. Erin was the sole budget analyst working on high-profile issues in the last year including Paid Parental Leave,

Coordination of Total Compensation Templates, and the Pay Raise Implementation process, to name just a few. Erin works weekends and nights leading up to the annual July pay adjustments to ensure employees receive their pay increases correctly. Erin has done this for three years now, and it is time the State formally recognize her for her dedication and hard work.

**Department of Public Health & Environment – Fonda Apostolopoulos – Superfund and Brownfields Project Manager**

For the past 25 years Fonda's work may have resulted in more environmental cleanup than any single CDPHE employee. Fonda began his CDPHE career in May 1993 and was assigned to oversee remediation of the Asarco Globe Smelter and neighborhoods surrounding Globeville. An early task was cleanup of residential properties in the neighborhoods. Fonda’s success in his new role was not due to technical expertise, but rather his customer service skills and ability to build trust with the community. The listening and problem solving skills developed and honed during his years at Globeville set the stage for a successful career at CDPHE. Highlights at Globeville include cleanup of the 80 acre plant site as well as 800 residential and 250

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commercial properties. After cleanup was completed in 2014, the plant site was redeveloped into a commercial business park providing an economic spark to a historically disadvantaged neighborhood. The success of the project was recognized at the 2017 EPA National Brownfields Conference in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The project received the Region 8 Phoenix Award, honoring men and women working to solve critical environmental problems of transforming abandoned properties into community assets.

**Department of Public Safety – Ashley Riley Lopes – Grant Administrator, Office of Victims Programs**

Since her arrival, Ashley has volunteered to design and launch a number of special projects supported by a multi-million dollar increase in federal victim assistance funds. Ashley used these resources to develop four major initiatives designed to improve services for crime victims. Most recently, she created a program through the University of Denver under which recent law school graduates can obtain two-year fellowships to work for local victim service agencies. This initiative provides these organizations with much needed legal services, and helps direct new attorneys toward a career in this important field. Previously, she facilitated the design and implementation of programs that have enhanced civil legal services for victims, expanded housing options for victims, and developed a strategic victim emergency fund. Her work has helped improve the lives of literally thousands of Coloradans.

**Department of Regulatory Agencies – Carolynne Dionese -Wright – Criminal Investigator**

Carolynne displays unwavering dedication to fulfilling DORA's mission of Consumer Protection over her impressive 31-year tenure. She began her career at the Division of Real Estate as a front desk receptionist. Through hard work and dedication, she advanced from realtor licensing to enforcement. Today, Carolynne is a criminal investigator for the real estate program. She possesses a comprehensive knowledge of the real estate broker license law and regulations. She handles the most complex investigations at the Division involving at-risk and elderly populations. These cases typically involve substantial consumer harm and are typically referred for criminal

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prosecution. To combat the predatory scams of equity skimming, Carolynne collaborated with the Division’s Communications Team to produce a consumer alert. She prepared the written content for the consumer alert by developing six tips on how to avoid becoming a victim of equity skimming. The alert was translated into Spanish to reach more homeowners. She never seeks public praise for her work. Instead she would prefer to quietly serve and protect homeowners. Carolynne deserves praise for her bold, consistent and genuine service to Colorado.

**Department of Revenue – Ken Schade – Tax Policy Analyst**

Most people around the department know Ken as a helpful and extremely knowledgeable member of the Office of Tax Policy Analysis. Ken is known for being friendly and approachable, which is why people are constantly phoning, e-mailing, and dropping by with their tax questions. Of course, they would not keep coming to him if he did not consistently give accurate, thorough, useful, and understandable answers. Ken continually goes above and beyond to see people get what they need. As he often says, he enjoys helping those who are working hard to make the department better. But folks needing Ken's powerful insights on Friday mornings find his office dark. That's because Ken's values of helpfulness and hard work take him into the community. Throughout the week, Ken works longer hours so that he has every Friday morning free. He uses that time to volunteer for an organization that packs grocery bags with weekend food for low-income students in the Denver Public Schools. The program ensures that students who get most of their weekday meals through the free or reduced lunch program don't go hungry on the weekend. Ken truly is an asset to State government, the Department and his community.

**Department of Transportation – Kane Schneider – LTC Ops 2**

This past year created some unique challenges for the Department of Transportation when it came to keeping the State’s mountain roads safe. Over the past few years Kane has worked with the Division of Highway Maintenance, and the other CDOT

Regions on the implementation of the “GAZE-EX” Avalanche mitigation equipment and has worked to support the CDOT explosives program at a high level. During this year’s

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unprecedented avalanche cycle, Kane worked with DHM, CDOT Regions 1 and 3, and the Colorado Avalanche Information Center to clean up after this winter’s historic avalanches, and mitigate potential danger or damage that could be caused by additional avalanches. Kane went above and beyond the call of duty with his efforts to make the I-70 corridor safe for our visitors, mountain residents, businesses, and employees.

**Governor’s Office – Kachina Weaver – Deputy Legislative Director**

Kachina Weaver has been instrumental to the success of Governor Polis' Legislative Agenda this year. Kachina worked to set up a bill tracking system for the over 400 bills going through the Legislature. She's developed communication tools for working with every member of the Legislature, and built out a team of legislative coordinators to ensure the Governor's priorities are being tracked and responded to. Kachina worked to organize over 55 legislator meetings with the Governor, including weekly, bi-partisan meetings with Legislative Leadership. She's flawlessly executed on strategy, is thoughtful and witty, and instills a sense of drive and purpose in her team. And she is truly the “hostess with the mostess.”

**Office of Economic Development and International Trade – David Fishman – Colorado Tourism Office Fiscal & Operations Manager**

David Fishman, known as "Fish”, is a bold and active problem solver. Because he is so consistent in his work and known for his integrity, he has earned trust and respect across OEDIT. This past summer, Fish worked tirelessly as a volunteer for the office move to ensure that OEDIT's relocation went smoothly and there was little disruption to business operations. When OEDIT’s accounting department needed help, he was the first to volunteer. Fish's thoughtfulness is also expressed in smaller ways, like donating his beautiful handmade wooden cutting boards for a raffle to raise money for the Colorado Combined Campaign, providing an endless supply of candy to keep the office fueled, and keeping a toolbox under his desk in case someone needs help hanging something in the office. Fish embodies what it means to be an excellent public servant, teammate, and employee.

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**Governor’s Office of Information Technology – Don Bailey – Deskside Manager**

Don runs the CDOT-facing Deskside Support Services Team. Running a team is a tough and often thankless job; that is doubly so for serving a geographically-spread organization like CDOT, which has 3,000-plus employees scattered across 200

locations in every corner of Colorado. Don's team is highly respected for providing fast support for crucial issues; that kind of reputation means an exceptional person is leading that team. Don’s team has high morale, a clear mission, and good camaraderie. They are known for their politeness, elegance, quick service, and honest interactions. Don is a true leader who positively impacts those he works with. He sets the bar high. CDOT considers him a terrific business partner. CDOT is working to become the best department of transportation in the country, and support from partners like Don is vital to accomplish this mission. It is an honor to know and work with Don; if more managers were like him, Colorado state government would be even more effective and efficient.

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