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Virginia Tech Staff Employee of the Week

November 12, 2007

Group Name: Johnny L. Cox
Job Title: Machine Shop Supervisor
Employee's Home Department: Mechanical Engineering
Employee's College or VP Area: College of Engineering
Nominated For: President's Award for Excellence, and Governor's Award for Career Achievement
Nominated By: Matthew L. Swift, Department Administrator, Mechanical Engineering
Virginia Tech Hire Date: September 8, 1965



Summary

Johnny Cox is the machine shop supervisor in the Mechanical Engineering Department, where he has served with distinction since 1965. Many of Virginia Tech's headline-making research projects on jet engines, alternative fuels, robots, autonomous vehicles, weapons and acoustics start out as prototypes in Johnny's machine shop.

Johnny is well known across the campus for his fabrication skills, and knowledge of the electrical and mechanical systems that have evolved over the years in Randolph Hall and other Mechanical Engineering labs. He is equally well regarded for his ready smile, positive attitude, dependability, and willingness to help out in any situation. One administrator commented: "Sprinkled around Virginia Tech are a small, unsung handful of 'power' employees whose contributions make the university work in a hundred ways. They rarely have glamorous titles, but their stature is huge among their co-workers and peers. Johnny is clearly a member of this elite group."

He has also demonstrated the types of leadership qualities that have resulted in a highly productive and motivated team of employees. When he was promoted to be Machine Shop Manager in 1984, he instituted a number of changes. He was able to recruit, train, and retain capable machinists, without a single turnover for more than fifteen years. He and his staff of skilled machinists literally invent the future with their own hands.

Another faculty member described his support for faculty and students: "I see Johnny studying a rough drawing from a student like an architect, eyeing its inherent faults and contemplating, like a wise teacher, how on earth to explain the solution to the naive student. I see Johnny ready to help the students, faculty, and staff with whatever new problem they presented him, accepting the challenge freshly, even though it may have been something he'd mastered years before." He has been committed to helping faculty members meet deadlines in their experimental work, much of which is funded by industry sponsors. One researcher stated, "Without his outstanding contributions, I can certainly say that my research programs would suffer a huge setback."

About the ["Staff Employee of the Week"](#) Program

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