

Staff Employee of the Week

Gail Duncan

NAME: Gail Duncan

JOB TITLE: Office Specialist

HOME DEPARTMENT: Housing and Residence Life

COLLEGE OR VP AREA: Vice President for Student Affairs

NOMINATED FOR: President's Award for Excellence

NOMINATED BY: Vera Kidd

SUMMARY

Gail has worked in several offices at Virginia Tech, but since 2005, she has been on the “front lines” meeting students, parents, staff and the public in regard to their housing and residential support needs. Gail’s title of Office Specialist does not do justice to the scope of her work, as she herds and directs all of us through the busy days in the office. Her maturity, professionalism, and dedication to genuine customer service prevail in all she does. She works with a large number of students including undergraduate Resident Advisors and Graduate Assistants, exhibiting high levels of productivity with a calm, measured and friendly demeanor. She is unrelenting in solving problems, and is empathetic to residents’ needs or concerns about their on-campus experience – explaining policies and procedures in detail and finding answers to questions she has not yet encountered. Gail is the anchor around which the daily activities of the department flow, and she is truly appreciated by those fortunate enough to share her work environment.



When Gail came into (what was) Residence Life, there had been turnover at the customer service stations in the office. Gail’s maturity and professionalism immediately began to turn things around – her focus was never herself, but service – especially to students. A large number of student workers interact with Gail – we have around 280 student leaders, undergraduate Resident Advisors and Graduate Assistants. Also students with the Residence Hall Federation and the Student Government Association frequent her office. She is a warm and welcoming person, greeting each of those staff members with an open attitude and a gracious demeanor.

As the front-line person in HRL, Gail also has to meet students and parents in various degrees of crisis – whether they are unhappy with a room or building assignment or traumatized with roommates’ interactions with their child. They occasionally act angry, tearful, or just unfriendly. It is all the same to Gail, she sees them as students or parents who have something bothering them and who need the intervention of our staff to help them, or at least to explain their options to them. It takes a lot of nerve to listen and de-escalate these situations, but Gail has the attitude and professionalism to defuse them. She is relentless in finding out how to solve problems.