

2009 Outstanding Participant Awards



Susan Lynette Bennett

*Cherokee Nation
Tahlequah, Oklahoma*

As a single-parent raising four children, Ms. Bennett struggled to make ends meet with her \$7 per hour job, limited transportation, and no family support in the area. Even though it had been sixteen years since her high school graduation, she was determined to pursue a degree in higher education in order to change her family's circumstances.

Ms. Bennett received her Associate in Arts degree from Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College, and membership into the prestigious Phi Theta Kappa Society, an International Scholastic

Order of the Two-Year College, through tuition and textbook assistance from the Cherokee Nation's Classroom Training Program. She was also named to the Dean's Honor Roll, President's Honor Roll, and National Dean's List. She continued to work hard and took advantage of various scholarship opportunities through the Cherokee Nation's Education Services Group, and received her Bachelor of Social Work degree from Northeastern State University, and Master of Social Work degree from The University of Oklahoma.

Currently, she is the Supervisor for the Cherokee Nation Rental Assistance Program for Delaware, Mayes, and Ottawa Counties in Oklahoma. "In a way, it's almost like I have come full circle," Bennett stated. "I used to barely survive and struggled to make ends meet. Now, I am in a position to help others through kindness and encouragement shown to me."

Cody N. Guerin

*American Indian Center of Arkansas, Inc.
Little Rock, Arkansas*

Mr. Guerin was a Sergeant in the US Army, Charlie Company M1-9 Infantry, and also with Delta Company 2-19. He was deployed to Iraq in 2004 and led his team unit in their search for enemy insurgents and their leaders. Many of his men were killed during those 15 months in Iraq. Mr. Guerin was diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and received an Honorable Discharge as a disabled veteran. He experienced a long, difficult, and challenging transition to civilian life since he believed that he should not leave his unit and felt he needed to give more of himself to his country.

Unemployed, he lost his new house to the bank, moved in with his wife's parents, and was expecting a newborn. Determined to better his situation and provide for his family, he worked fulltime as

an auto mechanic, attended classes at night for a 64-week certification program at the Nashville Auto Diesel Mechanic School, and continued his counseling sessions for the PTSD through the Nashville VA Hospital.

In April 2008, Mr. Guerin received his diploma in Collision Repair and Refinishing Technology with High Performance Fabrication. He is employed in that special area and has also established himself as an outstanding custom fine airbrush artist for motorcycles.



Lynette Lunak

*Blackfeet Tribal Business Council
Browning, Montana*

Ms. Lunak's past was one of no family support (other than her grandmother who never gave up on her), domestic abuse, drug and alcohol addictions, guilt, and shame. With these many life hurdles, she was determined to create a better future for herself and her children. She participated in an Alcoholics Anonymous Program, received her Associate of Applied Science degree in Health, Wellness and Chemical Dependency Counseling from Blackfeet Community College, obtained employment as an administrative assistant, and realized, for the first time, her life was manageable.

Unfortunately, after many years of sobriety, she relapsed and

then, within three years, lost everything: her family's trust, her job, her children to Child Protective Services, and her family home. She was alone in a shelter for battered women, feeling devastated, depressed, and hopeless. She considered suicide then decided to try and take baby steps to pull herself back up.

Ms. Lunak went through 500 hours of On-the-Job training, various professional and life-skills trainings, and ongoing attentive case management and childcare support, and she slowly turned her life around.

Today, Ms. Lunak has been a successful full-time employee at Blackfeet Manpower for the past three years where she provides compassionate, professional Case Management services to clients. She has also been an active supporter and advocate for Blackfeet Domestic Violence Program and its collaborations with similar domestic violence agencies throughout the state of Montana.

2009 Outstanding Employer Award

Sicangu Wicoti Awayankapi - Rosebud Housing Authority

Sicangu Nation

Rosebud, South Dakota

In a collaborative effort with Sicangu Nation Employment and Training Program to create new green jobs for the community's youth and adult workforce, Sicangu Wicoti Awayankapi contributed approximately \$384,333 for solar heat panel installation training and straw bale home construction training, and \$200,000 for a homeless shelter for veterans, which was valued at \$365,000. These joint efforts have created about 30 jobs and helped provide efficient, cost-effective solar heating systems for 150 homes.

Thirty clients from the Sicangu Nation Employment and Training Program were provided with supportive services (i.e., work tools, work clothes, gas vouchers, training tuition, per diem, lodging) in order to participate in a solar heating two-hour

power point training and five-hours installation demonstration. They were also part of a two-week classroom plus on-site training, which resulted in their certification as installers and immediate employment to install these green systems. Finally, they received straw bale home construction training and, thus far, have completed a three-bedroom home using locally produced straw, and equipped with solar panels, for an elderly, handicapped woman who had lost her home to a fire.

These types of green jobs, which are easily replicated, use local resources, and teach important life skills to community members, will be in high demand as tribes learn the importance and efficiency of this industry, and redirect training dollars to these areas.

2009 Outstanding Participant - Honorable Mention

- *Angela Christensen, North American Indian Center of Boston, Inc.*
- *Anthony C Downey, Citizen Potawatomi Nation*
- *Kenneth Dyer-Redner, Inter-Tribal Council of Nevada, Inc.*
- *Ruben J. Eppeler, Council of Three Rivers American Indian Center, Inc.*
- *Elizabeth Hen Hawk, The American Indian Center of Indiana, Inc.*
- *Shannon R. Riggs, The Navajo Nation*
- *Julie Rockman, Ho-Chunk Nation*
- *Diana "Anna" L. Warden, Nez Perce Tribe*
- *Karen Young, Sicangu Nation*

2009 Alice BigPond Roach Memorial Award

Myrle Thompson

*Ho-Chunk Nation
Black River Falls, Wisconsin*



As Airman Second Class (E3) in the US Air Force, Ms. Thompson served during the Korean War as a cryptographic operator and received the National Defense Service Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and an Honorable Discharge. After her military service, she worked in the Neillsville School District as a Library Assistant/School Aide, then went on to pursue a degree in American Indian Studies at Mount Scenario College in Ladysmith, Wisconsin. In 1988 she received an award for “Outstanding Family in Education” from the Neillsville Education Association. Today Ms. Thompson is a Certified Literary Volunteer and Ho-Chunk Language Instructor of the Ho-Chunk Language Division of Mauston, Wisconsin. As a veteran, she belongs to American Legion Post 73 of Neillsville. When she’s called on, she assists with the Ho-Chunk Legion Post.

Ms. Thompson has always supported education efforts by participating in various American Indian Awareness programs and efforts in Wisconsin: promoting diversity between tribal youth and their non-Native peers in the school district, and at events conducted by the Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts; teaching arts and crafts, language, and history for the Wisconsin Winnebago Youth

Leadership Conference; preparing exhibitions and displays for the history shows at Wisconsin’s pow wows, Indian Summer in Milwaukee, and Native American Awareness Week at local school districts and universities; and making the beadwork for the old Winnebago children’s home known as “Sunburst” near Neillsville, Wisconsin.

Besides her contributions to education, from 1985 through 1997, Ms. Thompson worked at the Tribal Aging Unit to deliver meals to home-bound elders and provided transportation to medical appointments. In 1993, she worked as a Tribal Courier for the Ho-Chunk Nation. From 2004 until 2006 she participated in the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council Senior Companion Program. To this day, Ms. Thompson works at the Puzaki Pei Cinak Headstart Center helping the children learn their language.

Ms. Thompson is an elder member of the Ho-Chunk Nation and enrolled member of the Winnebago Tribe.

2009 Howard Yackus Memorial Scholarship Award



Wayne S. Chulin

*Inter-Tribal Council of Alabama
Millbrook, Alabama*

For many years, Mr. Chulin worked as a welder’s helper on projects that involved high-rise commercial buildings. This high-risk occupation and the experience of suffering a heart attack last year compelled Mr. Chulin to reconsider his personal and professional life options and priorities. Even while conducting research on potential alternatives, he was most concerned with how to go about supporting his family while attending school.

Through the guidance and support of the Workforce Investment act Program of Inter-Tribal Council of Alabama, he was able to design and set in motion a clear plan towards achieving an educational goal and a career goal. Mr. Chulin now attends Trenholm State Technical College and is working towards becoming a Certified Diesel Mechanic. He is confident that he will obtain gainful employment in this field with career ladder opportunities as well as retirement and health insurance benefits, which will provide much needed financial stability for his family.

Mr. Chulin is a Kenaitze Indian from Alaska.