

# Employee Spotlight



## ***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why do you stay?***

I am a native Floridian and have lived in the Tampa Bay Area my entire life. I have spent time in Pasco, Hernando, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties over the years. Of all the counties I have lived in, Pinellas has always been my favorite. I knew I would return here to live. Now I am lucky enough to live and work here. Pinellas County offers many opportunities to learn and grow in your career. Pinellas County also finds ways to make its employees feel valued. I hope to finish out my career here.

## ***How do you help make Pinellas a great place to live, work and play?***

I work for Forward Pinellas, the metropolitan planning organization and planning council for Pinellas County. We are a separate appointing authority responsible for county-wide land use and transportation planning. We work with other local governments, agencies and regional partners to create sustainable, livable, enjoyable communities. We connect those communities by actively pursuing transportation initiatives that make travel easier and safer for people using cars, buses, bicycles and their feet. We encourage collaboration that results in countywide and regional efforts being realized. Our work supports vibrant downtowns and increased options for getting around. I am excited to be a part of this agency and look forward to the future destinations and transportation options that will result from our efforts.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to learn about the inner workings of local government. This was something I never paid enough attention to in the past. I now realize how important local issues are and appreciate being a part of a team that helps find solutions to those issues. In the process, I enjoy getting to know many of the local elected officials and staff at each of our unique municipalities.

## ***What is one accomplishment at work that you are most proud of? Why?***

I arrived to my position just months after the agency had completed the unification process for the Pinellas Planning Council and Metropolitan Planning Organization. I am proud to have played a role in breaking down barriers between the two and helping create an environment of collaboration and improved office morale. I enjoyed being part of our communications team that resulted in the re-branding of our agency as Forward Pinellas. I appreciate being a part of something new and exciting from the ground level. I love organizing team building events that allow these efforts to continue for the benefit of all our staff.

## ***When you retire, what do you hope people will say about you at your retirement party?***

I hope people will say I made their lives better for knowing them. I very much enjoy making others laugh and smile. I hope they will say I made their job easier in some way. That I was a person who could always be counted on to go above and beyond to get the job done with excellence. But most important, I hope they will say I made a positive impact on my beloved Pinellas County.

# Employee Spotlight

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | September 2016



**Maria Riley**

*Customer Services Supervisor  
Utilities Customer Services Division*



## ***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why do you stay?***

I chose to work for Pinellas County Government because I heard that they had good benefits. I chose to stay because I love what I do. I love helping people.

## ***What is the one accomplishment, at work, that you are most proud of? Why?***

In the 90's I worked with Lockheed Martin and the WAGES program (Work and Gain Economic Self-Sufficiency Act, Florida) and hired some people as temps in our customer service call center. Some of those employees became permanent and have grown in their career with Pinellas County Government. I earned the Community Bridge Builders Award on 10/07/1999 presented at an event in St. Petersburg at which Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s daughter was present.

## ***Who is one colleague that deserves praise and recognition? Why?***

Jessica Green at BTS. Jessica has been a shelter in the storm for us. A refuge, so to say. We have had to call her on many, many occasions at very short notice to change the messages that customers hear first when they call the Utilities Customer Service Center. For example, she will add messages during emergency events such as changes to the reclaimed water restrictions or a water main break that affects a large number of our customers. Most recently, during Hermine, a press release plus an Alert Pinellas phone call went out about overflowing manholes. Citizens were advised to call our phone number to report them. We were inundated with phone calls. We con-

tacted Jessica and she quickly added a message to let callers know our maintenance department was aware of the manhole overflow issues and were working hard to resolve the problem. She also changed our hours in the ACD (automatic call distribution) system to keep the calls coming to our call center until 6 p.m. instead of switching over to the answering service at 5 p.m. as usual.

Sometimes Jessica receives calls from us after she has left for the day or while she is driving. She takes care of our issues remotely and does whatever it takes to get the job done. She deserves praise and recognition. JESSICA IS AWESOME!

## ***What is on your wish list for the next five years with Pinellas County?***

I plan to retire within the next five years. I will have 30 years with Pinellas County Government on August 24, 2017.

## ***When you retire, what do you hope people will say about you at your retirement party?***

Maria gave 110% to Pinellas County Government. She was a problem solver, very reliable and dependable. She was a people-person who loved people and would give another human being the shirt off her back if they needed it or asked for it. She showed genuine concern for others and their welfare. She was not afraid to tell others that she loved them. It is going to be hard to find a replacement for her, someone with her "heart condition" is hard to find. She will laugh and cry with you and knows how to give words of encouragement to others. She is a poet who puts true meaning and feelings into her poems.

# Employee Spotlight



**Mark Sprague**

*Deputy Director Operations & Facilities  
St. Pete-Clearwater International Airport*



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

The Deputy Director Operations & Facilities leads and oversees the airport departments of Operations, Facilities, IT and Aircraft Rescue Firefighting.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

The aspect I enjoy most in my job is being able to utilize my diverse aviation experience and incorporating this knowledge to my everyday tasks or projects, all while retaining our slogan; "Tampa Bay The Easy Way". Serving over 1.6 million passengers, it is important to me that first and lasting impressions are positive.

## ***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why do you stay?***

Moving from the Washington DC area, I was definitely looking for a year-round warm weather western Florida area. Add in the County benefits, baseball, beaches, and my love for boating, Pinellas County is truly a Live - Work - Play paradigm without ever crossing a bridge.

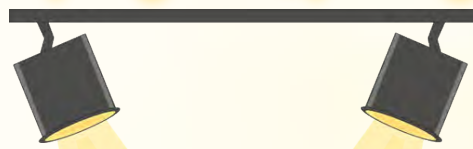
## ***What is the one accomplishment, at work of which you are most proud? Why?***

The one accomplishment I am proud of is leading a talented, dedicated and skillful team to its 12th consecutive year without a single deficiency in our annual Federal Aviation Administration Safety and Certification Inspection. This is not a single task accomplishment from one person but rather from airport teams and partners committing themselves to excellence. I have only led this team since early 2015, but enjoy implementing new methods and best practices, always assuring safety is continually a top priority.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Wake up with determination – go to bed with satisfaction! And — master your tasks and do more than is expected!

# Employee Spotlight



**Joyelle Debernardi**  
Tax Collection Supervisor  
Tax Collector's Office



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

I am a Tax Supervisor for the Tax Collector's Office. I have the opportunity to work with my team assisting them with their own personal success.

## ***When you retire, what do you hope people will say about you at your retirement party?***

My goal in life is to leave footprints in the lives of others that I meet. I try to bring encouragement and a positive attitude in with me to work every day. I enjoy helping others see their value and their contribution to the organization. So with that being said, I would want others to be able to share how I may have touched their lives in some way.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Be a sponge. Be willing to learn and grow even if it hurts and is uncomfortable some times. Take it all in and don't stop. Allow mirror moments. What are mirror moments, you ask? Those are times where you take a look at yourself and ask someone to provide constructive feedback. Don't be defensive about it; celebrate it! You must operate in the uncomfortable or you are not doing anything at all.

## ***What is the one accomplishment, at work, that you are most proud of? Why?***

My Certified Public Manager designation was a huge accomplishment because I worked very hard for that achievement. Each class I attended opened my eyes to the world of management and taught me how to be successful in my position.

## ***How has the County helped in your career development?***

The Tax Collector has provided all the necessary tools and resources to develop me into a leader. They have afforded me a multitude of training classes, the ability to earn my CPM designation, and a plethora of on-the-job knowledge and experience. These opportunities have paved the way to being a successful supervisor. I have been blessed with management's support throughout my career as well. Mostly I learn from my teammates because without them, I am nothing.

# Employee Spotlight



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

My department informs the public on how to properly dispose and recycle what they no longer need using our Integrated Solid Waste Management Program, in order to conserve natural resources. We encourage residents to recycle through programs, information outreach and municipal/community partnerships.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

Giving tours and presentations to teach what happens to items placed in trash cans or recycling containers. I am proud to share the variety of components the County has in place to handle what people no longer need. Residents are excited to learn that we burn garbage to generate electricity while recovering metals for recycling, about the recycling of old TVs and computers, the collection and reuse of unwanted chemicals and, last but not least, the grinding of yard waste (including the great smelling Christmas trees) into mulch that we give away for free! It is a joy to hear a well thought out question from a fourth grader that tells me she is engaged and learning. It is fun to see adults gasp or put their hands over their faces when they thought they were super recyclers only to find out they have been contaminating their home recycling bins by placing plastic bags, paper towels and plastic toys in them.

## ***What are some upcoming trends or challenges that you see in your field?***

The waste disposal field is constantly changing as companies produce different products, such as e-cigarettes. The recycling industry is

changing as the commodity markets change in value and technologies change. How people receive their information is changing. I believe people sincerely want to recycle and do the right thing for the environment. It is a challenge to keep up to date regarding changes, then think how to inform the public in a positive fashion, and consider how to use the website and social media to its full advantage.

## ***How do you help make Pinellas a great place to live, work and play?***

I am part of a team at Solid Waste that works hard every day to manage the tons of garbage produced in our County, and we work very hard to protect the environment. We do this by providing a place to take garbage so it doesn't pile up on the streets, by burning the garbage to generate electricity for 40,000 homes per day, and by managing disposal of electronics and chemicals to protect the ground and surface water environments. By constantly informing, teaching and instilling the passion to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle and Recover, I help make Pinellas County the best place to work, live and play.

## ***When you retire, what do you hope people will say about you at your retirement party?***

As a Pinellas County employee Jan was kind, passionate, and cared about her job while enjoying her co-workers. She taught residents the correct way to recycle, dispose of their waste, and to protect and conserve water ... and had fun doing it. She made a dent!

# Employee Spotlight



## ***What is something that only a few people know about you?***

Maybe more than just a few people know this but only because it's been all over Facebook recently. My 22-year-old daughter, Megan, is about to make me a grandmother. She is 16 weeks along, due in late October. We are about to find out the gender at her next appointment. She's excited, nervous, and anxious. While I'm way too young to be a grandparent, I'm also excited. That baby's going to be doing mud runs right alongside me!

## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

As a member of the BTS Web Administration team, I support the County's internet, intranet, SharePoint, and the new agenda automation software called Granicus.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

There are many aspects of my job I enjoy so to pick just one would be impossible. The top finishers on my list would be the variety of my workload, the people I get to meet and interact with, and the opportunities our group has to assist in moving the County toward a paper-free environment. Aside from my job responsibilities, I also enjoy my role as the Wellness Champion for BTS, and being on both the Employee Picnic and Pinellas County Golf Tournament committees.

## ***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why do you stay?***

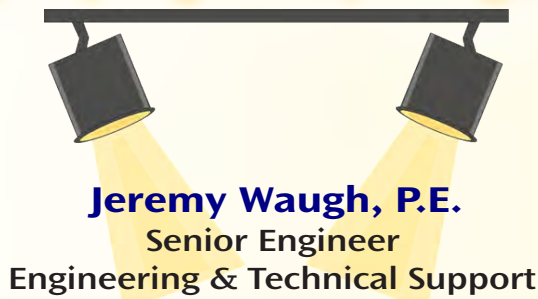
In my last year of high school, I worked at the Checkers on Gulf to Bay Blvd. After graduating in June 1992, I figured it would be a good idea to get a real full time job. So I began working at Kelly Temp Services. Only a few weeks later, I was assigned to work at Pinellas County Solid Waste for John Weir, the Maintenance Supervisor at the time. I guess I did a good enough job. They hired me on permanently only a year and a half later. In my 24 years with the County, the accomplishments and triumphs have far outweighed the difficult moments and setbacks. I stay with the County because I thoroughly love my job and the people I work with.

## ***How has the County helped in your career development?***

The Tuition Reimbursement Program is a godsend. Without it, I would not have been able to earn my Associate degree in 2001 and my Bachelor degree in 2013 while raising my daughter. The out-of-pocket expenses were next to nothing. I would really encourage employees to take advantage of this program for their own career (and personal) development.

On-the-job and off-site training opportunities have also expanded my job and County knowledge, especially in my current Web Administration position and my previous Change Management Lead position.

# Employee Spotlight



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

Helping our clients (Utilities, Public Works, Solid Waste, Parks and Conservation) get their projects completed. Also, trying to identify utility failures before they happen, and fix them before they fail. When they do fail, then we try to contain the impact as much as possible.

## ***What are some upcoming trends or challenges that you see in your field?***

The County Water and Sewer Utility infrastructure is getting old. Finding ways to cost effectively rehabilitate and/or replace pipelines while reducing the impact to residents and motorists is a real challenge. New innovative technologies help, but sometimes good old fashioned “digging it up” is still the best solution. Educating nearby residents and businesses of why we are fixing the pipes is a key component to a successful project. We try to leave things better than they were before we started digging.

## ***What is something that only a few people know about you?***

While in college I received a Minor Degree in Classical History. Ancient Greek and Roman culture specifically interest me. My dream job is to be one of those engineers you see on TV shows who are reconstructing the Coliseum or figuring out how the Egyptians built the pyramids.

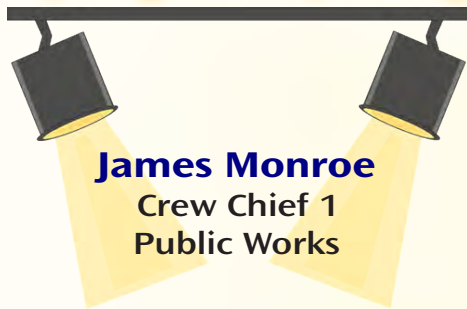
## ***What is the one accomplishment at work that you are most proud of? Why?***

One of my team’s main job priorities is to fix problems in the water and sewer network before they fail. We’re not always successful at that, but there are many cases where we do catch them beforehand and fix them. I am proud of the work we do as a utility department in supplying water and sewer services to residents. Even when we have large major failures, we almost always get service restored within a few hours. It takes a huge effort by many dedicated utility staff to get that done. Most customers do not realize the efforts we go through to make that happen.

## ***Who is one colleague that deserves praise and recognition? Why?***

There are many County staff that deserve praise. For me specifically though I think that the Construction Department inspection staff deserves to be recognized for their hard work. They are our “eyes and ears” in the field and ensure that the County gets quality work from contractors. Many times they are called upon to work nights, weekends, holidays, etc. with very short notice or warning. They are always ready to help and offer great solutions to problems encountered in the field during construction.

# Employee Spotlight



**James Monroe**  
Crew Chief 1  
Public Works



## ***What is something only a few people know about you?***

I spent 6 years in the Marine Corps and I also served in Desert Storm/Shield with an Amtrac Unit.

## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

To inform the public about the stormwater system, and how important it is to keep our water ways clean.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

It's the technology part of my job. We are moving forward from the Trimble Unit to using a tablet which will eliminate using so much paper while doing my job. And it gives us live updates instead of waiting for the data.

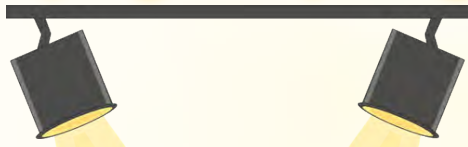
## ***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why do you stay?***

I came to work for the County to be closer to home and have a chance to work with my wife Gail Monroe. There are plenty of reasons to stay with the County. The benefits as well as the people and the different BCC functions we have throughout the year like the picnics.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

I would like to take my wife back to Hawaii. The first time we went was for our honeymoon. But this time we will take my daughter and make it a family vacation.

# Employee Spotlight



## **Keith Royster**

**Facility Operations Division Manager  
Real Estate Management**



### ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

Providing leadership support for Facility Operations that leverages the knowledge, skill and abilities of the current state to achieve the desired future state. Maintaining safe, comfortable and clean facilities.

### ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

The opportunities. Every day there are opportunities for transformative activities to be accomplished. There is value to be gained from engaging with staff, customers, my peers and leadership. Similar thinking and collaborative activities generate energy and momentum, which makes the workplace naturally enjoyable.

### ***What is on your wish list for the next five years with Pinellas County?***

Being a part of a team that delivers a successful and sustainable asset management solution for the County's infrastructure.

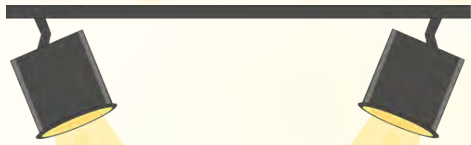
### ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Strive to achieve. At the beginning, develop your goals and plans for your success. Configure and align those goals with the County's strategic plan, vision and values. Be a continuous self developer. Never, never (did I say never) stop learning and creating value.

### ***When you retire, what do you hope people will say about you at your retirement party?***

That I was genuine about my desire and my efforts to help others succeed. That I was instrumental (along with others) in achieving the next level of operational performance for my department.

# *Employee Spotlight*



**Clayton Parrott**

**Emergency Management Coordinator  
Emergency Management**



***What is something that only a few people know about you?***

I played music semi-pro for 30 years. My main instrument was drums and I worked with a number of 'at the time' fairly major country artists.

***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

I am one of the Emergency Coordinators. Part of my responsibilities includes working with all other Pinellas County departments on their Continuity Planning, or COOP for short.

***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

Being able to work and interface with the various people that work for the County, and providing support for the multiple municipalities that make up Pinellas County.

***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why do you stay?***

I have worked as an amateur radio volunteer for many years and also I am the ACS/ARES Emergency Coordinator for the amateur radio operators in Pinellas County. I finally was fortunate to be accepted for a fulltime position in Emergency Management.

I enjoy the challenge and being able to bring my own skill set to the job.

***What is the one accomplishment, at work, that you are most proud of? Why?***

Being able to balance my volunteer work and my normal work can be challenging. But since becoming a County employee, I have been able to balance the two.

# Employee Spotlight

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | December 2015



**Debra Tierney**  
Branch Manager  
Tax Collector's Office



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

I am responsible for the activities associated with the operation of a full service agency of the Tax Collector. The Tax Collector's offices are responsible for vehicle and vessel titling and registration, hunting and fishing licensing, ad valorem and non-ad valorem tax collection, driver's licensing, and various support activities.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

What I like the most is teaching, training and mentoring staff. Preparing employees for the future is one of the most satisfying aspects of my job. I know that the time I take with them now will help to ensure that they, along with the Pinellas County Tax Collector's Office, will be prepared for any challenges that the future may bring.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Put your best foot forward every day because every day you have an opportunity to make a difference. Be compassionate and empathetic when dealing with co-workers and the public. Have fun along the way; the journey can be difficult at times but is very satisfying. Remember that you represent the Office of the Tax Collector and Pinellas County Government and, in doing so strive every day to fulfill the vision of Diane Nelson, Pinellas County Tax Collector, to provide "World-Class Service Any Time, Any Place."

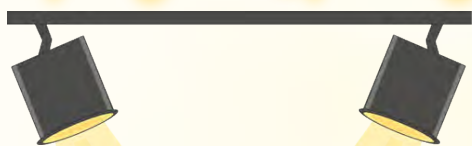
## ***When you retire, what do you hope people will say about you at your retirement party?***

I'm currently in DROP having spent the last 33 years with the Tax Collector's office. I'm looking forward to that retirement party and hoping that people will say that I was fair, worked hard and persevered. Also, that I made a difference and was a positive example to my co-workers.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

My husband and I have had the opportunity to fly, drive and visit many states throughout the U.S. However, we have not yet had a chance to visit the Pacific Northwest. We are hoping to spend time, after my retirement, visiting Oregon, Washington and Alaska.

# Employee Spotlight



**Judi Anderson**  
*Customer Service /  
Communications Liaison*  
Human Services

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | November 2015



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

I work with our staff, people at the Department of Health and other community agencies here in Pinellas County to help people in our community.

## ***What aspect of your job do you love the most?***

I get to work with our staff, our clients, and the community. As a Customer Service Liaison with Pinellas County Human Services I get all kinds of calls and requests to help people. I never know from day to day what the requests for help will be and I am grateful for the wonderful support of my administrators who trust and help me. I am able to help many people who call our department for help when everyone else has either told them that they cannot help or have referred these folks to us.

## ***What is one accomplishment at work that you are most proud of? Why?***

One of our case managers named Yuan-Chen Kung who was working on our mobile medical van called me and asked if I could help one of their clients. They were seeing and treating a 72 year old lady who had absolutely no identification. She was born in England. She was homeless and had been for many years. She said that everyone gives up on her. At 65 years of age she should have been getting Social Security and Medicaid. I was able to help this lady by getting an old driver's license. I contacted USCIS and verified that

this lady was a resident alien and in the end she was able to get a Social Security card, a new resident alien card and she started getting a Social Security check and Medicaid. She has now been able to move out of Pinellas Hope and is living independently in her own apartment.

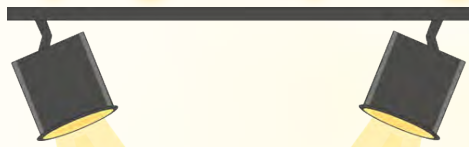
## ***Who is one colleague who deserves praise and recognition? Why?***

This person would be Anousone Eicher. She is a case manager and has been working with our department for 25 years. She exemplifies kindness, compassion and generosity. She always does her best and will go the extra mile to help each person that she sees. She treats our clients with respect and dignity. She is also wonderful about taking care of our staff as well. Anousone is genuinely a credit to our department and is one of the nicest people you could ever know!

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Work hard and try to do your best each day. Keep your word and be kind and compassionate in your dealing with co-workers and the people we serve. You should have a personal work ethic and be true to yourself no matter what other people may say. Be aware that you are always representing Pinellas County. Remember that even when you are off duty to conduct your life in a manner that you, your family and your co-workers would be proud of.

# Employee Spotlight



**Tim Johns**  
*Financial Operations Technician*  
*Clerk's Accounting*

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | October 2015



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

I handle the weekly and monthly disbursements of fines, fees and forfeiture funds to the Board, 23 municipalities, and the State of Florida.

## ***What is something that makes you unique, that only a few people know about you?***

I am a proud grandfather of 7, 3 girls and 4 boys. They range in age from 16 years to 3 months. This is the reason that I will be leaving the County and moving north, to be more involved with them.

## ***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why have you stayed?***

The County gave me an opportunity to get away from retail and be able to enjoy my nights and weekends with family. After 23 years in the Coast Guard and over ten years at Home Depot, working various shifts and many weekends, the Monday through Friday 8 to 5 was and still is a welcome change.

## ***Who has been a mentor for you here at the County? How have they helped you?***

Mona Wyllie was my first lead worker and mentor. I have always strived to have the same work ethic and helpful attitude that she has. Her sense of humor is a great thing, also.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Always ask questions; never be satisfied with "That is how it has always been done." Never be afraid to pose the same question to multiple people, you will usually get different answers. This does not mean that some are wrong, just that people view things differently.

# Employee Spotlight



**Rob Krueger**

**Entomology & Education Support Specialist  
Mosquito Control & Vegetation Management**

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | September 2015



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

My position title is Entomology and Education Support Specialist. I work in the mosquito lab and also maintain our in-house and outreach education program.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most? Why?***

I finally have an outside job, for the most part, where I get to see all the wild areas of Pinellas County on a regular basis. Gators, snakes, insects and all the forested wetland a guy could ever hope to see in one day "at the office!"

## ***How do you help make Pinellas a great place to live, work, and play?***

I'm a small part of an entire team of great folks that protect the public from arthropod borne virus and nuisance mosquitoes. Without Mosquito Control, many scientists believe that much of Florida would be uninhabitable!

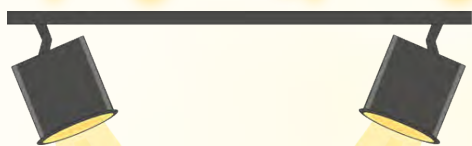
## ***Who is one colleague who deserves praise and recognition? Why?***

I can't name one specifically. That said however, it's completely fair to say that our whole group of Mosquito Control technicians are rocking and rolling, rain or shine, through treacherous terrain to answer the call for this entire summer thus far. Most are putting in 14 hour days to ensure our goals and duties to keep this recent West Nile Virus situation in check.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

Vacation? What's that? This may be the first job I've had where vacation could be a reality! Bucket list for me has always been to go to the Pantanal Wetland in South America in the hopes to see an Anaconda in the wild!

# Employee Spotlight



**Rosa Garcia**

**Procurement Analyst Coordinator  
Purchasing Department**

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | August 2015



## ***What is something that only a few people know about you?***

I originally graduated from fashion design school in 2003. Shortly after, I joined the US Navy and got assigned to the USS Essex (LHD2) in Sasebo, Japan where I worked in supply and logistics. The Navy gave me the opportunity to visit different countries and to learn from their cultures and their people. It was an eye opening experience that made me realize how fortunate we are to live in our country.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

The aspect I enjoy the most is that every day comes with a new challenge and an opportunity to make a difference. Every purchase, regardless of the cost, is essential for the operations of the departments we serve. To me, it is very rewarding to know that the efforts of my department contribute to the success of the County's daily operations.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

I think that having a positive attitude allows us to cope better with the different challenges in the workplace. A positive attitude can help us to adapt to the demands of a new working place and help us to find ways to improve and to give one's best, which I believe leads to success.

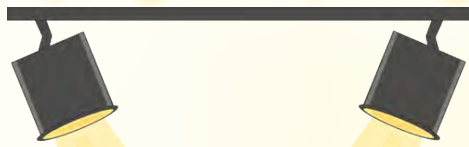
## ***When you retire, what do you hope people will say about you at your retirement party?***

When I retire, in the far, far future ... I hope people remember me as someone who encouraged and inspired them to give their best at anything they did. I'm a better person today because of good leaders who taught me to approach situations with a different perspective and who encouraged me not to give up. If I have the opportunity, I would like to do the same for others.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

I would go to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil! I would like to go to their Carnival Festival and also visit the Christ the Redeemer statue at the top of Corcovado Mountain. I would like to be able to take a picture from the top of the statue!

# Employee Spotlight



**Dawn Grasso**  
**Administrative Support Supervisor**  
**Supervisor of Elections**

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | July 2015



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

I supervise Pinellas County poll worker training at three sites with a staff of 30 to train up to 3,000 poll workers for Election Day.

## ***Why did you first choose to work for the County and why do you stay?***

Previous to moving to Florida, I traveled the world as an International Business Consultant where I had many adventures. My motto was Life is a daring bold adventure or it's nothing at all! I also loved to write and I published a political thriller called "Code Breakers" by D. S. Peterson. Then the white sandy beaches and brilliant turquoise waters of Pinellas County called my name and I moved here to write. But a funny thing happened on the way to the beach ... I remembered that I like to eat. And to eat, I needed a job! During that rude awakening my Pinellas County Voter Information Card arrived in the mail and by divine intervention I was prompted to call the Elections Office to see if they needed help during the 2008 Presidential Elections, which they did.

I stay with the Supervisor of Elections because Deborah Clark, the SOE Team and Pinellas County are great to work for with decent pay, good opportunities and great benefits. That and I hold the right to vote in high esteem; we at the Supervisor of Elections are the Gatekeepers of Democracy.

## ***How do you help make Pinellas County a great place to live, work and play?***

My husband and I give back to the community with service projects and fundraisers. Our signature fundraiser is a dinner dance called the Harvest Blessing Bash where we raise money for a local food pantry, with last year's donations totaling \$6,000. We've also just launched a new project called Frozen I.C.E. where we provide Emergency Information Kits to Pinellas County residents. The kits are placed in the freezer with a magnet on the freezer door to signal first responders.

## ***What is something that makes you unique, that only a few people know about you?***

I write books, write and produce audio and stage productions and do a bit of work in front of the camera as well. I'm now working on film projects for the Supervisor of Elections, for other businesses, and the funeral home my husband, Pete Grasso, and I operate. I'm currently working on photo shoots and film clips that focus on our Celebration of Life services. But then some days I switch gears and head to a church or cemetery where I hug necks and wipe away tears as families say goodbye to their loved ones.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

I would grab my husband's hand and fly off on a European adventure, then Istanbul, then back to London on the Orient Express. Then we'd find our way back home to Pinellas County and the best beaches in the world!

# Employee Spotlight

**Belinda Huggins**  
Director of Applications Support  
Business Technology Services



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

Providing guidance and leadership for the Application Support team whose responsibilities include responding to the inquiries of our business partners, ensuring availability and effective utilization of their applications.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most? Why?***

The aspect of my job that I truly enjoy is having the opportunity to work with such a diverse and dynamic group of people on a daily basis. This has enabled me to strengthen my interpersonal skills and has contributed to my professional development and career growth. Every day is like being in a classroom; I look forward to the lessons that I am able to embrace as well as pass along to others. These lessons and interactions have proven to be invaluable throughout my career and have contributed to my overall experience with Pinellas County.

## ***What is the one accomplishment, at work, that you are most proud of? Why?***

Without question, my most valued accomplishment is being blessed with the opportunity to advance into the role of BTS Director of Application Support. My career with Pinellas County began as a programmer analyst. Over the course of 18 years, my work ethic, perseverance, and dedication allowed me to transition through various positions that eventually lead into

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | June 2015

management and now into my current role. I attribute much of my success to the strong leadership and mentorship that I have received throughout my career. Now, I am in a position where I can provide that same mentorship and guidance to others seeking to advance in the organization.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

One piece of advice that I would give to new employees is 'work hard and look for opportunities to demonstrate your skills and abilities beyond your position responsibilities.' These are the skills that are noticed by and characteristic of leaders, which can definitely enhance your career trajectory. One thing that has helped me in my journey is providing recommendations to address concerns, so that my input was not viewed as a complaint, but rather a solution to a problem.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

A lifelong dream of mine has been to experience God's majesty captured in the beauty of Niagara Falls. It is described as one of the most splendid natural wonders of the world. Having the opportunity to enjoy this with my family would be my ultimate dream vacation. My husband has attempted this vacation several times in the past two years, but back to back major projects have delayed our plans. My hope is that in the very near future my dream will become reality.

# Employee Spotlight



**Kris Kondilis**

**Equal Opportunity Coordinator  
Office of Human Rights**

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | May 2015



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

My job is to investigate discrimination cases in housing, employment and places of public accommodation, i.e., businesses and restaurants.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most?***

I enjoy interviewing people, learning about the unique situations in every case, and trying to resolve conflicting evidence from parties who each believe their actions and motives were the right ones.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

The advice I'd give a new employee is to enjoy your time with the County and learn all you can. It's not a competition. Your colleagues and supervisors have knowledge and experience that you can learn from, no matter how long you stay. That said, be pro-active about your career. No company or single person can "make" you into the professional you want to be. Draw on the County's resources, but take the lead in getting yourself to the next level in your career.

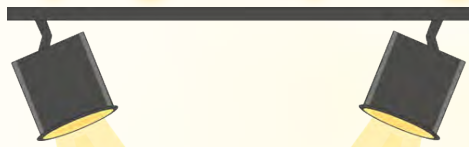
## ***What is something that only a few people know about you?***

Most people don't know that I was on a "SWAT" team. The Southwest Archaeological Team, or "S.W.A.T." for short. We had to work fast on a piece of land in east Mesa, AZ that was being sold to a storage shed business. Before the site was paved over, we sifted through a lot of sand and recovered some Hohokam pottery shards and other artifacts dating from 1100-1400 B.C.E.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

In the past several months, during the Centennial commemorations for World War I, I've been swept up in historical fiction about this forgotten war. I'd like to visit the towns and battlefields in Belgium and in France that I've read so much about.

# Employee Spotlight



**Lindsey Marshall**  
*Scalehouse Services Specialist Sr*  
Recycling and System  
Management Division  
Solid Waste



## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most? Why?***

I have a great sense of pride to be a part of such a unified team consisting of amazing coworkers. The individuals that surround me every day are truly an inspiration to me. I feel I can lend my voice and the team appreciates my contribution. There is always something new and exciting to learn at the Solid Waste Facility and I am grateful that I am a part of such a meaningful organization.

## ***How has the County helped in your career development?***

My coworkers teach me something new each and every day. I can honestly say I can take a tad bit of information home with me on a daily basis. Pinellas County has given me the opportunity to grow as an individual and as a supervisor. The amount of effort and dedication provided to me, through engaging instructors and coworkers alike is astounding and will always be appreciated. Between the classes, time, support, and guidance I am where I am today.

## ***How do you help make Pinellas a great place to live, work, and play?***

I enjoy the work I do at the Solid Waste Facility knowing my contributions are a part of something bigger than “just garbage.” People throw away just about anything like furniture, art, food, and even

valuable trophies! Our state-of-the-art facility generates power from our everyday household waste. How cool is that? I like to sit on the ocean front and look around at those big blue recycling cans and know that I had a part in implementing that very program. It is a constant reminder that in fact, little old me is accomplishing something for everybody to enjoy.

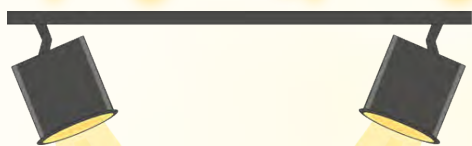
## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Stick with it! It is a great place to work and you have tremendous opportunities all within reach. The potential lies within you. Regardless of what department, unit or division that you currently work in or will be in, you play a powerful role in the success of Pinellas County.

## ***If you could take a vacation anywhere, where would you go?***

There is nothing like a good ole “staycation” sometimes. I admit I enjoy the place I call home. I was just discussing the fact that there is a world of people that pay a ton of money to come and visit the place where we call home: the amenities, the scenery, the weather, not to mention the diversity of people and abundance of delicious food. With that being said I would also like to see the Carnival in Brazil, go snorkeling in Mexico, view the northern lights in Alaska, go camping in the Redwood Forest, maybe even zip line in the rainforest, just to name a few.

# Employee Spotlight



**Gwen Brooks**

**Property Records Supervisor  
Property Appraiser's Office**

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | March 2015



## ***What is your job?***

I assist internal and external customers with information pertaining to the value roll system for taxation purposes. These tasks involve answering questions about exemptions, just market value/assessed value, taxes, portability, save our home, and property characteristics. It includes having a vast knowledge of departmental operations for county, municipal, state, and federal departments. I also order office supplies and distribute mail to other departments and provide assistance with operating office equipment. In addition, I do whatever is needed to help my co-workers and directors.

## ***How has the County helped in your career development?***

I am grateful for the Pinellas County Tuition Reimbursement Program that helped me earn an Associate of Arts Degree and a Bachelor of Applied Science Degree while being employed here and being a full-time single parent. In addition, I graduated from the Succession Management Program and Career Development Program that teaches you how to be an effective leader for Pinellas County Government.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most? Why?***

I enjoy all parts of my job especially assisting taxpayers and others with exemption, explaining value processes, and training others. It makes me happy to be of service to someone else and brighten their day.

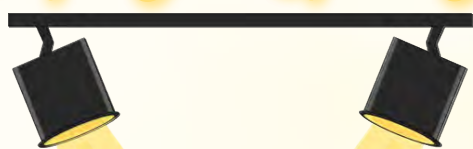
## ***Who has been a mentor for you here at the County? How have they helped you?***

Joan Read, my mentor, is an inspiration. She encourages me to continue my education, and to be innovative in my career. She provides guidance for improving my capabilities and skills to enhance my career with Pinellas County Government.

## ***What piece of advice would you give to a new employee?***

Take the county consortium classes and participate in the career development programs that are offered through the Pinellas County Human Resources Department. Every day try to learn something new and be a helpmate to others.

# Employee Spotlight



**Justin Gross**  
**Jury Coordinator**  
**Office of Ken Burke**  
**Clerk of the Circuit Court**

Featured in [The Pen newsletter](#) | February 2015



## ***What is your job in 25 words or less?***

To summon approximately 1,200 jurors weekly upon estimating the daily number needed by the court, and to tactfully orient and assist jurors.

## ***What aspect of your job do you enjoy the most? Why?***

Definitely turning around citizens' negative perceptions of jury service.

Many express concerns prior to and upon reporting about work, childcare, and other obligations that may be disrupted. The court has made service very reasonable by reducing it to one day or the length of a trial and by allowing deferral up to six months.

These simple accommodations have reassured many citizens and even invited willingness and appreciation.

## ***What are some upcoming trends or challenges that you see in your field?***

Not to be cliché but technological change. We are constantly streamlining and are presently studying systems that may increase the speed of juror check-in, gathering and transmittal of juror information to the court, and other efficiencies.

One example: within the past couple of years cash payment has been made available to eligible jurors. We are the only county in Florida to offer cash payment and this joint venture between the Jury Services Dept., Clerk's Accounting, and our

various counter services areas is rightly a point of pride for Mr. Burke as it represents a significant convenience to jurors and savings (in check processing) to taxpayers.

## ***What are your career aspirations? How are you planning on accomplishing them?***

My father retired from the County, and my parents always instilled in me the importance of integrity and public mindedness. In my youth I always saw myself serving in public service.

I would definitely like to rise within the Clerk's Office. My sharpened ability to tread the fine line between compassionately helping citizens navigate our processes without becoming their advocate is what allows me to excel at my job.

## ***How do you help make Pinellas a great place to live, work, and play?***

My department and the court do an outstanding job of balancing compassion for individual citizens' circumstances with the collective need for citizen juries. I understand the obligations that pull a person in a variety of directions, but also appreciate the essentiality of citizens' participation.

Nothing protects the freedoms we all enjoy and that are guaranteed by our state and federal constitutions better than participation by jurors who are as representative a sample of the population as possible.