Public Goods Post
—— thinking about the public economy ——
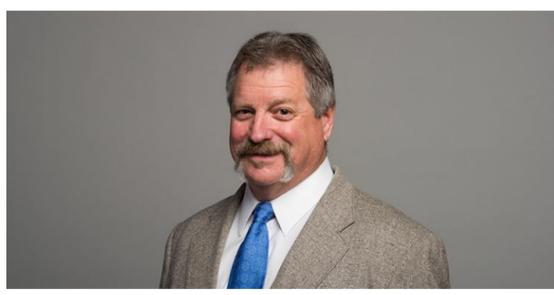

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The Oscars for Civil Servants

The 2016 Samuel J. Heyman Service to America Medal finalists were announced this month. As described recently in The Washington Post, these medals honor civil servants who have performed breakthrough work in the public sector, resolving formidable challenges to public well-being.

You are likely familiar with these challenges. Especially as they impact public health and the environment, they have made national headlines. But you probably have not heard about how a problem was solved or a public need met, because solutions are not considered newsworthy. For many of the public workers on this list, their contributions are being recognized for the first time.

Below, we highlight the work and stories of several of the finalists who have directly and significantly improved the quality of life for all of us.

SELECTED 2016 FINALISTS

Dr. Burke Healey | Department of Agriculture

"Halted the spread of the largest animal disease outbreak in U.S. history, an avian influenza virus that threatened human health, the poultry industry and the jobs of 1.8 million people."

Background
Avian Flu Outbreak Takes Poultry Producers Into Uncharted Territory | NPR

Thomas A. Mariani, Jr., Steven O'Rourke, Sarah Himmelhoch

Department of Justice

"Secured a record $20.8 billion legal settlement against BP for the devastating 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, providing funds to help a five-state region recover from massive environmental disaster."

Background

U.S., BP Finalize $20.8 Billion Deepwater Oil Spill Settlement | WSJ

Joseph J. Mueller

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

"Prevented the collapse of a major dam that threatened the lives and property of thousands of residents and business owners downstream, and could have disrupted New York City's water supply."

Background

Water Recedes and Anxiety Rises After Hole Opens Near Upstate New York Dam | NY Times

Kathleen B. Hogan | Department of Energy

"Developed and expanded a series of pivotal national energy efficiency initiatives that have greatly reduced greenhouse gas emissions and saved American consumers and businesses billions of dollars."

Background
Better Buildings Challenge Energy Savings Exceed $1.3B | Facility Executive

David A. Hindin

Environmental Protection Agency

"Spearheaded the EPA's use of advanced pollution monitoring technology to increase compliance with federal environmental laws, provide more public transparency and reduce harmful pollutants in our air and waterways."

Background

EPA adopts rules to limit oil refineries' emissions into neighborhoods | LA Times

Jaques Reifman and the APPRAISE Team

U.S Army Medical Research and Material Command

"Developed an artificial intelligence system for medics to quickly detect if severely injured patients in transit are hemorrhaging, improving survival rates by preparing trauma centers to act immediately upon the patient's arrival."

Background

Automatic Detection of Internal Bleeding in Air Ambulances | Medgadget

PAUL MCGANN, DENNIS WAGNER, JEAN D. MOODY-WILLIAMS
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services

"Reduced preventable patient harm in U.S. hospitals, which resulted in an estimated 2.1 million fewer medical errors and saved nearly 87,000 lives and $20 billion."

Background
Patient Safety Improvements Save 87,000 Lives and $20 Billion | AJMC

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