



GTC SOUTHWEST 2009

Texas CIO OF THE YEAR AWARD

Written nominations must be submitted by:

January 9, 2009

Send to:

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OBJECTIVE

The CIO of the Year Award is being established to recognize an outstanding public sector Chief Information Officer in Texas, from state or local government, who:

- Demonstrates exemplary leadership and fosters the development of new IT leaders
- Develops innovative solutions to create organizational efficiencies, cost savings and increased value of IT investments
- Creates and implements strategies that promote information sharing and collaboration among government entities to breakdown traditional barriers and identify opportunities for shared intergovernmental success

SELECTION CRITERIA

1. Organizational Collaboration – collaborates and partners internally and externally, with public or private entities, to achieve business results
2. Outstanding Customer Service – leads their IT organization to provide exceptional customer service to all constituents and stakeholders
3. Innovative Leadership – leads an IT organization relative to operational, program and project success, including enterprise initiatives, and demonstrates innovative leadership through the effective use of technology in support of strategic initiatives of their organization
4. Mentoring – demonstrates compassion and commitment to IT staff development, in a manner that promotes pride in public service and fosters high performance IT teams
5. Communication – breaks down communication barriers and employs tools and processes to facilitate and encourage communication across the enterprise, especially between IT and business

ELIGIBILITY

The eligible candidate is currently serving in state or local government entity or authority, in Texas, in the capacity of the Chief Information Officer for their agency or jurisdiction. (Chief Information Officer holds the most senior level IT position within their organization.)

TIMELINE

December 20 – Announcement Distributed
January 3 – Announcement Reminder Distributed
January 11 – Nomination Deadline
January 14 – Nominees Notified of Nomination
January 29 – CIO Academy & Presentation of Award to Recipient*

*Note: All nominees are strongly encouraged to attend the event as the recipient will not be notified of their selection in advance of the award.

**GTC Southwest 2009
TEXAS CIO OF THE YEAR AWARD**

I would like to nominate Caren Skipworth with Collin County

Please fill in the following information and **briefly describe the reasons why you are nominating this individual**. The description should include the individual's accomplishments and examples of their leadership. Emphasize the reason(s) this person should be chosen based on the selection criteria described above.

NOMINEE'S INFORMATION

NAME: Caren Skipworth _____

TITLE: IT Director _____

AGENCY: Collin County _____

ORGANIZATION: IT Department _____

ADDRESS: 210 S. McDonald Street _____

McKinney, TX 75069 _____

PHONE: (include area code): 972-548-4501 _____

FAX NO: 972-548-4494 _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: cskipworth@collincountytexas.gov _____

NOMINATION

(Please answer the following questions. You may use additional pages; no more than 3.)

A. Why are you nominating this individual?

With Collin County being one of the fastest growing counties in the nation over the last five to eight years, Caren Skipworth has done an outstanding job maintaining legacy services while evolving the county to handle the growth through new automated IT services. Building relationships throughout Texas she has been able to accomplish many projects thought to be impossible. I have seen her efforts in collaboration that have benefited Collin County and many other cities and counties. Below are a few highlights of some of Caren's accomplishments that truly speak to why she should be considered for this award and recognition.

B. What are examples of their leadership and major accomplishments?

1. Caren currently chairs the CUC (Conference of Urban Counties) and the CIJS (Common Integrated Justice System) Technical Committee. The project consists of 13 of the largest Texas counties cooperating to implement a Texas Case Management System. The project is currently underway with successful installs, and Collin County being the first to go live with the system. The 13 counties shared the cost of doing a requirements gathering to write the RFP (Request for Proposal), the purchase of shared software licenses, the recurring maintenance cost, and the software modifications expenses. The collaborative effort saved Collin County's tax payers 1.4 million dollars through joint procurement and through annual support for the Case Management system.
2. Working with her staff and the Department of Homeland Security the IT department completed a state-of-the-art Regional Homeland Security Operations Fusion and Communication Center (OFCC) network, data center, and MICP (Mobile Incident Command Post) vehicle. This is one of very few OFCC facilities in Texas.
3. With the growth in GIS (Geographical Informational Systems) she engaged the City of Wylie to share in Collin County's GIS departmental services and technology instead of building their own. The County currently has two inter-local agreements with the City of Wylie and the City of Lucas to provide GIS services, again saving taxpayers money by sharing resources.
4. In order to reduce the cost and risk of transporting inmates IT installed in just two months a video plea system for less than \$1,000 dollars a court by utilizing existing equipment. The project utilized innovative technology that allows for video and audio recording capabilities across the County fiber network. Within two months over 100 video pleas were processed. The system allows the County to process plea hearings efficiently and conveniently for Judges.
5. Caren has worked collaboratively with other government entities to establish a county- wide fiber network for the support of government business. Collin County received a TAC Technology Fiber award for these efforts.
6. Caren constantly promotes the sharing of IT resources and documentation amongst her peers. She does this through the support and/or development of SharePoint sites for documentation management. She also participates in team-building with her staff by coordinating and facilitating a team-building event annually. She imparts these concepts with other organizations with which she is involved. Some of the organizations are:
 - a. TAGITM (Texas Association of Governmental Information Technology Managers), serving as president from 2006-2007. Coordinates and facilitates team building events for the

- organization annually since 2005. Assisted in establishing new partnerships with TAC (Texas Association of Counties).
 - b. Chairs the CCECC (Collin County Emergency Communication Committee) consisting of IT Directors from cities, ISDs, and Collin County Community College campuses within Collin County.
 - c. Chairs the CIJS (Common Integrated Justice System) subcommittee of the CUC (Conference of Urban Counties) implementing the installation of a Case Management system for 13 Counties.
 - d. Co-chair of the CUC (Conference of Urban Counties) IT Directors Group supporting the Tech Share program for Texas Counties. The committee looks for potential collaborative technology applications in County Governments.
7. Caren participated in the publishing of successes in the Collin County IT department in the past year for the following:
 - a. Best Practices in Change Management, Prosci Benchmarking Report, 2007 for ADKAR Practices in Government Agencies.
 - b. GFOA (Government Finance Officers Association) for IT Governance Journey, 2009 for IT Right Sourcing Study.
 8. For background, Caren is responsible for managing 5 Collin County departments: IT, Telecommunications, GIS, ERP, & Records with a total of 62 employees, Caren leads a centralized IT department supporting over 1600 full-time employees. She fosters and inculcates self-development among employees promoting a better understanding of accountability, leadership, decision-making, and the importance of teamwork. She also shares many self-development books with her peers in other Counties and Cities.
 9. Caren is changing Collin County IT structure to establish best practices using the ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) & ISO (International Standard Organization) 9000 standards. For the past two years she's been aligning the IT employees' Pay for Performance Objectives with the IT department and the County's Strategic Direction and Vision while coordinating with her staff, keeping them involved in and informed of changes.
 10. Caren teaches and supports Change Management best practices for the people side of IT projects. As a certified ADKAR (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, & Reinforcement) practitioner she shares the skill with IT and with other County departmental employees. Strong adherence to the principle of assuring that business owners are involved in all technology projects is a cornerstone of that solution. Through completion of many successful IT projects she has shared this proven concept with other local governmental entities.
 11. The Collin County web site received national recognition for becoming one of the top county government portals awarded by the Center for Digital Government in 2007 Best of Web Competition for improved citizen services.
 12. Caren believes that it's crucial for county employees to have the ability to communicate to IT in a seamless and efficient manner on a daily basis and during major projects, which an intranet web site is designed to facilitate. As a result, the IT department customer service surveys provided an 'above satisfactory of services' rating to county departments over the past 5 years.
 13. A newly constructed Collin County Data Center was occupied December 2007. The existing inadequate data center that served for 24 years was completely vacated in just over two weekends. Instead of using a vendor turn-key approach for the building and moving of the computer room, Caren depended upon the IT employee's expertise and resources to implement the transfer, which amounted to a cost savings of \$76,000 for the move alone. Outages were minimal for the users during the move and no major issues occurred after the move. Relying on her co-workers promoted pride in the staff's success and increased their knowledge of the environment to be supported while it reinforced the principles of self-development she has worked hard to instill.

C. What is the nominee's single greatest accomplishment in their position?

Caren saw the need to reduce the overall recurring cost of 27 T1 communication lines connecting 24 Collin County facilities. She started by seeing what it would cost to replace the T1s with a fiber network, estimating \$3.5 million for a total of 124 miles of fiber. Exploring the possibility of using existing fiber already installed by other government entities, she discovered a massive amount of existing fiber already in Collin County with the greatest portion under the jurisdiction of the Collin County Community College District. So she worked with the CCCC Board of Directors to get them to agree to share their dark fiber (fiber not in use by the College) with Collin County. Caren authored and negotiated an inter-local agreement wherein Collin County received 16 strands of fiber totaling 84 miles. The County only needed to install a further 40 miles of fiber which reduced the cost by half. This saved the County taxpayers 1.2 million dollars and eliminated the County's T1 recurring cost of \$330,000. Collin County and the CCCC District divide the ongoing fiber maintenance costs as well. The project was completed in 2006.

After the County and the College completed their portion of the project Caren formed a committee made up of the IT Directors from cities, colleges, ISDs, and Collin County called the CCECC (Collin County Emergency Communication Committee). This committee was tasked with many objectives, but the primary one was to successfully connect the larger cities, ISDs, colleges, and the County to a proprietary fiber network for daily government business and for Homeland Security purposes. Planning and meeting on a regular basis the committee applied for a grant to help fund the CCECC Fiber Project. The proposal received a \$326,000 dollar grant for their project. It was agreed that the funding would cover the fiber connection for the Cities of Allen, McKinney, Frisco, Plano, Plano ISD, Collin County Community College, and Collin County, who now use the fiber network for Homeland Security radio inoperability, transfer of police agency data, and access to system applications for investigation and analysis. All FTP (file transfer protocol) established with these agencies and ISD access to Collin County's Truancy Case System is also supported through this fiber.

The committee is working toward future cooperative ventures that will utilize the CCECC fiber network. It continues to support cost savings and plans to add additional agencies to the network in the future.

D. Are there any additional comments about the nominee you want to share?

In summary, Caren is an outstanding individual who looks outside of the box to make things happen. Her collaboration and experience merits the consideration for CIO of the Year.