



2010 JAY and ROSE PHILLIPS AWARDS

WORK AWARDS

William “James” Anderl, Rochester, Minn.
*Packaging Engineering Professional: Thermal Design
IBM Corporation., Rochester, Minn.*

A highly respected engineer, James Anderl “manages his projects with a passion,” according to his supervisor at IBM.

Cerebral palsy, high frequency hearing loss, a speech impairment and allergic asthma were never barriers to James. Courage Center services touched his life many times: He attended therapeutic preschool, received outpatient therapy, attended camp from age 7-18, learned to swim and ski, and learned to drive through Courage Center programs.

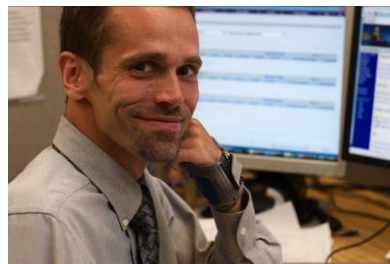
James’ received his B.S. degree in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Minnesota. He has worked for IBM Corporation for more than 11 years.

His passion and energy flow into the community. He volunteers for his church, helping with food distribution. He also participated in four mission trips to build a college dormitory at Alaskan Christian College. “James has always been an achiever and hands-on kind of guy, so when he gets a chance to operate a piece of power equipment, stand back and watch him go!” said a nominator.



Jim Counts, Mendota Heights, Minn.
*Operations Supervisor, Social Security Administration,
St. Paul, Minn.*

When he was 19, a car accident left Jim with a spinal cord injury. Despite his quadriplegia, Jim received a Bachelor’s Degree in Political Science from the University of St. Thomas, and a Master’s in Public Administration from Hamline University.



Jim has worked for the Social Security Administration (SSA) since 2000. He supervises 12 employees and is a primary contact between clients, agencies and SSA employees. He served on the Social Security Advisory Council for Employees with Disabilities for six years.

In the community, Jim served on the St. Paul Mayor’s Advisory Council for People with Disabilities for three years and the Dean’s Advisory Committee for Students with Disabilities while a student at the University of St. Thomas.

“Jim Counts is a true professional,” said a supervisor. “...his job knowledge and organizational skills are exceptional.” His contributions include “working the most complicated cases. He gives each claimant his undivided attention and treats them with respect from start to finish.”

Counts was recently promoted to Operations Supervisor for his drive to provide courteous, selfless and efficient public service and his ‘team concept’ perspective.

Nick Zerwas, Elk River, Minn.
*Latent Print Examiner, Target Corporation
Brooklyn Park, Minn.*

Nick Zerwas was born with a rare, congenital heart defect – Tricuspid Atresia. In his lifetime he has survived 10 open heart surgeries and a stroke at age 17. He credits his survival to advances in heart research, and the support of his family and friends.



Despite his health issues, Nick graduated from Elk River High School. He then received a B.A. degree in Biology from Hamline University, with certification in Forensic Science, and an M.B.A. from Phoenix University.

At Target Corporation, Nick processes fingerprint evidence from in-store crimes. Prior to this, he worked for the Anoka County Crime Lab.

Nick was elected to the Elk River City Council in 2006 and is seeking re-election. He is a national spokesperson for the American Heart Association (A.H.A.) and was recently inducted into the A.H.A. Hall of Fame. In Elk River, he is a member of the Development Authority, the Library Board, United Way and YMCA boards, the Elk River High School Scholarship Committee and the Guardian Angels Fund Development Committee.

Nick and his wife Julie married in 2005 and live in Elk River.

CAREGIVER AWARD

Valerie Shirley, St. Paul, Minn.

Valerie Shirley is a competent, positive woman who “accomplishes anything she sets her mind to and who has instilled her work ethic in her children,” according to her nominator

After her husband abandoned her and their four children, Valerie was a single mom struggling to raise a family, working as a teacher. Then her son Musab, just four months old, contracted spinal meningitis which left him deaf, severely brain damaged and with diminished motor function.



Valerie has committed herself to providing Musab with all the resources and skills he needs to live a productive, independent life. She and her family enrolled in American Sign Language (ASL) classes and all, including Musab, are now fluent in ASL. She returned to school for a Master’s Degree in Deaf Education.

Doctors gave her very little hope about Musab’s potential. But, she took the challenges and turned them into opportunities, said her nominator. Today, Musab attends Metro Deaf Academy in St. Paul.

Valerie also advocates for the local Muslim community, teaching children and families about deaf culture and ASL. As a board member of the international advocacy group Global Deaf Muslims (GDM) she recently organized a community symposium that drew hundreds of people from the Muslim community to educate them on deaf culture.