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ASU Mid-South Graphic Designer Earns National Excellence Honor

Pete Sullivan, graphic designer at Arkansas State University Mid-South, has been selected as a National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development (NISOD) Excellence Award winner.

“I was completely surprised and humbled,” Sullivan said. “When you think about all of the incredible people on our campus, anybody could have won this award. It happened to be me this time, but it certainly could have been lots of other people.”

“ASU Mid-South has a great culture. When employees take pride in their work and go out of their way to be helpful, individual success is much easier. That constructive culture contributed a great deal to my winning the award. I had never experienced that until I started to work here.”



Coworkers say Sullivan is well deserving of the honor.

“Pete is a dream employee, and as his supervisor, I sincerely appreciate his efforts to make the college and his coworkers look good,” said Diane Hampton, ASU Mid-South Vice Chancellor for Institutional Advancement. “He is committed and helpful and has a clear vision for each creative endeavor he undertakes.”

“Plus, uncharacteristically for a person with such creativity, he is exceptionally linear and organized. His talents and innovative approaches have taken this institution’s brand to a new level, and I know there’s only more to come from him.”

Don Threm, ASU Mid-South Publicity Coordinator, said Sullivan approaches his work with professionalism, enthusiasm, and perfectionism.

“Pete goes to great lengths to make certain the college always looks its best in printed and digital formats. In addition to his graphic design skills, he demonstrates a great ability to work well with everyone. Pete always demonstrates a positive attitude and is a consummate professional.”

In addition to his contributions at the college, Sullivan volunteers his design services to the DeltaARTS organization in Crittenden County.

“Peter has done amazing pro bono work for us,” said Amelia Barton, the organization’s executive director, who knew Sullivan as a youngster. “One year he designed all of our Crittenden Youth Theatre posters with such professionalism and creativity. He also painted our DeltaARTS outdoor sign over the door.”

“I was appreciative because at that time we had no one on staff with design expertise. I am pleased Peter is receiving this recognition because he is talented, humble, and unassuming.”

While he now makes his living as a graphic designer, Sullivan actually graduated with an anthropology degree from the University of Memphis.

“That was the most interesting subject to me when I went to college,” Sullivan said. “I especially loved learning all about the cultural side of anthropology.”

He knew, however, that employment opportunities in the field would be limited, and upon graduation, he worked a variety of jobs unrelated to his degree. He eventually hired on at a Memphis printing company running copy machines and worked his way up to a supervisory role.

When he and his wife moved to San Diego, Sullivan worked for the same franchise and began expanding his horizons.

“I saw what the designers were doing and thought, ‘Wow, that’s something I would be interested in doing.’ So I asked them to teach me how to do some of the things they did.”

When the company began downsizing, Sullivan had an opportunity to use what he had learned.

“There wasn’t enough work for two people, but there was too much for one person, so I volunteered to jump in and help out,” he recalled. “I got lucky just getting the experience. I came at design from a different perspective than most people, and through the years, I’ve been able to learn the creative part of it.”

When the Sullivans returned to the Mid-South because of a family illness, Pete began looking for a full-time graphic design job. Even with the practical experience, he found it difficult. “Without a design degree, it’s really not easy to get a job as a graphic designer,” he explained.

At one point, he applied for a job at what was then known as Mid-South Community College but didn't hear anything. A couple of years later, Sullivan tried again and landed the job.

"I am really lucky that it worked out like it did. I think I came at the right time."

Obviously, his fellow employees agree.

A tradition since 1989, the NISOD Excellence Awards program supports individual colleges in recognizing and celebrating their finest at home and on an international stage. At ASU Mid-South, recognition criteria includes a positive attitude, commitment to professional development, college service, commitment to institutional advancement, community service, innovation, integrity, professionalism, and fairness.

Previous staff award winners at the college include Ellie Selden, Letory Collins, John Easley, LaToya Roberson, Deborah Webb, Rita Hulen, Linda Graham, Melissa Cox, Sherry Fountain, Verna Davis, Leslie Anderson, Jeremy Reece, Jerry Webb, Nancy Hogan, Don Threm, Tom Cook, Barbara Stewart, Debra West, and Sandra Williams.