



GOVERNMENT FINANCE OFFICERS ASSOCIATION  
**NEWS RELEASE**

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***GFOA's Third Annual Hero Awards Announced***

(Chicago, Illinois–June 22, 2021) Government Finance Officers Association's (GFOA) Third Annual Hero Award recognizes finance officers who have demonstrated extraordinary actions during a time of **health, financial, natural, or human-made crisis**. The Hero Award Committee, composed of members of GFOA's Executive Board, recently convened and selected the following recipients of the award:

**Catherine McClary, Treasurer, Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor, Michigan**

There are several critical measures Catherine worked on this year specific to the COVID-19 pandemic and racial inequity that clearly distinguish her as an influencer whose leadership has led to recovery and renewal in her community including:

- Safety requirements stemming from the pandemic gave her and staff an opportunity to rethink old business practices and provided an urgency to accept change. She led efforts to implement:
  - Secure, online payments for delinquent taxes
  - Safety monitor personnel at the front building door with masks for customers
  - A secure window for transactional customer business and secure partitions for essential staff onsite
  - Drop box improvements, coordinated with other departments, for timely receipt of deeds, tax payments, and election materials
  - A phone tree, transfer system for phone calls, and mobile phones for staff
  - Same day ACH for interim payroll
  - A unique URL for tax and other payments
- Catherine worked to motivate Washtenaw County Treasury staff to continue some of the Equity work begun prior to the pandemic by re-focusing efforts on two major Equity projects started before the pandemic—Bridge Loans for Affordability and Home for Generations.

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**Darin Kamradt, Director of Finance, WaterOne, Lenexa, Kansas**

WaterOne is an independent, public water utility serving over 455,000 people in the suburban Kansas City area. Darin's leadership during this pandemic was critical to ensure the safety of the organization's essential workers and the reliability of water service to the public by:

- Organizing an emergency procurement team that planned for and procured food supplies and appliances such as washers and dryers in preparation to meet the needs of core staff on site for an extended period of time should an escalated shelter in place requirement deem necessary.
- Enlisting the help of in-house water quality laboratory staff in creating a homemade supply of hand sanitizer with disinfectant materials that were not as impacted by supply chain shortages.
- Supporting Customer Relations and Distribution colleagues by quickly facilitating the authorization of an unanticipated expenditure for a remote call center solution allowing the customer service call center to be operated remotely.
- Leading a virtual team of staff and consultants to advance refund outstanding bonds in order to take advantage of the market conditions created primarily by the pandemic. The refunding saved ratepayers \$4.5M over the next twelve years.

**Matthew Trine, Assistant City Manager/Finance Director, City of Rockledge, Florida**

While this award is for 2021, the leadership, service, and perseverance Matt has demonstrated to the City has gone on for years:

- A natural disaster hit the County in October 2016—Hurricane Matthew. Since Matt served as a director over Finance, Risk Management and IT, he immediately worked on the FEMA paperwork.
- In September 2017 Hurricane Irma hit Florida. Matt handled all of the FEMA paperwork for the City again.
- In March/April 2018, the City began a major enterprise software conversion for the entire City. The conversion took six to eight months for training and implementation to be completed.
- Matt began the process of lining up the City's chart of accounts with the State's chart of accounts, which lasted several months and into 2019 in time for the end of fiscal year 2019 and the audit. The City received the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence for Financial Reporting for the first time.
- The pandemic hit in March 2020. Matt helped the City by monitoring their revenue streams almost weekly and monthly. He also worked to get their fixed assets in even better shape within their new software program.

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### **Paul Miller, Director of Finance, Ohio Public Employees Deferred Compensation Plan, Columbus, Ohio**

The Ohio Deferred Compensation (Ohio DC) is a public supplemental retirement plan that provides retirement investment services to nearly 250,000 public servants in the state of Ohio. Paul Miller, as the director of finance, provides employer support to over 2,000 public employers in the state. Paul had been instrumental in the organization navigating the pandemic, which benefited the community and economy in Ohio:

- The Ohio DC plan does not currently offer loans; however, they do have an Unforeseeable Emergency program that allows participants to access their retirement savings when faced with unforeseeable circumstances. Paul was instrumental in evaluating COVID-related legislation that allowed defined contribution plans, like Ohio DC, to offer Coronavirus Related Distributions (CRDs). In place of CRDs, staff decided to modify their Unforeseeable Emergency program to allow participants to self-certify their needs for fund access, which increased the amount of money available to participants. Paul played a critical role in serving participants through this program and helping them pay medical bills, mortgages, rent, and other critically important financial needs through the revised program structure.

### **Jené Jess, Finance Director, City of Bondurant, Iowa**

Jené Jess, the City's finance director helped the City navigate multiple crises:

- Recognizing that residents could easily accumulate huge balances with the suspension of utility shutoffs at the beginning of the pandemic, Jené worked with customers to develop payment plans and reduced the City's overall delinquent utility balances, while helping customers figure out how to cope with individual financial setbacks.
- Jené previously helped the City transition from a legacy software system. Prior to this new system, the City did not have e-Government capabilities and every transaction had to be manually entered. When COVID hit, the City had been promoting online transactions as a convenience to residents, businesses, and builders. This ability became essential when City Hall closed to the public due to the pandemic.
- The City of Bondurant was hit by a derecho on August 10, 2020. Jené initiated procedures to create a special revenue fund and re-train department heads on FEMA-related procedures and emergency measures, highlighting what could be reimbursed and what documentation would be needed.
- Jené developed a City of Bondurant Finance department webpage for transparency and communication with the community.

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**Albert Stanley, Chief Financial Officer, City of Ventnor, New Jersey**

During the pandemic, Albert was instrumental in keeping the City operating, functioning, and the Finance department working:

- He was key in finding and procuring protective gear for essential personnel, fire, and police.
- Albert went into the City office when all others were quarantined to handle what needed to be done and the public as needed. Only having been hired in January 2019, he swiftly learned functions of his direct reports, so he could serve as back-up, which COVID made a reality.
- He is the City's CMFO as well as the City's QPA. He facilitated keeping critical infrastructure safe. He saw that vendors and employees were paid.
- Albert managed to reorganize and rededicate the remaining staff to ensure tasks were covered. He reviewed existing functions, practices and processes, and re-invented the Finance office, all which benefited the City departments served as well as the taxpayers.

The recipients will be recognized during GFOA's 2021 Virtual Conference. For more information regarding GFOA's Hero Award or to learn how to join GFOA, please visit [gfoa.org](https://gfoa.org).

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*Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) advances excellence in government finance by providing best practices, professional development, resources and practical research for more than 21,000+ members and the communities they serve.*