

## Show Staff That You Care

**What's the great idea?** Show your staff members they are appreciated.

**Who's doing it?** Materials Research Society

**What's involved?** Staff who work with volunteers can sometimes feel underappreciated, which is why it's important to recognize their efforts on a regular basis, says Patricia Hastings, director of meeting activities at the Materials Research Society.

Each year, the 40-person staff of MRS gathers for an employee-appreciation reception where milestone anniversaries—five, 10, 15, 20 years, or more—are honored with a roast that lasts five minutes per person. Staff members with anniversaries receive a gift, such as a padfolio or servingware, ranging in value from \$40 to \$250, plus a pin with one ruby at five years, two rubies at 10 years, three rubies at 15 years, and a diamond at 20 years. Staff volunteers collect photos and stories about staff being honored at the reception and create a presentation for the event.

“We really do try to keep it lighthearted but sincere because we do appreciate the fact that staff hangs with us,” says Hastings. “So often with not-for-profit associations, we're typically volunteer led ... you put your board of directors and committees [as] the face of the society ... so this is really an opportunity for the staff to shine.”

MRS has an average staff tenure of 14.5 years, and Hastings says the events help contribute to the organization's team-oriented culture, “and I think that culture and family feelings does contribute to retention. That's important. We want people to want to work here, and we want people to be happy and be part of us.”

All staff members are also eligible to be nominated for an Annie Award, named after retired staff member Anne Wagner, which is given to a well-rounded employee who contributes positively to business and to the staff. Winners receive a Maltese Falcon statuette (in honor of Wagner's favorite movie), a certificate, and \$250.

**What are people saying?** “People do appreciate recognition, and even those that aren't being recognized appreciate that others are being recognized,” says Hastings. Staff members wear their pins with pride at meetings and MRS events, and leadership and members often know the significance of the pins.

Hastings says staff recognition is important and that all organizations should do it, but “you don't want to do it as an afterthought. Define your program as something special.”