

Outstanding Service

Finance honors employees for providing outstanding service.

Story by Andrea San Agustin, Liaison to the Office of Finance; Photo courtesy Finance

On June 20, the Office of Finance (Finance) honored the top two percent of its workforce at the Department's annual Outstanding Service Awards (OSA) ceremony held at the DoubleTree Hotel downtown. Antoinette Christovale, Director of Finance, presented awards to seven employees for their exceptional performance and dedication to the job.

Ming Luo, Tax Auditor II, was named Employee of the Year.

Ms. Christovale and Chief Management Analyst Saul Romo of the Administration Division opened the proceedings by reflecting

on the year's accomplishments and praising all honorees for their exceptional professionalism and contributions to the department. They also took the opportunity to thank all Office of Finance staff for their service and dedication throughout the year.

The Office of Finance completed its 13th year of operation and has made significant gains in revenue collection. In total, Finance collects more than \$2.5 billion in revenue annually. The department's business tax revenue has grown from \$317 million in 2000 to \$442 million in 2013. These funds are used to pay for essential City services including public safety, libraries, parks and recreation. In

addition, since August 2011, the Office of the Treasurer merged into the Office of Finance. With the addition of treasury operations in 2011, Finance administers a \$50 billion cash and debt management program and actively manages an \$8 billion investment portfolio for the City of Los Angeles.

The event was filled with moments of heartfelt gratitude and humor. awardee Diosdado Morales exclaimed that receiving an OSA award ranked along with his most memorable life events, including the birth of his son and passing the engineering board exam. At the beginning of awardee Marvin Avila's acceptance speech, he likened his

public speaking ability to President Obama's, stating, "... Unfortunately, the City isn't budgeted for a teleprompter." He then pulled written notes from his pocket and went on to express gratitude to his supervisor and Finance Management.

Ms. Christovale, Assistant Director of Finance Jan Zatorski and Assistant Director of Finance Ed Cabrera closed the event by thanking the management team for their generosity and support in funding the breakfast event.

For more information about the Office of Finance, please go to finance.lacity.org/.

The Club congratulates all the honorees at the Finance Outstanding Service breakfast!



2013 OSA Awardees with their supervisors and Finance's Executive Team, from left: Assistant Director Ed Cabrera, Ursie Gomez, Gene Clarkson, Clariza Mullins, Li "Adam" Deng, Diosdado Morales, Erlinda Buising, Director of Finance/City Treasurer Antoinette Christovale, Marvin Avila Jr., Ming Xia Luo, Benjamin Ortiz, Christine Smith, Howard Bein, Florserfina Avila, Assistant Director Jan Zatorski, Elba Pallais and Benjamin Vargas.

The following seven honorees were recognized for their service during fiscal year 2012–2013 for performing at levels above and beyond the normal duties of their jobs:

Diosdado Morales, Accounting Clerk II, manages the payroll of nearly 400 full-time and part-time Finance employees, including more than 150 mileage employees. He started working in the Payroll section upon taking a reassignment due to a staff shortage in 2008. He learned the payroll processes in a very short period of time. He took over the former Accounting Clerk's responsibility of processing salaries, mileage and parking reimbursements, bonuses, and other payroll related payments, as well as responding to Finance employees and outside employees' demands and inquiries without a Payroll Supervisor. Mr. Morales demonstrates independence, reliability, accuracy, resourcefulness, courtesy, and timeliness, which are essential in carrying out the payroll function. He has established good rapport with his fellow employees as well as the payroll staff in the Controller's Office while resolving complex payroll-related issues. Through his efforts, Finance received a 100 percent rating in the Payroll category in the Controller's Certification and Fiscal Monitoring Program in the past two consecutive rating periods.

Marvin Avila Jr., Personnel Analyst II, has consistently demonstrated exceptional performance of his duties. He often goes above and beyond the scope of his assignments to try to find ways of making Finance's Personnel Services Section run more efficiently. He is proactive in identifying personnel-related issues, and is quick to analyze the situation and make appropriate recommendations. He thinks outside of the box. He always looks at the issue at hand, and considers the "big picture." This has helped Finance Personnel avoid huge missteps in the directions taken with personnel-related issues, thus helping decrease liabilities. In addition, Mr. Avila consistently provides the department with exceptional customer service. He is the liaison for the Administration, Revenue Management and Systems Divisions, accounting for 162 employees. As such, he is constantly contacted with all types of personnel-related issues and questions. Mr. Avila responds quickly to all inquiries, and provides complete and thorough responses, not only answering the question but also providing historical information,

procedures, policy or MOU language. He often offers to meet with employees in person to better explain procedures and issues, including evaluations, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), discipline and grievances. Finally, Mr. Avila is the consummate team player; he is always willing to assist the section with other assignments when needed, including handling selection processes, reviewing evaluations, and attending meetings. He does all this, and yet maintains a high level of productivity. The Office of Finance is fortunate to have someone of Mr. Avila's caliber assisting with Human Resources issues on behalf of the department.

Erlinda Buising, Treasury Accountant I, is very thorough and proactive in executing her duties in the Debt Management section. Her exemplary performance is reflected in her various responsibilities, which demand extensive analysis, accuracy and follow-up on debt service payments and the implementation of the Street Improvement Bond program. She maintains thorough files and documentation of procedures to ensure continuity in operations, notably in the event of an emergency. Her internal logs and spreadsheets are accessible to other staff, and she has cross-trained her co-worker to enable efficient and timely processing of transactions. For the Street Improvement Bond Program, she serves as liaison between Public Works, General Services, property owners and bondholders. She actively assists in mitigating property foreclosure and works with both the property owner and lien holder to remedy delinquent accounts. The process is very involved and sensitive, requiring ongoing communication, proactive follow-ups, customer service and status updates to both the bondholder and property owner. In 2012, she handled the foreclosure of two properties – a paper-intensive, delicate, and rigorous process that involved extensive coordination with other City departments, escrow companies, lawyers, publications, property owners, and lien holders.

Benjamin Ortiz, Finance Collection Investigator II, performs duties that include investigating, collecting and negotiating payment of delinquent tax and non-tax liabilities within City statutory provisions and collection guidelines. He has performed

exceptionally well in his primary function, as well as in the special assignment as a Small Claims Case Coordinator this fiscal year. Mr. Ortiz has collected \$1.6 million in delinquent liabilities as of April 30 for this fiscal year. In addition, Mr. Ortiz is tasked with preparing Small Claims cases for various Sheriff services, including ensuring that the "Plaintiff Claim and Order to Go to Small Claims Court" form is submitted to the Sheriff's Office no less than 30 days before the court date. Of the 461 cases filed this year, none of the submissions has been rejected for error or untimely filing. Ben has also contributed to drafting procedures for Small Claims filing.

Li "Adam" Deng, Systems Programmer I, has been tasked with the Windows 7/Active Directory migration. Mr. Deng has clearly shown his dedication to this project. He is not only motivated, but is an excellent problem solver. Moving to the Windows 7 platform has caused many legacy applications to fail, including LATA, D-Time, Cry Wolf, and TDS. His ability to identify problems and provide solutions is both timely and effective. Moving the network from Novell to the Active Directory environment is a huge undertaking. The migration requires the creation of users, directory structure, permissions, logon scripts, group policy, and more. Adam developed a solution that allows divisions to share files easily, without the aid of Systems. He is working with division managers and users to identify special needs prior to migrating. Mr. Deng has proven to be an asset to the department's migration to Active Directory.

Howard Bein, Tax Compliance Officer II, is the assistant supervisor in the Revenue Management System Tax Discovery Unit and consistently displays strong leadership skills. He has presented comprehensive briefings to Finance Customer Service Specialists and Call Center personnel, providing an overview of the RMS Unit's operation. He provides information that ensures payments are credited to the proper registration that accurately identifies Finance's revenue and provides a better understanding of how the unit works together. He takes initiative and actions to ensure that the daily incoming inventory and checks are categorized and

accessible to staff for processing. He is diligent and committed to process improvement, and has even suggested several viable databases that he believes will be beneficial in increasing the departments' revenue. Due to his technical knowledge, Mr. Bein provided instructions to staff on how to send time-sensitive forms during renewal period via email versus by the United States Postal Service, ultimately saving the department postage costs and giving the taxpayer an opportunity to file 2013 renewals in a timely manner. In addition, he has received two letters of commendation from taxpayers for providing excellent customer service and going above and beyond the call of duty. Despite the pressures of a heavy workload, he always has a pleasant attitude and is ready for the next challenge.

Ming Luo, Tax Auditor II, began her City career in 2006 with Finance. She performs exceptionally well in all areas of her duties and responsibilities. She consistently demonstrates reliability and diligence in her production of good quality and high quantity of audits with recovery amounts. She works with minimal supervision in all her audits, including the complicated ones. Because of her experience and capability, Ms. Luo is always relied upon to perform complex and out-of-state audits. Most of her audits are Communication Users Tax, Parking Occupancy Tax, Transient Occupancy Tax and taxpayers with multiple locations, multiple fund classes, and complicated gross receipt allocations. She always deals professionally with taxpayers and their representatives. She explains all the ordinances, rulings and court cases to support her audit findings during the audit and the exit interviews. Despite the fact that she is assigned complex audits, she has accomplished more than 60 audits for fiscal years 2010-2011 and 2011-2012. In addition to her exemplary work ethic, she has a good attitude towards her co-workers, supervisors and management. Her performance and dedication to the job raise the level of productivity of her section. She is an asset to the Office of Finance. Through her contributions, Ms. Luo has earned the designation as the Office of Finance Employee of the Year for 2013.