

## LEAN On Me

by Heidi Kalvig

**A**s an administrative assistant to the city engineer in a mid-sized city in Iowa, I see, hear and deal with all types of situations. From complaints about a street, to working with contractors or answering questions on the phone, my days are never the same nor are they boring. There are many reasons I enjoy my job, but first and foremost it is the opportunity to provide a service to our citizens.

I am blessed too with the pay, benefits and flexibility that come with my position. But I am more fortunate to have a boss who understands the responsibilities of being a mother and that my family is my top priority. My co-workers are team players and help to make my day run smoothly. They also treat me as an equal and often come to me for assistance, advice and support.

My position is not simply of a receptionist answering phones or someone who types letters. I am encouraged to participate in every aspect of our office and feel my suggestions and opinions are valued. I have also been given the opportunity to serve on the website re-design committee and take charge of the city's Facebook page. I'll also be in charge of our city's newsletter in addition to taking an active role in the city's LEAN Initiative.

Our city is leading the way in the LEAN Initiative. Our vision is to deliver user friendly, high quality services within budget constraints, to pleasantly surprised citizens by proud employees in a great working environment. I have been involved in LEAN through participation in kaizen events, which involves looking

at the way you do a particular task or process, stripping it down, eliminating the wastes involved and then agreeing upon the best process to follow.

I have also led my office in the 5 S process (sort, showcase, set-in-order, standardize and sustain), completely cleaning out an unsightly storage area, tossing unneeded items, painting and re-organizing. We now have a clean and organized area where everyone knows where items belong and what inventory we have. We have saved money by not purchasing duplicate office supplies.

Through the money the city has saved with LEAN improvements we have saved time and money and we have not had to lay off any employees. I am grateful our administration has taken this initiative and proud to be a part of it.

I joined IAAP in 2009 because I wanted to network with other admins and also gain more knowledge in my field. I've met some wonderful women, gained valuable information and have been encouraged to study for my certification exam. I will also be giving a presentation to our chapter (something I thought I would never

have the courage to do). I believe this new found confidence can be directly tied to my position and encouragement from my fellow IAAP members.

Being employed by the city for the past nine years has been rewarding, interesting and enlightening. To say that all days are great days would be untrue, however I enjoy coming to work every day, meeting new people and challenging myself. Employees are encouraged to learn new skills, increase our knowledge with in-service days and continue our education.

I have been in an administrative role now for around fifteen years and have decided this has truly become a lifetime career for me. My job with the city has by far been my favorite, most rewarding and challenging thus far. Someday I hope to be able to work toward another promotion but for now I will be content with serving citizens, assisting co-workers and continuing to grow professionally and personally.

Interested in submitting your own story about why you love your job? Please submit your 600-word essay to Editor Emily Allen at [eallen@iaap-hq.org](mailto:eallen@iaap-hq.org).