In Memoriam: Michael Delahanty

University Communications
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Michael Delahanty, a 29-year veteran of Parking & Transportation Services who helped grow the unit from a small office that managed several parking lots into what it is today, died on Jan. 28 from an extended illness. He was 58.

Delahanty, a Tucson native, was born Aug. 23, 1959. He graduated from Pueblo High School and attended Northern Arizona University on a wrestling scholarship.

Delahanty spent his entire career at the University in PTS, starting in 1988 as an administrative assistant. He became an office supervisor in 1989, parking coordinator in 1991, then program coordinator in 1993. He was promoted to senior program coordinator in 2000, a position he held until 2012, when he became operations manager.

He won the PTS Leadership Award and for many years helped organize a golf tournament to raise money for student scholarships.

Delahanty had retired in June.

Colleagues recalled Delahanty as someone who knew everyone, had a joke for anyone, and always strived to find solutions that would work for the whole campus.

"He always saw the bigger picture and realized we needed to come up with a solution that was satisfactory for everyone," said Brian Dolan, assistant director of construction for Planning, Design and Construction, who worked with Delahanty for 28 years. "He was a master at being able to put that together."

In one such case, Delahanty helped minimize the impact on parking availability during and after construction of the Lowell Stevens Football Facility, Dolan said.

"Mike never took that lightly," he said, adding that Delahanty's creative solutions not only saved the project money in the long run, but also ended up leaving oft-used parking spaces intact.

Dolan also recalled Delahanty's work in helping to map all of the UA's parking lots. Those maps laid the groundwork for the digitized inventory system that PTS uses today, Dolan said.

David Heineking, executive director of Parking & Transportation Services, first met Delahanty in 2006 when Heineking was interviewing for the associate director position. He remembers hearing stories about Delahanty's early days, when he used a wheelbarrow and shovel to install sign posts by himself — a job typically done by two or three people these days.
When Delahanty started at the UA, there were no parking garages. Now, there are eight, and Delahanty had a hand in the design and construction of every one, Heineking said.

Delahanty knew his work affected everyone on campus, and made sure his PTS colleagues knew it, too, he added.

"He liked to instill that in people and say, 'You might not think you're doing something that's all that important. But to people trying to get around campus, we're doing important work,'" Heineking said.

When Herb Wagner, director of occupational and environmental health in Risk Management Services, noticed cars exiting from the Cherry Avenue Garage were intersecting with heavy pedestrian traffic, he turned to Delahanty to help get it corrected with new traffic striping.

"From a safety perspective, he was right on board with all of that," Wagner said. "He was a guy that would work with you to find a solution."

Elisa Tapia, a PTS program coordinator for special events and one of Delahanty's mentees, said his perpetually cheerful demeanor made it easy to be his friend as well as his co-worker. And he had a tendency to treat his colleagues like family, despite being one of 17 children, she said.

"Even having that many brothers and sisters, he had room to make us his brothers and sisters, too," Tapia said.

During her son's deployment to Afghanistan with the Army in 2010, Delahanty was always there for Tapia, even if it meant working seven days a week so she could take time off.

"He didn't know it at the time," she said, "but that meant everything to me."

Delahanty's teaching as Tapia's mentor still impact her day-to-day. Because of the connections he helped her make with others across campus, she knows precisely who to call for help with projects, and she said she's learned to adopt aspects of his calm leadership style.

"You really couldn't tell if his job was stressful because he really wouldn't complain about it," Tapia added. "It showed me, I hope, to be more patient and stop and think about how to treat other people."

He is survived by life partner Priscilla Salinas, an administrative assistant in PTS; daughter Melanie; stepchildren Adrian, Greg and Melissa; brothers Carlos, Victor, Robert, Daniel, Louie, Armando, Roy and Patrick; sisters Virginia and Carmen Delahanty, a PTS program coordinator; 12 grandchildren; and numerous nephews and nieces.

A service for Delahanty was held at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church on Feb. 6.

Donations toward funeral costs can be made by visiting this YouCaring page [1].

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