

Award: Leadership in Government Award - 2018
Recipient: Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office
Presenter: Chris Garcia

Hello again everyone. I'm Chris Garcia.

Next I am going to present CCHCC's Government Leadership Award. This Award is presented to a local, state, or national government official or agency that has distinguished itself by showing leadership in advocating for the best interests of the people they represent. This year we would like to recognize the Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office for their Township Assistance Client Services.

Cunningham Township is the township that corresponds to the City of Urbana – its geographic boundaries are the same as the City of Urbana. Because of this, Urbana City Council members also serve as the Cunningham Township Board.

The Township has two sections: the Township Supervisor's Office, and the Assessor's Office.

Most people are not familiar with the Township Supervisor's Office, and do not know about the important role it can play in providing social services to community members who would otherwise fall through the cracks.

The Cunningham Township Supervisor's office provides essential social services that form a safety net of last-resort safety for Urbana residents who do not qualify for other forms of financial assistance, such as welfare or SSI.

Township Supervisors have great latitude in how to carry out their duties and how to provide services with the funding they receive. Not all Township Supervisors are responsive to the community's needs, and not all Township Supervisors make their services accessible or deliver them in a way that treats people with dignity and respect.

Fortunately, under the leadership of our new Township Supervisor, Danielle Chynoweth, Cunningham Township is now providing more and better services to more residents, including services to help prevent homelessness. Most of the clients served by the Cunningham Township are single individuals, with no minor children, who have become disabled and unable to work, but who have not yet qualified for Social Security Disability (a grueling process that can take years).

Now, thanks to Danielle's leadership and the amazing staff she has assembled at the Township, services are delivered with compassion, dignity, and without unnecessary barriers.

Under this new leadership and team of staff, the Cunningham Township office is nimble and capable of responding to clients' and the community's needs in a way that hasn't been done before. They always answer the phone, welcome walk-in appointments, and can provide support right away in emergency situations.

Cunningham Township provides monthly cash assistance for those who qualify. They also have emergency housing programs to help prevent the homeless from sleeping outside or residents from being evicted from housing. Many of our own clients benefit from these life-sustaining services.

Assistance from Cunningham Township can literally mean saving someone's life – saving their life from the ravages and dangers of homelessness, despair, from disintegration and poor health. On any given day, low income or no income clients have to make tough decisions about paying utilities or paying rent or other bills. Thanks to the work being done by staff at the Township Office, a lot of people now have a little more security and a little less stress as they face the challenges of loss of income.

The change in leadership and staff at the Township is a morale booster. As Paulette says, our Township Clients are happier than I have ever seen any Township Client. The clients love the new staff and the respect that they receive; they say this is the way that people should be treated – with kindness, understanding, and dignity.

We see the difference that the Township Supervisor's Office makes every day in the lives of their clients, and we see the difference in the types of services being provided, and how they are provided under the new leadership and staff at the Cunningham Township Office.

Our friends at the Cunningham Township Office have truly distinguished themselves by providing true, responsive leadership in the most local form of government.

So tonight, it is with tremendous gratitude that we present the Leadership in Government Award to the Cunningham Township Supervisor's Office, for your Client Services work.

