

Instructors of Excellence and Team Administrative Awards

Honoring NHI's top trainers

Knowledgeable instructors with years of real-world experience are the backbone of the training program at the National Highway Institute (NHI). Whether they are employees of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) or contractor staff, NHI's instructors consistently deliver the highest quality training to the Nation's transportation workforce.

Of the more than 300 trainers and their administrative teams, some have gone above and beyond in their commitment to quality instruction. To these top performers, NHI is pleased to present its 2010 Instructors of Excellence and Team Administrative Awards.

"This has been an exceptional year for NHI and the Instructors of Excellence program," says NHI

"I can honestly say that this is one of the most important acknowledgments I can receive in my professional career. I sincerely admire the commitment NHI demonstrates to adult learning, and I appreciate how much I have learned over the last several years while working with NHI."

—Instructor of Excellence Award Winner Lisa Barnes
Vice President, O. R. Colan Associates/ORC Training, LLC

Training Director Rick Barnaby. "For 2010 to recognize 66 instructors and 7 administrative teams is phenomenal. They have set a new level of excellence for NHI training delivery. We could not be more proud of them."

To earn this distinction, instructors must consistently achieve rankings of 4.5 or above (on a 5-point scale), be approved by an NHI

training program manager, attend and pass the NHI Instructor Development course, and achieve or be in the process of achieving NHI Instructor Certification.

Evaluations completed by training participants at the end of each course reveal just what makes 2010's Instructors of Excellence so successful:

- "Knowledgeable on subject, very good at instruction and keeping the topic interesting."
- "Engaged the group and facilitated open discussion."
- "Provided frequent real-world examples to reinforce topics."
- "Always available for questions after the modules and during breaks."
- "Upbeat, great flow made subject fun."

Recipients of the Team Administrative Awards are judged according to criteria including timely and accurate submission of session administrative packages, all instructors in the group maintain a minimum ranking of 4.5, instructors have completed the Instructor Development course, and instructors have achieved or are in the process of achieving NHI Instructor Certification.

"I congratulate each of our 2010 Instructors of Excellence and Team Administrative Award winners," says NHI Instructor Liaison Carolyn Eberhard. "The hallmark of NHI training is the superior subject matter expertise of our instructors and the critical value they add to the training they deliver. With limited resources, the NHI team provides the technical training to keep the transportation infrastructure viable and our economy strong."

FOR MORE INFORMATION, VISIT THE NHI WEB SITE AT WWW.NHI.FHWA.DOT.GOV, OR CONTACT CAROLYN EBERHARD AT (703) 235-0952 OR CAROLYN.EBERHARD@DOT.GOV.



Ted Pluta, NHI 2010 Instructor of Excellence, shown here hiking in Palm Springs, CA.

Credit: Ted Pluta

Instructor Profile: Ted Pluta

For more than two decades as an NHI instructor, Ted Pluta of O. R. Colan Associates has been training right-of-way contractors and specialists in Federal, State, and local governments. For the last 4 years, in fact since NHI began officially recognizing its trainers for excellence, he has ranked among the top-rated, award-winning instructors.

Pluta teaches NHI's courses on Basic, Advanced, and Business Relocation under the Uniform Act, delivering as many as 10 sessions per year. "I love the interaction with the attendees and meeting new people," he says. "It's a different experience everyplace we go, so it is never boring!"

At its core, NHI training stresses the value of learner-oriented education. The challenge of helping participants address their real-world problems is one that Pluta relishes in his role as an NHI instructor. "We always find the time to discuss the real-life problems, whether we weave them into the curriculum or discuss them over lunch or dinner," he says. "The most rewarding part is when training

participants contact me after the class is over and say that we really helped them in their jobs. Also, I field many calls and emails from participants wanting to see if they are approaching the problem in the right way, or looking for input on how to solve the relocation problem."

What does it take to excel as an NHI instructor? "First and foremost," Pluta says, "you really have to enjoy what you are doing. It is also essential to have a thorough understanding of the subject matter and a solid background in field work and hands-on experience. We definitely have to be quick on our feet, as participants always have questions about how the regulations apply to specific circumstances."

He offers this advice to other instructors: "Be prepared and definitely enjoy the moment. The people and wide range of experience in each class are what make these sessions so enjoyable."

Between project work and instructing NHI courses, Pluta has been on the road for nearly 26 years, "so business travel is pretty much an accepted part of my life," he says. But when he's not on a plane or in front of a class, you might find him teeing off at a nearby golf course, strolling on the beach, or hiking with his wife, Beth. "Anything outdoors and I am pretty much game!"

NHI congratulates Pluta for his many years of quality instruction and for being honored with an Instructor of Excellence Award 4 years and counting.



Ted Pluta on a glacier in Alaska with his wife, Beth.

Credit: Ted Pluta

2010 List of Awardees

Instructors of Excellence		
Instructors		Organization
Stephen Seeds		Applied Pavement Technology, Inc.
Blair Barnhardt		Asphalt Institute
Pete Lagassee	James Ruff	Ayles Associates, Inc.
Johnny Morris	James Schall	
Jerry Richardson		
Thomas Collins		Collins Engineers, Inc.

continued on next page

Instructors of Excellence		
Instructors		Organization
Richard Albin	Mark Doctor	FHWA
Adam Alexander	Michael Duman	
Craig Alred	David Grachen	
Catherine Batey	Kreig Larson	
Dan Brown	John McFadden	
Eric Brown	George Merritt	
Richard Denny	Marshall Wainwright	
Stewart Stein		GKY & Associates, Inc.
Gregg Hostetler	Jeffery Rowe	Infrastructure Engineers, Inc.
David R. Reser	Andrew Young	
Christopher Huffman	Eric Tripi	ITERIS, Inc.
A. Tamim Atayee	Roger Kilgore	Kilgore Consulting
Joseph Buckovetsky	Stephen Nieman	McCormick Taylor
Brennan Collier		
Darrell Burnett		Metric Engineering
Milo Cress	William (Ron) Gardner	Michael Baker, Jr., Inc.
Jerry Ellerman	J. Eric Mann	
Andrew Fickett	Thomas Ryan	
Phil Fish	John Wackerly	
Lisa Barnes	Ted Pluta	O. R. Colan Associates
Robert Merryman		
Dennis Jackson		Pavement Solutions
Dennis Eckhart	Maurice Masliah	Perform Tech, Inc.
William Fitzgerald	Charles O'Connell	
LeAngela Ingram	Nancy Rosenshine	
Dane Ismart	Dee Spann	
Gerald Kennedy	Gary Thomas	
Joseph A. Caliendo	Robert Bachus	
Patrick Hannigan		Ryan R. Berg and Associates, Inc.
Bruce Landis	Theodore Petritsch	Sprinkle Consulting, Inc.
Mark Nagata	Bryce Nahas	Trauner Consulting Services, Inc.
Frank Brewer		University of Tennessee
Paula Dowell		Wilbur Smith Associates

Team Administrative Awards		
Instructors		Organization
John Hunt	James Ruff	Ayes Associates, Inc.
Pete Lagassee	James Schall	
Thomas Collins	Terence Browne	Collins Engineers, Inc.
David R. Reser		Infrastructure Engineers, Inc.
Gary B. Thomas	Eric Tripi	ITERIS, Inc.
Lisa Barnes	Robert Merryman	O. R. Colan Associates
William Fitzgerald	Charles O'Connell	Perform Tech, Inc.
Mark Nagata	Geoff Page	Trauner Consulting Services, Inc.