

March 2025

# Just The Dirt

Custodial & Grounds Newsletter



From this



to this in a few short weeks.

Photos by Rebecca Albaugh and Kelly Beck

**M** | CUSTODIAL & GROUNDS SERVICES





# A Letter from the Manager

As the saying goes, "April showers bring May flowers." There's no better time to walk around campus than now, with the trees beginning to bloom and the tulips on the Diag in full blossom. This is such an exciting time of year: the gray skies and snow are giving way to the warm weather of spring, and people are more eager to be out and about.

However, as the end of the school year approaches, this time of year also brings a lot of stress for both students and professors. Final projects are due, and many students are studying hard for their finals. As CGS employees, we need to be extra mindful of the pressures these students are under. It's important that we treat them with respect and provide the service they deserve. At the end of the day, these students and faculty are the main reason we are here.

With everything happening in the world and on campus, I want to take a moment to thank everyone for their hard work and dedication to the university and our mission. I encourage each of you to take five minutes out of your day to step back from your work and reflect on the accomplishments you've made and how you're enhancing this beautiful campus. You are the reason we Make Blue Go.

Thank you once again for your hard work and commitment.

Andrew Ottmar  
Area Manager





# Spotlight

Building Success How CGS  
Invests in Employee Development



**Ron Blaszczyk, Robert Opsommer, Jaime Perez, Amanda Birchfield, and Shawn Logan after completion of a training session from the Cleaning Management Institute for a Certified Custodial Supervisor and Accredited Auditing Professional.**

Developing skilled and motivated employees is a key component of a well-organized business, and the Custodial and Grounds Department is no exception. Over the last five years, before COVID-19, the CGS team has dedicated significant time to creating a clear pathway for employees to grow and advance from temporary roles to supervisors or managers.

When Lukeland Gentles stepped into the role of Director, one of his first priorities was to create a pathway for employees to advance within the organization. To achieve this, he formed a team that included custodians, supervisors, managers, and a former director.

Together, they developed a comprehensive development program with supporting training modules, to equip frontline staff with the skills and tools necessary to succeed at the next level in their careers.

The path created includes opportunities for custodians to become groundskeepers, leading to the promotion of 16 employees. Of those, 8 have taken a second promotion to become Horticultural Specialists.

Another aspect of the training has focused on management development. In Custodial Services, 8 of 11 custodians who completed the program have successfully advanced to supervisory positions.

To further support career advancement, CGS created the Shift Coordinator Program for custodial supervisors looking to progress to being custodial services managers and ground services specialists aspiring to become supervisors.

This program has seen remarkable success, with 3 out of 4 supervisors accepting manager-level positions and a 100% success rate for ground specialists moving into management.

Internal development is a crucial factor in a successful organization, and the Custodial and Grounds team has proven this through their successful internal development program.

Written by Andrew Ottmar





# Kudos from our campus Partners

## **Kudos from Rob Doletzky Grounds Manager**

Hi everyone,

I speak for Kim, Lukeland, and the Supervisors in thanking you again for your hard work and long hours over the last couple of months. We see improvements across the board with timeliness, quality of work and care of equipment. New operators - continue to hone your equipment skills as we push through the end of this winter. I love this quote from General George S. Patton - "He who sweats more in training bleeds less in battle." Keep looking for ways to improve 1% every day!

Here are some stats and kudos that I mentioned today:

Snow - a total of 32 inches to date

12.2 inches of snow in January with 20 out of 31 days receiving snow

Also - 24 extra large pizzas with breadsticks and salad eaten in 30 minutes... might be a new Grounds Services record...

## **Victoria K. Green, Business Systems Analyst, ITS**

I just wanted to say thank you to you and the team for all the snow removal you do on sidewalks so people like me can get to work on days like today. In all my years at U-M, no matter how early I've come to work, whether on North Campus, Central Campus, or South Campus, you've always been there before me to get the sidewalks clear.

## **Jennifer Konal, Customer Service Rep at FSC**

I just wanted to give the Grounds crew a big shout-out for today. I did not receive any snow concern calls, so kudos to them. And that's even considering there were a few issues with the fuel pumps at both Baxter and Kipke. Have a great evening!

## **Malcolm Bambling, Utilities Central Power Plant Manager**

Thank you for keeping our staff safe during these snowy days

## **Andy Berki, Executive Director of Campus Sustainability and Climate Action**

You guys are great. It's so nice to see sidewalks clear so early in the morning.

## **Jerry Schulte, Associate Director for AEC - Project Management**

I ride my bike to work almost every day and it's always nice once I get to campus. The walks are always in great shape compared to where I ride from. Please thank your staff for me.

## **Hank Baier, Walbridge Consultant (former AVP for F&O)**

Your team continues to perform at a high level across campus. And that's coming from a customer now.

## **Kim Kiernan, Interim Associate Vice President for Facilities and Operations**

I just drove through North Campus. I saw at least a dozen buses, clear sidewalks and students getting to class safely! Amazing! You and your teams are fabulous.

Thanks,  
Rob





## Kudos from Kristin Brancheau

Hello,

Kudos to your crew who are out clearing the sidewalks/roads and making it safe for all of us who start early in the morning!

After driving in on icy roads it was nice to see everything here getting done.

Thank you!

**Carol Tucker:**

She called to thank you and is grateful how every thing is being maintained this year.

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As the 2024-2025 snow season comes to a close, I believe it is important to reflect on the efforts of the Hybrid Snow Team. As you may know, the Hybrid Snow Team is a group of volunteer custodians who move to a different shift and sometimes other buildings to support Grounds with snow removal across ten snow routes. This dedicated staff worked nights, early mornings, and on several occasions, throughout the entire weekend, salting and clearing snow from over 500 entries, ramps, and stairs during each winter event. It was not uncommon for some team members to walk over six miles while completing their rounds in just a few hours of their shift. Let's give a shout-out to:

Vic Caballero, Ross Dochada, Lance Fielder, Rodrigo Osorio Garcia, Terance Goudy, Jason Kinzinger, Zach Lapinski, Armani Madison-Owens, Kasey Nelson, Dwight Rogers, Kairaba Soumaoro, Emma Tibu, Jamaica Williams, Donald Dyson, Lynn Miller, Tammy Chapman, and Sterling Robinson.

We would also like to express our gratitude to our fellow custodians, custodial supervisors, and area managers for assisting us in clearing snow and ensuring that salt was stocked at the doorways. A special shout-out goes to the Grounds team for their collaboration. We cleared what they could not, but the level of effort that Grounds puts in every winter is truly remarkable.





## Did you know March is Women's History Month

Women's History Month is a time to honor and celebrate the significant contributions women have made throughout history. Observed every March, it highlights the achievements of women in various fields such as politics, science, the arts, and social justice. This month serves as a reminder of the struggles women have faced and continue to face, as well as their resilience and determination in breaking barriers and challenging societal norms. By recognizing the invaluable role women have played in shaping our world, Women's History Month encourages us to reflect on the progress made and the work still needed to achieve equality for all.

### **National Walking Day is April 3rd.**

Walking Day is a celebration of the simple yet powerful act of walking, encouraging people to embrace this easy and accessible form of exercise.

Observed on various dates around the world, Walking Day aims to raise awareness about the health benefits of walking, such as improved cardiovascular health, increased energy levels, and better mental well-being. It also promotes walking as a sustainable mode of transportation, reducing our environmental footprint and fostering a greater connection to our surroundings. Whether it's a casual stroll through a park or a brisk walk through the city, Walking Day serves as a reminder of how small changes in our daily routine can lead to healthier lifestyles and a more active, mindful society.

### **National Administrative Professionals**

**Week**, April 21-27, is a time to recognize and appreciate the hard work, dedication, and essential contributions of administrative professionals in the workplace. These individuals—often serving as the backbone of many organizations—handle a variety of tasks, from scheduling and organizing to communication and problem-solving. This week shines a spotlight on their invaluable support, ensuring that operations run smoothly and efficiently. Administrative professionals, including executive assistants, office managers, and receptionists, play a critical role in fostering productivity, maintaining a positive office environment, and supporting teams in achieving their goals. It's a time to express gratitude for their efforts and acknowledge the impact they have on the success of any organization.

### **Proper Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- **Wear the right gear:** Ensure that all grounds staff wear appropriate PPE like gloves, safety glasses, hearing protection, steel-toe boots, and high-visibility vests, especially when working near traffic or with heavy equipment.
- **Sun protection:** Wear hats, sunscreen, and protective clothing to prevent sunburn and heat-related illnesses.
- **Hydration and Heat Stress Prevention**
- **Stay hydrated:** Drink plenty of water throughout the day, especially during hot weather. Keep water accessible at all times.
- **Heat stress awareness:** Be mindful of signs of heat exhaustion (dizziness, excessive sweating, fatigue) and heatstroke (confusion, high body temperature). Take frequent breaks in shaded or cool areas when working in the heat.





## **Proper Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) continued**

### **Lifting and Carrying Techniques**

Use proper lifting techniques: Lift with your legs, not your back, and avoid twisting your body when carrying heavy items.

Use lifting aids: If available, use carts, dollies, or other mechanical aids to move heavy objects.

### **Tool and Equipment Safety**

- **Inspect tools before use:** Check all equipment for signs of damage or wear before using it, including lawnmowers, trimmers, and blowers.
- **Maintain equipment:** Ensure all tools are well-maintained and cleaned regularly. Sharpen blades on lawnmowers and other cutting tools to prevent accidents.
- **Wear appropriate safety gear:** Use hearing protection when using loud equipment like lawnmowers and blowers, and safety glasses when working with power tools or chemicals.
- **Chemical Safety**
- **Read labels and follow instructions:** Always read labels carefully on chemicals, fertilizers, or pesticides, and follow manufacturer instructions for safe use.
- **Wear chemical-resistant gloves and masks:** When applying chemicals, wear the correct PPE to avoid exposure.
- **Storage:** Store chemicals in a safe, well-ventilated area away from children, pets, and food.

### **Avoiding Slip and Trip Hazards**

- **Clear walkways:** Regularly check pathways for debris, loose gravel, or other obstacles that could lead to trips or falls.
- **Watch for wet surfaces:** Be cautious of slippery surfaces, particularly after rain, on mowed grass, or near water features. Mark these areas as needed to alert others.

## **7. Handling Weather Conditions**

Adapt to weather changes: Work with caution when it's too hot, cold, or rainy.

Wear appropriate layers in cold weather, and avoid working in hazardous weather conditions (e.g., thunderstorms).

Stay alert for lightning: Avoid using metal tools or standing near tall structures during a lightning storm.

## **8. Traffic Safety**

Wear high-visibility clothing: Always wear bright or reflective clothing when working near roadways or areas with vehicle traffic.

Work with a spotter: When operating heavy machinery or working near vehicles, have a spotter to guide you, ensuring safe operation.

## **9. Tree and Shrub Safety**

Use caution with ladders: When trimming trees or shrubs, ensure ladders are stable and on a flat surface. Never lean too far or overreach.

Wear protective gear: When cutting or trimming branches, wear hard hats, gloves, and goggles to protect against falling debris or sharp objects.

## **10. Wildlife and Insect Safety**

Beware of animals and insects: Be cautious of snakes, bees, or other wildlife while working outdoors. Wear protective gloves when handling plants or debris and check areas for insects before working.

Know the signs of allergic reactions: Be aware of symptoms of insect stings or bites, and have access to first-aid kits and emergency numbers in case of an allergic reaction.



# Spring Puzzle

Proper Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) continued

## 11. Ergonomics and Posture

Take breaks to stretch: Incorporate regular stretches and breaks to reduce strain, especially when doing repetitive tasks like raking or trimming.

Use ergonomic tools: Where possible, use tools designed to reduce strain on the body, such as adjustable rakes or long-handled pruners.

## 12. Emergency Procedures

Know emergency protocols: Be familiar with the location of first-aid kits, fire extinguishers, and emergency exits. Know who to contact in case of an accident or emergency.

Report accidents immediately: If an injury occurs, no matter how minor, report it right away to ensure proper treatment and documentation.

## 13. Working with Snow and Ice (Winter Safety)

### Safety)

Wear non-slip footwear: Use footwear with good traction when working in icy or snowy conditions.

Use salt or sand carefully: When salting walkways, make sure to apply evenly and avoid over-salting. Wear gloves to protect hands from cold and salt irritation.

By following these safety tips, grounds staff can minimize the risk of injury and keep themselves and their coworkers safe in all weather conditions and work environments.



air		April		awakening	
baseball		birds		breeze	
buildings		butterfly		buzzing	
caterpillar		cleaning		flowers	
fresh		gardening		grass	
green		grow		jacket	
lawn		mowing		pollen	
spring		sprout		sunshine	
university					





Join our Process Improvement Plan Group (PIP)--Make an Impact in CGS!

Are you interested in making a meaningful impact in the CGS dept? We invite you to join our PIP group, where we will collaborate to enhance efficiency, streamline workflows, and improve experience across campus.

As a member, you will:

- Work with a team dedicated to continuous improvement
- Help Identify challenges and develop logical solutions
- Gain valuable problem-solving leadership skills
- Contribute to a culture of excellence at the University of Michigan

Whether you have ideas for improvement, experience in process optimization, or just a passion for making things better, we welcome your participation!

Meeting details: April 17th via Zoom and in-person

Meeting Place: TBD

Who: Post Probationary custodians, groundskeepers, supervisors, Leads, and Area Mgrs.

Join us in shaping a better future for CGS. We look forward to working with you!

## Best of Luck To Paul Eminger

After more than 22 years of dedicated service, Paul has retired. For most of those years, he worked as a Horticulturist in our Medical Zone, where he played a crucial role in transforming Michigan Medicine into a welcoming and world-class destination for patients seeking diagnosis and treatment from around the globe. His extensive knowledge and significant contributions have left a lasting impact on our institution and staff. He will be greatly missed.





# Happy Anniversary

AIKEN, JOSHUA  
ALBARRAN, VICTORIA  
ASHLEY, SHAUN  
BALANG, JONAS  
BELAND, LYNNETTE  
BLASZCZYK, RONALD  
BLAY, JUSTIN  
BLISSETT, CASEY  
BRAUN, KANE  
CAMARA, MARIAMA  
CAROEN, CONNOR  
CHAPMAN, TAMMY  
CHRISTIE, TAMMY  
COTTER, GEOFFREY  
COTTON, VERLA  
CRIGLAR JR, ARCHIE  
DELINE, ROBERT  
DIAKITE, SOULEYMANE  
EAGLE, BETH  
ELLIOTT, DANIELLE  
FLETCHER, JEFFERY  
GARCIA SALGADO, PABLO  
GREEN, SAMANTHA  
GRONDIN, KATHY  
GROSS, KIMBERLY  
GUTIERREZ, ROSA  
HALL, CEDRIC  
HARGROW, M L.  
HARRELL, GREGORY  
HOAG, AARON  
HOUENSOU, LAURENT  
JACKSON-EDER, JEANNE  
JANCEVSKI, MILAN  
JANICEVIC, SINISA  
JOHNSON, JAQUELINE

KABA, SEKOU  
KARIMOU, HAMADOU  
KING, BRENT  
KOZLER, RICHARD  
LISKIEWICZ, EVAN  
LITTERAL, RANDALL  
LIU, JERRY  
LOGWOOD, JACQUELENE  
LOUCKS, TONYA  
MACDONALD, JEFFREY  
MARSHALL, RUBIE  
MASSEY, RICHARD  
MCHUGH, CHARLES  
MICHAELS, BRETT  
MITCHELL, CINDA  
MOORE JR, FRANK  
MOORE, OLIVIA  
MUNOZ, LUZ  
NELLIST, DANIEL  
NIENHAUS, THOMAS  
OLDENBURG, DAVID  
OLDENBURG, GINA  
OLIVER, ROBERT  
OTTMAR, ANDREW  
PAGE, RAYMOND  
PARMELEE, ERIKA  
PATTERSON, JASON  
PATTILLO, GIOVANNI  
PEPPER, MICHAEL  
PERRY, TIMOTHY  
PREVOST, DANIEL  
RANKIN, MATTHEW  
RANKINS, REYNALDO  
RIGGS, ROBERT  
ROBINSON, SHERRIE

RROKITA, ANGELA  
ROOKS, JEMAR  
SANABRIA, NOE  
SANDERS, MARENE  
SAUNDERS, RACHEL  
SMITH, LADONNA  
STILTNER, TAMMIE  
TALAWALI, HADJA  
THOMAS, GARY  
TIBU, EMANUELA  
WELCH, MATTHEW  
WHITEHEAD, TRACEY  
WOLF, REMA

If anyone has been missed. Please let Denise Krause know so their anniversary information can go in the next newsletter.

