

2021 Monmouth University Supervisor of the Year

Kathleen Kumke- Nominated by: Luke Collier, Student Employee, Chemistry & Physics



It is with great pleasure that I nominate Ms. Kathleen J. Kumke for consideration for the 2021 Supervisor of the Year. In addition to performing her job at an extraordinary level, Kathy demonstrates an extraordinary commitment to the students, faculty, and staff of whom she serves at Monmouth University.

Kathy takes it upon herself to provide exceptional support and service to the department of chemistry and physics. No matter the time of day, Kathy can be found in the chemistry labs, ensuring the smooth operation of experiments with students and faculty alike. Not a minute goes by without her asking, “is everything going okay? Do you need anything?” No matter your skill level, Kathy is always there to help guide you and ensure you understand the process behind completing a task.

Kathy’s real-world experience enables her to help construct and lead a working environment similar to that found in the chemical industry. Through her years at Merck, Kathy has gained many skills that she has taught her student employees, gearing them for what a career may be like in the chemical industry. No matter how much time it takes, Kathy will always fit you into her busy schedule, whether it be to learn a new skill, or just to talk about life. Fondly known as the ‘go-to’ person within the department, Kathy receives emails and student visits daily, and she has no problem setting time aside for anyone that needs assistance.

I, along with the all other student employees reporting to Kathy, can all agree that working never feels like “working.” The environment that Kathy sets-up for her employees is one that we all strive to have once we graduate college and find a job within our field of study. I think that we can all agree that if we had the choice, we would choose to stay at Monmouth University after graduation, continuing to work under Kathy’s direction for as long as possible!

Of course, the COVID-19 pandemic put a major damper on how labs would be conducted, following all social-distancing and sanitization guidelines was going to be complex. But, once again Kathy came to the rescue! Kathy spent most of her summer break meeting with university officials on how said labs can be conducted in-person, following all guidelines. While it would have been much easier to just place all labs online, Kathy, along with others, developed a plan to ensure the successful running of chemistry labs during a pandemic. Whether it meant converting labs to hold different equipment, coordinating with the registrar to change class meeting times, or ensuring the proper staffing of her stockroom and lab assistants, Kathy accepted the challenge and ensured everything would be operational by September 2020.

No matter the challenge, Kathy has made a major difference not only within the department, but at our university. She is the true definition of what a Monmouth Hawk is: determined, caring, and ensuring no one is left behind. These are just some of the reasons why I believe Kathy would make an incredible supervisor of the year.