

Assistant Excellence in Leadership Award

In Memory of Buford M. Watson, Jr.



Marie Shook

Marie Shook, assistant county manager, Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, has implemented two initiatives—the Employees Quality Improvement Program (EQUIP) and the NETWORK—to tap the energy, expertise, and creativity of mid-level supervisors and front-line staff.

EQUIP was designed to improve morale, productivity, and the quality of service delivery by involving employees in decisions that affect their work. Employees participate on EQUIP teams to identify and to analyze causes of problems, to recommend solutions to management and to implement these solutions. Team leaders are trained and in turn, train team members on conducting effective meetings, setting measurable

goals, and using problem-solving tools and techniques to devise effective solutions.

When Shook observed the managerial styles of mid-level managers, she found that there was inadequate communication across departments, which impeded the ability of the human services system to respond quickly to client needs. To remedy this situation, this group of administrators were brought together for training, fellowship, lunch, and mutual support on a monthly basis. During the past two years, the NETWORK has enjoyed the following workshops: Sparkplugs for Change, Persuasive Presentations, Negotiation and Conflict Resolutions, Job Matching, Ethics, and the Creative Executive.