**James C. Grimm New Professional Award**

**Nominee: Steve Simpson**

I would like to nominate Steve Simpson for the James C. Grimm New Professional Award. Steve is a Residence Director at Belmont University and started with us in Spring of 2008. We had an RD leave in the middle of the year and needed someone to fill a spot. Steve was unique in that he had no prior Residence Life experience, other than being an RA for a brief period of time in his undergraduate career and he was currently working as an aircraft mechanic when he applied for the job. However, we desperately needed a body and knew good candidates were hard to find in the middle of the year. Steve really impressed us during his interview and we realized that while he would have a learning curve of figuring out how to run a building, he had the work ethic and other skills necessary to do the job. Steve was hired for one semester, under the condition that his employment status would be reevaluated at the end of the Spring.

When the end of the Spring semester came, there was no question that Steve had exceeded our expectations in every area. I, myself, was an RD at the time and Steve took over the apartment complex I had been running, while I moved to a different complex. Steve sought me out for as much information and advice as he could get from me. He took over the complex and made a smooth transition with the complex and with the RA staff. I was pleased to see that my efforts to build a great complex had not gone to waste and were continued with Steve leading the group. He connected with residents and the RA staff with ease, which really built a strong community. He genuinely cares about students and their stories and really seeks to build relationships with them.

At the end of his first semester, we moved Steve to an upperclassman residence hall where he continued to thrive. The sense of community in Kennedy hall is outstanding, which speaks to the type of leader Steve is. He has high expectations for his residents and for his RA staff and they respect him for it. He consistently looks for ways to help his people be better. Steve is excellent at building relationships and tries to make a personal connection with every student he meets. You can find him frequently in the lobby hanging out with the students or playing sports with them around campus. In the RD weekly reports, we ask for the RD’s to provide information on student interactions. Most of our RD’s might list one new person or talk about basic interactions such as helping a resident with a maintenance request. Steve’s reports stand out in this regard because he lists at least 2-3 new student interactions each week and can tell you about their background or what is currently happening in their life.

Finally, Steve is the type of colleague you look forward to working with. He is a real “go getter” and tackles anything we throw at him with intensity. Steve is very reliable and you never have to worry about him meeting deadlines or completing projects. He strives to do everything to the best of his ability and that is evident in the work he produces. Just one example is our Culture of Evidence committee, which focuses on gathering survey data from programs and from residents throughout the year. Steve is the head of this committee and has really done some outstanding work. Our university decided to no longer use paper surveys and thus eliminated our ability to gather data in that manner. Residence Life decided to purchase our own survey software and Steve took embraced this challenge head on. He spent hours learning the software program, testing in out, making sample surveys and reports to make sure the process went smoothly for other staff members. Steve also set up individual training times, on his own initiative, with others in Student Affairs to help teach them how to use the software for their particular areas. As a result of his hard work, we are able to collect quality data and use it in a manner to help us progress in the future. When Steve is working on something, we don’t have to worry about how it going and trust that it will be executed with a high standard of quality.

As Steve’s current supervisor, I am truly impressed with his work and how far he has come over the past 2 years. He has become the top leader of our RD staff and his coworkers look up to him as the example of how to do things well. I know he will continue to do great things in the future, with whatever he chooses to do. Steve has some inherent qualities that make him great in Residence Life. These are qualities that can not be taught in a classroom, but rather are part of who he is as a person. Therefore, I wholeheartedly recommend Steve Simpson for the James C. Grimm New Professional award.

Sincerely,

Rebekah M. Stewart

Assistant Director, Residence Life

Belmont University