

Tennessee Department of Transportation

The Civil Rights Division is celebrating Black History month by spotlighting employees whose exemplary work fosters the mission of the department.



Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



Shawn Allen

TDOT Technician Supervisor
Right-of-Way Division

He likes watching sports and his favorite quote is “I have decided to stick to love... Hate is too great a burden to bear” MLK.

Joined TDOT Family November 2000

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

“The I Have A Dream Speech” changed my life for the better, when I first heard it, it made me look at life in a whole different perspective.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My mother played a major role in my life which help mold me into the man I’m today, she put me on the right path to have the career I have today.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

The TDOT values, Collaboration and Family, resonates with me and with diversity because they work together in a caring culture like a family, which feels good.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

It allows us to reflect on the black culture by never forgetting the rough road our ancestors had to travel. We must continue to celebrate black history.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



Henry K. Bayiye

TDOT Permit Manager in Central Services

He is passionate about the stock market and long-term stock trading. He enjoys watching documentaries, news, travelling, and technology. His favorite quote is “a leader as one who knows the way, goes the way, and shows the way” – John C . Maxwell

Joined TDOT Family in December 2015

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

Harriet Tubman’s freeing of slaves using the Underground Railroad has influenced and shaped my career but more so my life. I believe as a leader, I have a responsibility to face the daily challenges, but also assist my team and act as a bridge to lift the team members either personally or professionally.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

Dr. Robinson, my Graduate School Professor was my mentor, greatly influenced my career. He referenced Dr. Spencer Johnson’s book, “who moved my cheese”, which meant anything could be a source of comfort and value. So, he often cautioned me never to be comfortable with the status quo but always embrace change and continuous learning.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

All eight (8) TDOT values resonate with me but I will limit it to innovation and family . Innovation because we look for ways to make processes better by getting feedback from stakeholders but also by recognizing the changes in the industry and responding to emerging trends accordingly. Family value recognizes differences in cultures by acknowledging and promoting our differences as valued asset through diversity activities because our differences are our strength.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

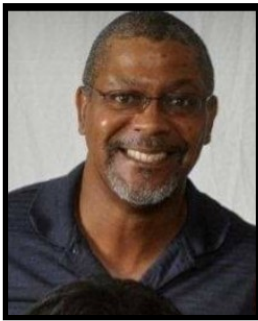
This quote summarizes the importance, "It’s about the lived, shared experience of all African Americans, high and low, famous and obscure, and how those experiences have shaped and challenged and ultimately strengthened America. It’s about taking an unvarnished look at the past so we can create a better future. It’s a reminder of where we as a country have been so that we know where we need to go." - President Obama 2016 speech.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



Benjamin Bellamy

TDOT Operation Technician Senior
Region 1

He enjoys playing in local pool leagues, muscle cars enthusiast and spending time with his family.

Joined TDOT Family July 1987

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

I had the pleasure of hearing Alex Haley speak about family roots and the importance of knowing where you came from, which influenced my life by giving me the strength to face any challenge I might endure.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My father, Paul Bellamy, was most influential in my life. He taught me to aim high, have a strong work ethic and to value relationships and communication.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

All of the TDOT values are very important and resonates with me daily in my job and in my everyday life. They help me carry out my duties and enable me to work with a diverse groups people.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

It is especially important today because of the recent current event, I fell we must take time to teach our youth about the struggles of those gone before us and how and why its important to continue to celebrate Black History, especially in 2021.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



Melanie Bumpus

Transportation Manager 1,
Region 3 Training Manager

She enjoys reading and tutoring children of all ages. Her favorite quote told by grandma is “If a task is once begun, never leave it till it’s done. Be the labor great or small, do it well or not at all.” Unknown author

Joined TDOT Family May 2001

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

The moment in history that shaped my career was when Dr. Mae Jemison became the first African American Women to go into to space on the Endeavor in 1992. It made me know as a black female I could do anything that I set my mind to do.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

I would say my mom and my husband Phillip have been very influential in my career. They both have always pushed me to believe in myself and encouraged me to get outside the box and not always stay in my comfort zone. Mr. Joe Deering has been a mentor to me. Anytime I need career advice, he has always been one that I can reach out to.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

Family is the TDOT value that resonates with me, because at the end of the day we work hard to support and take care of our families. We all come from families that give us our diverse backgrounds which we bring to the job to make a very diverse work environment.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

Celebrating Black History Month in 2021, is so important because we as black people have endured so much in the past few years. A lot of us have died and suffered many losses. But we feel now we have hope with a new administration. For me, having the first black female Vice President gives me pride and hope for this country. I feel that there is power in the black community. Our vote counts. Our ancestors fought hard for us to have the right to vote and we must make sure our voices are heard.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



Antoine Hawkins

Region 4 Planning Supervisor, Office of Community Transportation,
Long Ranging Planning Division

He likes to travel, listen to live music, outdoor activities, and reading. His favorite quote is “Change will not come if we wait for some other person or some other time. We are the ones we’ve been waiting for. We are the change that we seek.” – Barack Obama

Joined TDOT Family – 2017

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life. There are many moments, but first, Rosa Park’s refusal to vacate her bus seat in 1955. This courageous act was a catalyst for the advancement of the Civil Rights Movement, and showed the internal power we have as individuals to spur indelible change. Second, was Dr. Martin Luther King’s 1963 “Letter From Birmingham Jail”. This powerful letter still resonates very strongly with me.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My parents instilled both an effort of excellence and values within me to always strive for progress. My previous Supervisor, Calvin Abram, was my mentor, and he was instrumental in my arrival at TDOT, and he always empowered me within the job to excel.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

Family and Collaboration are the TDOT Values that resonate with me with regards to diversity. Regardless of how we identify, viewing ourselves as family and collaborating in good faith and with an open mind can only work to enhance our professional experience regardless of our differences.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

The year 2020, we saw a myriad of events occur that ripped the fabric of the nation showing the injustice experienced by Black People. These acts placed a more direct spotlight on why this statement has meant so much. Black History is American History, and should be recognized as such. It is vital to recognize Black Americans’ contributions.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



Marquitta Primm

Transportation Manager 1
Region 3 E-Operations

She enjoys running, traveling, reading and attending fitness classes.

Joined TDOT Family July 1984

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

When I was in the third-grade on the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr., my teacher taught about this historic tragedy. The entire class was given a part to read of Dr. King's I Have a Dream speech, we marched down the hall and back, and then had to discuss what we each thought the civil rights movement meant. We were encouraged to do our parts to make a world that sees the person rather than ethnicities.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My great-uncle was an educator and leader in the civil rights movements. EVERY visit with him was a lesson on kindness, leadership, pride in self and community. He would sit us down and talk about how small actions could build large movements. We always had to tell what we've done to be a positive force in our world.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

Integrity resonates with me. When I began at TDOT, I was often the only person of color, or female, in the room. Being the only one made me try to hold my work to a high standard of accountability. I always felt my integrity could help open doors for others like me, female and of color.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

This year is especially important to me because it feels like for the first time in a very long time, we as a people, are looking around and actually seeing each other.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



★ Janice Shellington-Jenkins ★

Transportation Program Supervisor

Long Range Planning Division/Administrative Office

She enjoys reading books of all genres, and loves travelling with her family. Her volunteer services include Kids Ministry and Digital media at church. Her favorite quote is, "It is our choices, that show what we truly are, far more than our abilities." – J. K. Rowling

Joined TDOT Family March 2014

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

It's hard to pinpoint a single moment. There are so many moments that have unconsciously influenced who I am and my ability to be successful in the world that we live in. To pinpoint just one moment doesn't seem fair. There are so many contributors to Black History that are far too often overlooked. I appreciate all Black History because it's American History, and it is a part of who we are. So I could be cliché and highlight the mainstream that everyone clings to, but everyone who has made an impact great or small to Black History in general deserves recognition. Because of their commitment, we are afforded opportunities they once dreamed about.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

While I have been fortunate enough to have worked under some amazing leadership, my father was the most influential person in my life. I am so much my father's daughter, and for as long as I can remember he drilled into me the importance of hard work, the value of time, integrity, and the reminder that I don't have to be the best but I always need to give my best.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

The TDOT Values that resonate the most with me are stewardship, integrity, consistency, collaboration, and family. They are values that I try to emulate in my own life, and I believe that these values encourage inclusion and equity which is so vital to creating a work culture that embraces diversity.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

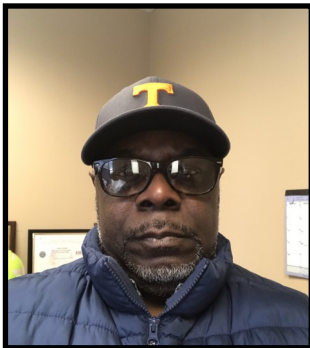
It's important to celebrate because it's important that we remember. We should never get so complacent that we forget to remember and celebrate what Black Americans before us accomplished for us to get to this point. It's also a reminder that our work is far from finished, and that we need to keep making strides forward so generations after us can remember and celebrate, Black History.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



John K. Smith

Region 4, Operations District Supervisor

He enjoys learning about God, bowling, table tennis, and basketball. He is a big TN Vols Fan, and his favorite quote is *"You can do it."*

Joined TDOT Family February 1984

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

When I was 8 years old and heard of Martin Luther King's death, I didn't really understand, but he has always been my hero because he said "a man should not be judged by the color of his skin, but by the content of their character." Martin Luther King's integrity was so important to me, it is a godly attribute.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

My co-worker, Billy Thornton, helped me tremendously when I was hired with TDOT in 1984. I was the only black engineer in the office, he was my mentor and race didn't make a difference to us. Billy died of cancer and I still have the hat that he wore to work.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

Integrity means more than anything to me, and that's why I appreciate the mandatory ethics training. This value is important and it is what your job and family needs. A person in any position, but without integrity, you don't really have respect.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

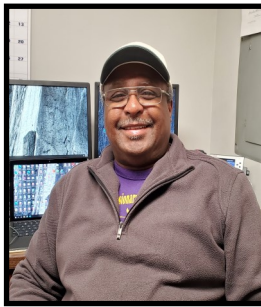
Black History is an important opportunity to celebrate the accomplishments of those forerunners who endured difficult times and paved the way for future generations to be successful.

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Black History Month Employee Spotlight:



James Wash

TDOT Operations Technician Supervisor
Region 1, District 17, Admin-Johnson City

He enjoys golfing and playing in 'Gods' cathedral'. He is also a church usher and sings in the men's chorus.

Quote: "Don't give up. Don't ever give up" - Jim Valvano

Joined TDOT Family March 1991

Tell us about a moment in Black History that influenced or shaped your career and life.

The shock of the assassination of John F. Kennedy influenced my life. It inspired me, and my family to continue to pursue the American dream of equality for Black Americans.

Who within or outside TDOT has been influential in your career? Are they a mentor today?

I was influenced and mentored by my grandfather who taught me the concrete finisher trade that lead me to my current career. He along with my grandmother taught me to always be honest, stay strong, work hard and strive to be a leader. Additionally, my dad, cousins, and the men of my community who all played for the Elizabethton Blue Grays, a Negro Baseball League, also influenced my life by providing me with a foundation to achieve success.

Which of the TDOT Values (Stewardship, Integrity, Safety, Consistency, Development, Innovation, Collaboration & Family) that are listed within the Strategic Plan, resonates with you and with diversity? State why?

All of these values resonate with me. Each value is like a brick necessary in framing a wall that builds confidence, character, and success. As with diversity, the uniqueness of the bricks together is what ensures the strength, to achieve goals.

What makes celebrating Black History Month so important, especially in 2021?

It is important that we continue to always remember all of those who marched, fought and died for our equal rights. We must continue to celebrate all who has played a role in achieving success for Black Americans in leadership today.