

Employee spotlight: Gunnell gets the job done



Louisville District employee Lenny Gunnell (left) provides environmental consulting services throughout the country, while also providing his team with valuable work experience and mentorship. (pictured here with co-worker Cristie Mitchell)

Jenn Domashevich

By Jenn Domashevich, public affairs

U.S. Army Corps of Engineers employee Lenny Gunnell has a reputation for providing great customer service. The Louisville District geologist provides environmental consulting services to customers throughout the country — and they keep coming back for more.

“Lenny’s environmental expertise, along with his creative approach to project execution has earned the environmental branch several new programs,” said Chris Karem, chief of the environmental branch, engineering division. “His ability to regularly exceed customer expectations continues to expand these programs.”

Gunnell began working for the Corps almost 17 years ago, providing environmental services for Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) and Defense Environmental Restoration Program (DERP) facilities. Approximately six years ago, Lenny was assigned to provide environmental support to the Defense Logistics Agency and the U.S. Army Reserves. He was asked to move into this position to help the program grow.

“We go out and find ways to support our customers’ needs,” said Gunnell. “Our customers give us work because they like us and the services we provide.”

Many of the customers he works for reach out to him because he has developed a reputation for providing quality service. Because of this reputation, he performs work for a lot of returning customers throughout the country. He is currently working on projects in Samoa, Hawaii, Arizona and New Jersey, to name a few.

“My thing is, I don’t stay inside my

five states,” said Gunnell, in reference to the Louisville District’s military boundaries of Kentucky, Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. “I’ve got a job in Hawaii I’m getting ready to work on, I’ve got a job in Samoa I’m going to be working on, and when I come back from Samoa I’m going to stop over in Hawaii to discuss more work they’ve got for me in Samoa and Guam.”

Gunnell and his team in the environmental branch of the engineering division perform a full-range of functions. They produce a wide variety of environmental products, both in-house and by contract. Products range from site assessments to remedial action design and implementation. Activities often require complex technical analysis, regulatory approval from multiple agencies, and continual customer support.

“Basically, we’re like a little environmental consulting firm,” said Gunnell. “Here, we do everything.”

Gunnell is very proactive in performing work in-house and getting his team out in the field. Not only is this a good business practice, but it also provides his team with valuable experience.

“It’s hard to put into words what I have learned from Lenny, as most of the things gained from him are intangible,” said co-worker Cristie Mitchell. “I can say with certainty though, that Lenny has helped teach me the importance of customer service. He is willing to go the extra mile to meet or exceed a customer’s expectation.”

Mitchell, who has worked alongside Gunnell for the past seven years, considers

him to be one of her mentors.

“He was one of the first people to trust that I could successfully manage a project. He gave me opportunities that lots of folks don’t get until later in their career,” said Mitchell. “I think that’s shaped who I’ve become and I’m very grateful for that.”

Gunnell and his team work on a variety of different projects, and for various customers. But one thing that remains constant in what they do is that they can visibly see the results from their efforts.

“We can actually see a before and after,” said Gunnell. “We’ll clean up a piece of property, such as a berm [man-made mound of earth] that’s contaminated with lead from being used as a backstop for a firing range, and then go back three years later and there are kids sleigh riding down manicured hills. It’s pretty cool.”

Gunnell and his team help make a difference, they transform used up areas into clean open spaces, find economical solutions for remedial activities and support other federal agencies in doing a job well done. While much credit can be given to the natural talents of these environmental engineers, they also credit their success to their team leader, mentor and friend, Lenny Gunnell.

“His innovative leadership style and focus on mentoring makes customer care and outstanding project execution part of the culture in our branch,” said Karem. “He also makes our office a fun place to work.”