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Barbara Sterling

Entry details

Nominee Name	Barbara Sterling
Nominee Organization	Texas Tech University Hospitality Services

Impact Story: Describe the effort or initiative led by the nominee and the impact it had on your campus or community.

Barbara Sterling leads by showing up with consistency, care, and quiet strength that students notice long before they know her name. She leads from behind the breakfast counter each morning before the sun rises, serving students at Texas Tech University with consistency, grace, and genuine care. For more than 18 years, Barbara has offered more than food. She offers familiarity, conversation, and a safe place to start the day. A student once wrote her a letter describing the impact she had on his life. He thanked her for her warmth, her patience, and her faithfulness. He said she reminded him of Dr. King’s dream. While others may have judged him, Barbara never did. Her kindness gave him hope. He said she showed him that character still matters and that good people still exist. That letter was unsigned except for one line: “The Kid Who Gets the Breakfast Sandwich Without Cheese.” Barbara never asked for recognition, but she leads a quiet initiative of her own. She shows up early. She remembers names. She listens when students need to talk. She creates moments of peace on a campus that can sometimes feel overwhelming. And in doing so, she reflects the values our department holds dear, especially our first: WE CARE ABOUT PEOPLE. Her impact is steady, personal, and lasting.

Leadership & Collaboration: How did this person lead, collaborate, or inspire others?

Barbara Sterling leads with presence, patience, and a deep-rooted belief in people. Whether mentoring student employees or collaborating with chefs, managers, or dietitians, she brings a steady hand and sharp eye to every shift. Her collaborative spirit helps hold teams together, especially during high-pressure service hours or large-scale events. Most recently, Barbara played a key role in launching Ghostrider, Texas Tech’s first virtual kitchen concept. From testing recipes like jerk chicken, butter masala, smash burgers, and pinsa pizza to helping design new prep and packaging systems behind the scenes, Barbara was a dependable partner throughout the rollout. The success of Ghostrider relied on strong teamwork, and Barbara helped translate ideas into action. She supported new hires, adapted processes, and worked across units with calm consistency. Beyond operations, her mentorship continues to shape team culture. She encourages employees to grow, pursue certifications, and take pride in their work. She asks thoughtful questions, listens closely, and creates an environment where people feel valued. Her leadership may be quiet, but it is lasting. Barbara is the kind of teammate who makes the work better, the shift smoother, and the kitchen feel like a place people want to be.

Personal Qualities: Share how this person embodies the spirit of Paul Fairbrook through compassion and service.

Barbara Sterling’s entire career has been an act of service. Raised in Lubbock, she began cooking as a child while caring for her siblings. It was never about recognition. It was about stepping up when it mattered. That same instinct

still defines her work today at Texas Tech, where she has served the campus community for over 18 years. Barbara brings heart and stability to everything she touches. She helps manage day-to-day operations at Ghost rider, our campus's newest virtual kitchen, but her greatest impact is far more personal. She remembers faces. She notices when students are struggling. She knows what it feels like to be alone, and she makes sure others don't have to feel that way. Her kindness is steady, not performative. It is the kind that happens early in the morning, quietly behind the counter, and over time becomes a lifeline for the people she serves. Barbara is not one to talk about herself. She doesn't list her accomplishments or ask to be seen. But every student she checks in on, every staff member she supports, and every meal she serves with care is proof of who she is. She embodies what this award stands for because her service is not occasional. It is who she is.

Please submit a short video (1-3 minutes) featuring the nominee and/or their work. Videos may be used in conference presentations and marketing to celebrate all nominees. The content may be edited by NACUFS staff to create a broader video celebrating the winners.

- Testimonials (colleagues, supervisors, or students)
- Social media highlights
- Photos of the nominee in action
- Survey results or other metrics
- Letters of appreciation
- Newsletters or articles featuring their work

Log in to nacufs.awardsplatform.com to see complete entry attachments.





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Barbara Sterlin... 3.1 MiB



Barbara.jpg 1.1 MiB

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Antonio Regala... 25 KiB

Dear Friend,

For the last year, and a half, you have made my meetings so much more wonderful. In cold meetings, seeing you happy and thankful for what you already have brings warmth and joy to my heart. Your work ethic and character in early hours and education remind me of whom I want to be and what truly matters in this life. Your patience and kindness towards me make me believe that there is still hope in such a big, broken world.

As I grow old enough to appreciate the racial tension in our nation, you remind me that Dr. King's dream isn't dead. You give me hope that people may still be judged first by the content of their character, before the color of their skin. While so many people have told me that I am an outcast because of the color of my skin and the actions of others who look like me, you have judged me solely by who you believe me to be. Thank you. You continuously remind me that this sense of racial divide in our nation does not mean anything about who we can be and how we can treat each other.

Above all, I try to please the Lord everyday. Before any of the other things I aspire to be, I try to love Jesus and His people. That's difficult in our world and in my weakness. While I often feel as though my thank and most genuine goals are foolish because the people I can't reach, your warm response to every conversation fills me with joy. The kind of joy that transcends circumstances, is not in the flesh of promises we realize yet are fulfilled. Your wisdom have reminded me that people can be valued, that we can still trust and care for our neighbors, and that my efforts are not wasted. Thank you, so much.

Thank you for taking the time out of your life to entertain the conversation of some kid, who is just barely becoming a true adult. Thank you for doing your job well, making a great breakfast for people who need it and do not often appreciate your patience and strength. Thank you for being kind to people, we need it. Thank you for making hard days of my life easier and showing me all that I will have to praise the Lord for. Thank you.

The Kid Who Owns the Breakfast Sandwich Without Chorus

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BarbaraSterling... 56 KiB

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