

SAS User Feedback Award Also Goes to Two

Throughout its more than 26 years of business, SAS has promoted customer feedback as an important key to enhancing the development of its software and services. SAS Technical Support Senior Manager Annette Harris took the SUGI 28 stage to speak about some of the ways that SAS listens to customers.

"Many of you are familiar with the annual SASware ballot," she said. "Throughout the year, Technical Support consultants collect your suggestions for software enhancements. These become candidates for the ballot." The SASware ballot is crucial to guiding the direction of SAS software solutions, she said, because it is the opportunity for users to vote for the new features they would like to see added to SAS software and services.

In support of this customer-driven philosophy, each year SAS employees from the Technical Support Division and other departments nominate and select a recipient for the SAS User Feedback Award, which honors the person who has made the most outstanding contribution to enhancing SAS software through his or her suggestions. This year's voting resulted in a tie, producing the award's first co-winners. Harris said both winners, Randy Collica of Hewlett Packard and Chris Heeney of the Canadian Department of National Defence, "exemplify the type of engaged users who help us with the continual enrichment of our software solutions."

Collica, a senior business and data mining analyst in HP's Enterprise Systems Group, Americas Operations, accepted his award Sunday evening from Harris. "Randy's support and feedback have helped not only development and technical support, but also have improved our alliance and marketing groups' ability to effectively promote SAS products and solutions," said Harris. She said Collica "provides continual feedback on SAS Enterprise Miner, Text Miner and the Siebel Adapter. As an R&D-sponsored development partner, he has been involved in the alpha and beta testing phases of these products, using real-world applications to test preproduction releases. He's shared his data, uncovered problems and helped validate SAS technologies."

"SAS has always maintained the highest quality in its software solutions, and that quality continues to set them apart," said Collica, who has been a SAS user for 15 years. "What impressed me most was how SAS integrated the suggestions I gave the technical support team to enhance its already powerful analytics solutions. SAS both listens and responds to customers."

Heeney, a capacity management database manager for the Canadian Department of National Defence, was unable to attend the SUGI conference this year, and will instead receive his award at a special ceremony in Ottawa on May 2. He was been a SAS user since 1981, when he used MICS and SAS to analyze and report on the performance of National Defence's DataCentre mainframe. Heeney's role has expanded to include distributed systems and network elements, which he analyzes and reports on using SAS/IT Resource Manager.

"Chris' outstanding work with SAS' Technical Support group has helped perfect SAS' products for improved decision making," said Harris. "He has reported bugs, made recommendations which were later implemented, and has served as a bridge between SAS and third-party software vendors to achieve resolutions to problems. Those in Tech Support who've work with him say Chris is always willing to 'get his hands dirty' to ensure the success of both his company and ours."