



# Monthly Newsletter

## FACILITIES FORUM

May 2026



PHOTO BY TODD PARIS

### Know Your Benefits - Own Your Options

By Kellie Fritze

Open enrollment is behind us, and I hope everyone took the time to review and make the choices that best support you and your family. If you didn't - or if you still have questions - this is a good reminder: understanding your benefits is ultimately your responsibility.

Facilities Services will always do our best to point you in the right direction, but we are not the experts on benefits, leave, or retirement programs. Those decisions can have real impacts on your health, finances, and time away from work, so it's important that you go directly to the source and make sure you have complete and accurate information before making decisions.

The University of Alaska HR team is there to help, and they are the best place to get clear answers. I strongly encourage everyone to take some time to familiarize yourself with what's available and how to access it:

UA Benefits Overview: <https://www.alaska.edu/hr/benefits/>  
 Leave (FMLA, medical leave, etc.): [ua-hr-leaves@alaska.edu](mailto:ua-hr-leaves@alaska.edu)  
 Benefits Team (health, retirement, disability, etc.): [ua-benefits@alaska.edu](mailto:ua-benefits@alaska.edu)  
 Retirement (PERS/TRS, ORP, 403(b)/TDA):  
<https://www.alaska.edu/hr/benefits/retirement/>  
 Some key areas worth understanding:

Health plan options and coverage levels  
 Short-term and long-term disability benefits  
 Leave options (FMLA, medical leave, accommodations)  
 Retirement plans and supplemental savings (403(b)/TDA)  
 If you're facing a medical situation, planning time off, or making financial decisions tied to your benefits, don't rely on assumptions or secondhand information - reach out directly to UA HR and get clarity early. We'll continue looking for ways to better connect you to the right resources, but the most important step is making sure you're informed and asking the right questions.

In this newsletter you can expect:

Know Your Benefits - Own Your Options
UAF EVENTS
Wi-Fi Pilot Program
Employee of the Month
Lambert at UAF Facilities Services
Kudos
Gerry Washburn
UAF Benefits
Current Recruitments
First Friday Tour at the Central Heat and Power Plant

### UAF Events

MAY 16, 10:00 AM -11:00 AM  
 JUNE 12, 12:00 PM-1:30 PM

REALLY FREE MARKET LOLA TILLY PARKING LOT  
 SUMMER PICNIC ON THE WOOD CENTER PATIO

[UAF NEWS AND EVENTS](#)

[SUPPORT UAF SPORTS](#)





## Big News for Fairbanks: Better Wi-Fi Coming to Fort Wainwright

By Lesa Sears

There's some exciting progress happening right here in Fairbanks—and it's getting national attention from the Army Community Partnership Program newsletter.

### Wi-Fi Pilot Program

Phase 2 of a Wi-Fi pilot program is bringing stronger, more reliable internet to soldiers living in barracks at Fort Wainwright. The plan is to connect eight buildings to start, with the option to expand later. For soldiers stationed in such a remote, cold environment, better Wi-Fi means easier communication with family, access to classes, and improved day-to-day life.

So how is UAF involved?

The University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) is a key partner in making this happen. UAF and Fort Wainwright signed an agreement in February 2026 to work together on the project. Because UAF already has infrastructure, knowledge, and local expertise, they're helping bring this system online faster and more efficiently.

The ECP team has played a huge role in coordinating everything—working with partners like Boldyn Networks to get equipment ready and installed. Their work is a big reason this project is being recognized at the national level.

Why it matters:

This project shows how the Fairbanks community, the military, and UAF can work together to solve real problems. It's not just about Wi-Fi—it's about improving quality of life and building strong local partnerships.

Wi-Fi service is expected to go live around mid-May, making a real difference for the people who live and work on base.

# Employee of the Month - Josh Strickland

Please join me in congratulating Joshua Strickland as our May Employee of the Month.

Josh continues to make a significant impact within Utilities, particularly in Operations, where he has stepped into a key training role and is helping shape the next generation of operators. His knowledge, leadership, and willingness to step in wherever needed do not go unnoticed.

Below is the nomination as submitted:

**Nominee:** Joshua Strickland

**Nominee Dept/Team:** Utilities - Operations Department

**Reasons for Nomination:**

**Achievements and Accomplishments:**

Josh assumed the training "lead" for the operators. He has an abundance of knowledge of the CHP and Atkinson plants that he is imparting on the folks that are in training mode, particularly those who are on fast track for becoming CT3 Operators. Jacob Buckles was hired on from ARKK and is now a qualified CT3 operator on nights, end of week shift. Josh is using our formal OPS training program as a base of the training and further refines the training with site specific information. Josh has revised a number of the training program segments to make them more relevant to our power plants.

**Positive Attitude and Behavior:**

Josh is a very personable employee. He is very patient with his "flock" so they they thoroughly understand the information that is required to move up in the training program. Josh is an example to others of what a good work ethic should be. He can be called in to help out when necessary. He is definitely a TEAM plant.

**Teamwork and Collaboration:**

Josh will jump in and help out during situations which require "all hand on deck". He will lend a hand to other departments when they have questions about systems especially when we have odd Lock Out Tag Outs required my maintenance and/or contractors.

**Leadership and Initiative:**

Josh is a qualified CT3 operator and can be counted on to sit on the control board (in the box) when called upon to do so. Josh is the "go to guy" to get things done when there are plant upsets that require attention. He is well respected and when he takes charge of an evolution he gets the teams full attention and support. Josh agreed to assume the OPS training lead without hesitation. He has produced great results with his "trainees".

**Customer Service and Satisfaction:**

Josh helps the Utilities Department on a daily basis (when on shift) to maintain power production so that campus is well lit and comfortable.

**Additional Comments:**

Josh is one of our top performing operators. He has an outstanding level of moral character. He is a great example both here at work and outside of UAF.

Thank you, Josh, for everything you do to support our campus and your team!

-Kellie

If you'd like to nominate a colleague for next month's Employee of the Month, you can do so [here](#).

# Lambent at UAF Facilities Services

by Brittany Van Eck, Space Planner & Leasing Manager

This article is a response to a question submitted by a FS employee asking about the specific savings and operational efficiencies achieved by Lambent. Here is a 'behind-the-scenes' look at how we're putting the data to work.

## From Conference to Campus

Some quick background on Lambent and how we got here. When I started at Facilities in 2021 occupancy software was just becoming a hot ticket item. Large organizations were drastically reducing their footprint and optimizing space after COVID showed flexible work was widely achievable. These reductions were allowing companies to realize significant savings, and of course that catches everyone's attention. Initially, I was mostly seeing occupancy software that involved chair sensors or plug-in-the-wall room sensors. For a myriad of reasons, these didn't seem like the right solution for UAF, though I did know that if we wanted data-educated decisions we'd likely need some external help to dig into the details. Then, a few years ago at a Space Strategies Conference I heard a university give a joint presentation with Lambent. In case you don't know, Lambent uses Wi-Fi data to anonymously estimate occupancy for a building, floor, or zone level, and this university has saved significant dollars on operational expenses by connecting their HVAC systems with occupancy data.

Fast forward from that conference to about one year ago when I proposed to the Space Planning Committee that Lambent had a semester-long pilot for about \$10,000. My focus for this pilot was on space planning – both real-time knowledge of our occupancy to inform current requests and planning as well as longer-term campus master planning. With that I'd hoped to find other ways we could utilize this data within Facilities, and I found an excellent partner along the way with Vanessa and her Custodial Inspection team.

## Early Success in Custodial Services

Vanessa and her team were early adopters of Lambent. They took one look at the Dashboard and knew they could make meaningful changes to cleaning schedules based on occupancy. For example, we had three buildings in the pilot: Arctic Health Research Building, Elvey Building, and Duckering Building, and the Lambent Dashboard told us how many folks were on each floor at any given hour. Within 60 seconds you can see that even if AHRB and Duckering are both in the 125K-150K square foot range, they have vastly different traffic throughout the day. With this data it was obvious that these two buildings, which were on the same cleaning schedule, don't need to be, and Vanessa's proposed adjustments from that one piece of data are estimated to save tens of thousands of dollars in annual savings. That's a good ROI! When we realized the savings potential Vanessa and I and Temple sat down and selected 17 buildings that met our priorities for a 1-year extension. We know we can save money for custodial immediately, while also being ready to adapt to any larger-scale planning opportunities.

## The Big Picture: Strategic Space Planning

UA has been pushing for a predictable capital funding plan, and at UAF we also have our Campus Master Plan as well as a capital priorities plan to guide our path forward. When we have a future project, we will have the ability to plan with additional data, potentially saving us millions of dollars. Additionally, we can also strategically engage with spaces that have the lowest occupancies to see how we can better utilize one of our most costly assets – our square footage. A quick example of cost savings and reducing our DM (Deferred Maintenance) is using the data to determine if the occupancy of a building slated for demolition could be supported in another building that isn't being fully utilized. Being able to bring this data into that conversation at the start has big benefits and allows us to see how space is (and will likely be) utilized.

I want to recognize that there are a LOT of details about Lambent that I haven't shared related to how it works and the very specific examples of how it could be used. I would be thrilled to talk to anyone about those details, and also to explore if there are other ways we can be using this data to be good stewards of our space.

**Key Facts about Lambent at UAF**

- **Current Scale:** 17 buildings tracked at the floor and building level.
- **How it Works:** Uses existing Wi-Fi signals and algorithms to filter out “ghost” devices (like printers) to estimate actual human presence.
- **Privacy:** All data is anonymous and focuses on trends, not individuals.



This screenshot demonstrates some of Lambent’s data for the Murie Building.

Lastly, I am acutely aware of the nervousness folks can have around this type of program and am happy to answer any questions as they come up, as well as brainstorm any ideas for anyone who thinks they may be able to benefit from Lambent. Please do not hesitate to reach out ([bvaneck@alaska.edu](mailto:bvaneck@alaska.edu)), stop me in the hallway, or find me in my office in the Physical Plant.

Ever wonder why we do things a certain way at Facilities? If you have a ‘how’ or a ‘why’ question, send your wondering to Kellie Fritze at [kfritze@alaska.edu](mailto:kfritze@alaska.edu).



MNorth Campus Trails - "Thank you for the awesome job you do!"

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# Gerry Washburn

By Kellie Fritze

FS Team,

I want to share some difficult news. Gerry Washburn, who worked with us in Utilities, has passed away.

Gerry started with us on January 25 as a utilities laborer/coal handler. In the short time he was here, he made a strong impression. His supervisor shared that he was smart, hard working, and that he had real potential for advancement. We are going to miss his presence.

This loss hits especially close to home for us as a Facilities Services team. Gerry is Jamie Meyer's son. Jamie has done so much for all of us in her role as our HRC, and right now she and her family need our support, our patience, and our thoughts. Please keep Jamie and her family in your prayers.

The service will be held on Saturday, May 16 at 1:00 p.m. at the Chapel of Chimes.

If you or someone on your team is struggling with this news, support is available:

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

The EAP is offered through ComPsych and provides services to help with work and life challenges. These services are free, completely confidential, and available 24/7 at 1-888-969-0155.

TimelyCare

UAF students and employees also have access to TimelyCare, a virtual mental health and wellness platform. It offers 24/7 crisis counseling, ongoing counseling sessions, access to a health coach, and self-care resources. You can access TimelyCare through the app or online using your UAF credentials, including through Canvas. For more information, contact the Student Health and Counseling Center at 907-474-7043.

Please take care of yourselves and each other, and check in on your coworkers over the coming days.



Save the Date -

# Administrative Services Summer Picnic



Summer Picnic, Friday, June 12 from 12p-1:30p on the Wood Center Patio (ballroom reserved for overflow and weather). More info to follow. Thanks!!

## UAF Benefits

Contact the UA Benefits team  
(907) 450-8242 | [ua-benefits@alaska.edu](mailto:ua-benefits@alaska.edu)  
[Schedule one-on-one time](#)

Need personal benefits help?  
[TouchCare](#) | 1-866-486-8242  
[assist@touchcare.com](mailto:assist@touchcare.com) | [TouchCare's Website](#)

## Current Recruitments



<a href="#">532340 - CT3 Instrumentation Mechanic</a>	<a href="#">532033 - Summer Grounds Crew - Temp</a>	<a href="#">531979 - Vehicle Custodian &amp; Inspection Assistant - Temp</a>
<a href="#">532190 - Warehouse/Property Coordinator Assistant - Temp</a>	<a href="#">532106 - CT2 Electrician</a>	

## First Friday Tour at the Central Heat and Power Plant

The Utilities Operations Division of Facilities Services offers monthly tours of the UAF Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Plant. Tours take place on the first Friday of each month at 1:30 p.m., meeting on the first floor of the CHP Turbine Building (north side entrance).

To help us plan for the appropriate number of tour guides, please email [UAF-chptours@alaska.edu](mailto:UAF-chptours@alaska.edu) in advance to reserve your spot. If you have any questions or would like to arrange a special tour, please contact us at the same email address.

We look forward to seeing you!



*Thank you for reading!*