

WCU Unsung Heroes: “The Snow Crew”

Josh Braid got behind the wheel of a John Deere 310SK backhoe at 9 p.m. on Jan. 22 and, except for periodic catnaps in a makeshift “dormitory” at WCU’s Facilities Building, didn’t get out of that backhoe until almost midnight on Jan. 25. Braid was one of two dozen-plus WCU employees who were part of the *Snow Crew*. They worked round-the-clock during Winter Storm Jonas to clear the campus of snow.

“These employees did an extraordinary job,” said Jim Lewis, associate vice president for Facilities. “The Borough received 22.5 inches of snow; this was a storm of historic proportions. Thanks to the hard work of the *Snow Crew*, the University was able to resume normal operations on Wednesday, Jan. 27.”

“The *Snow Crew* made it to campus despite the difficulties in getting here, and toiled throughout the storm,” said President Greg R. Weisenstein. “Of course, they weren’t the only heroes of the blizzard. Our campus police officers, residence hall security workers, food service workers, and other essential employees should be commended for their hard work, as well.”

The *Snow Crew* consisted of Grounds employees as well as employees from other departments, including Custodial Services and Plant Operations, who had the necessary skills to operate backhoes and other heavy machinery. Braid is a safety inspector in the department of environmental health and safety.

“It was a real group effort from everyone involved. There were no individual heroes,” Braid was quick to note.

The secret to the *Snow Crew*’s stamina? Coffee and lots of it. “Coffee and oranges is what kept me going,” said Braid. “On Saturday morning, student workers opened up Einstein Bros. Bagels in Lawrence, and that was great. Patti Shields treated us all to coffee and bagels.” Shields is WCU’s custodial director.

Plenty of coffee and snacks also were available at the Facilities Building at 821 Matlack Street, where cots were set up for napping.

“I used to work in Facilities so I have plowed during many storms over the years,” said Braid. “This was, by far, the most challenging conditions I have seen.”

Even when snowfall amounts aren’t record-breaking, Braid thinks that the WCU campus is hard to clear of snow. “It wasn’t built all at once like a mall or office complex,” he noted. “There are numerous nooks and crannies, and buildings that were added over the years.”

But even the “nooks and crannies” were mostly cleared of snow when the University reopened on Jan. 27. And for that, we have this week’s WCU Unsung Heroes to thank -- the industrious *Snow Crew*.