



# Human Resource Services

## Gallery of Winners

### Emily Blatter



Emily Blatter, MEd, MSW '18, says there's never a boring day in her role as an assistant director and social worker for the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) CURE Scholars Program, adding that she can boil down her duties to four simple words: "Whatever the scholars need."

"If a CURE Scholar is having an issue at school, I'm the one reaching out to the family to see what the student or the family is going through," says

Blatter, a former CURE mentor who joined the program's staff in 2018 after graduating from the School of Social Work (SSW). "If we see a red flag, like tardiness at school or falling grades or not showing up to CURE events, that's when we contact the family. I work on a lot of different things from day to day, but basically, whatever the scholars need, that's my job."

It's a job she does quite well, which was clear Jan. 29 when Blatter was recognized as UMB's Employee of the Month in a ceremony in the President's Conference Room at the Saratoga Building. Doing the honors for the first time as interim president, Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS, surprised Blatter with the award, handing her a plaque, a letter of commendation, and news that an extra \$250 would be in her next paycheck.

Jarrell then sat down and asked Blatter to discuss her role with CURE, the pipeline program that offers curriculum and mentoring to prepare sixth- to 12th-grade students in Southwest Baltimore for rewarding careers in STEM, health care, and research. The UMB program, supported by the National Cancer Institute's Continuing Umbrella of Research Experiences (CURE) initiative and the National Institute of General Medical Sciences' Science Education Partnership Award program, now boasts more than 100 scholars.

“I’ve heard all of these marvelous things about your interventions with the CURE Scholars and families, and it’s a pleasure to have you as a member of the program’s staff,” said Jarrell, who asked about a recent situation involving eighth-grade scholars at a partner school who were showing poor grade-point averages. Blatter called a meeting of school staff, scholars, and parents to address the issue.

“The principals and the teachers at our partner schools all know us well,” Blatter says. “We try to work in unison with school leaders, teachers, and parents to break down barriers so our students can attend CURE and school ready to participate. Our parents really appreciate the advocacy and guidance that CURE provides. We really just try to bring everyone together to support our scholars.”

Gia Grier McGinnis, DrPH, MS, executive director of the CURE Scholars Program and Blatter’s supervisor, said of the meeting: “Emily stood up and told the scholars that they could do better and encouraged them to make better use of the resources of our program and their school. At the end of the meeting, families were able to stay and have separate discussions with the teachers.

“As the primary social worker on our staff, Emily is often in the middle of delicate situations like this that might involve crisis management or academic interventions. This all-in, immersive style of work is a signature of our program, and Emily fully embodies this in everything she does.”

Before joining UMB, Blatter worked three years for the University of Maryland, Baltimore County’s Choice Program, which offers programming, resources, and case management to promote positive outcomes for young people and families in Maryland. Her work there inspired her to pursue her Master of Social Work degree.

“I’m a proud social worker,” says Blatter, who has two SSW student interns helping the program and is hoping to add a third this year. “I enjoy reaching out to the families and providing services so that our scholars can access the full curriculum offered by CURE. Working with Gia is fantastic, too, and she’s very supportive of my work. I’m also thankful for Dr. Robin Saunders, the founding executive director of CURE, who realized the importance of having a social worker on the team.

“I’m honored and humbled to win this UMB award, but it’s really our whole team that’s worthy of recognition. Our professionals really are phenomenal, working days and nights and weekends for our kids. That’s something we can all be proud of.”

— Lou Cortina

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