



On the Front Lines: UMB Champions of Excellence: School of Nursing Facilities Team

November 18, 2020 | Laura Lee

Working behind the scenes, Chris Evans and Neil McGinn provide “immeasurable” service by taking on additional building maintenance duties with can-do attitude and solutions-based approach.

The **Champions of Excellence** campaign is a multiyear branding campaign at the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) in which we highlight individuals and teams that exemplify extraordinary accomplishment and represent excellence at the University. This year, UMB is highlighting the employees who've done exemplary work since the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded in March. During the next few months, The Elm will be featuring these UMB Champions, who are making Baltimore, our region, and in some cases the world a better place.



Today: Facilities Team, School of Nursing

Facilities management can be a thankless job. As employees breeze in and out of climate-controlled offices, flicking on overhead lights that illuminate every time, there is a dedicated team of University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) employees working to ensure that these conveniences remain operational.

At the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON), that team consists of facilities manager Chris Evans and maintenance mechanic Neil McGinn, whose contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic have been “immeasurable,” according to Bill Gardiner, MBA, the school’s associate dean for administration and finance.

“They have stepped up significantly during this challenging time and enabled the school’s faculty and staff to make the sudden, unexpected switch to telework and online learning as smooth as possible,” Gardiner said. “And, more importantly, they have done all of this with the highest can-do, let’s-find-a-solution attitude.”

(View video below.)

When a statewide COVID-19 lockdown took effect in mid-March and most UMB employees began working from the safety of their homes, Evans and McGinn — who were the only on-site UMSON employees for six months — continued to fulfill their duties and take on new roles.

In the early months of the pandemic, as concerns about exhausted hospital workers began to rise, the facilities team made extensive plans to convert a portion of UMSON into a refuge for University of Maryland Medical Center employees who needed a place to rest.

“Fortunately, that initiative did not need to materialize,” Gardiner said, “but the planning that involved the setup of 20-30 bed and rest areas safely throughout the school required tremendous thought and coordination.”

In addition to their regular duties, which include project planning and building infrastructure maintenance, Evans and McGinn have willingly taken on tasks such as keeping an inventory and distributing personal protective equipment, managing incoming mail, delivering technology to teleworking employees, and depositing checks, a job normally managed by UMSON’s Office of Administrative Services.

They even went office to office painstakingly gathering hundreds of withering plants and moving them to the first floor, where they receive regular watering and much-needed sunlight. Thanks to their efforts, the UMSON lobby has taken on the air of a lush greenhouse. “A lot of the plants we pulled out of the offices look better now than they did before,” Evans joked.

None of these projects could have been accomplished without McGinn, who Evans says is always willing to put a shoulder to the wheel to get the job done.

“He’s an absolute godsend. I can’t think of anybody else I’d rather be working with during this time,” said Evans, who added that he and McGinn were grateful to be selected as UMB Champions of Excellence.

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"It's quite an honor to be recognized for going the extra mile and taking care of things that aren't front and center," Evans said. "To have somebody recognize the hard work we're doing is really special."

UMB Champions of Excellence - Facilities Team, School of Nursing



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