



UMB News

Celebrating Vital Service Virtually

May 29, 2020 | By [Lou Cortina](#)

The University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) Employee Service Awards Luncheon was canceled this year because of the COVID-19 pandemic, but the annual show of appreciation must go on.

Instead of being singled out at a crowded Westminster Hall, the honorees were recognized in a video presentation by **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, interim president, and **Matt Lasecki, SPHR**, associate vice president for human resources, for the following awards: Cecil S. Kelly Memorial Employee of the Year, James T. Hill Scholarship, and Community Service Award. In addition, Jarrell and Lasecki congratulated employees who've reached length-of-service milestones.

"It's a great honor to recognize our dedicated staff who have served UMB faithfully," Jarrell said. "Our University is so fortunate to have a staff with such dedication, energy, and drive. I am sorry that we are not able to come together to celebrate in person, but that does not diminish the contributions that you have made to UMB over the years.

"There is enormous value in the kind of deep institutional knowledge that this group represents. You know the University's strengths and our challenges, our history and traditions, our culture and climate. What I'm most grateful for is that you know your work matters, and you do it like it matters."

Cecil S. Kelly Memorial Employee of the Year

The Employee of the Year, **Sheena Jackson, MS**, is the director of admissions in the Office of Student and Academic Services (OSAS) at the School of Nursing. Her colleagues say Jackson was instrumental in restructuring the school's admissions operations unit into one that's modernized, service-oriented, and more efficient.

In addition to other efforts, Jackson helped to implement a phone queuing system that reduced wait times and eliminated dropped calls, developed an automated applicant recommendation system that decreased application processing time, established an admissions tour program, and executed well-received recruitment events.

Jackson has worked at the school since 2007, moving from a temporary job to a coordinator's position in the nurse anesthesia program before joining OSAS in 2014, a move she describes as "a leap of faith."

"I decided that I wanted to be on the front line to deal with students in the admissions process," Jackson says. "I had dealt with a lot of faculty and current students in my previous role but never really with the prospective students, so that was my passion, to help them begin their journey to becoming a nurse.

“Helping people brings me joy,” adds Jackson, whose award includes a \$1,500 prize. “In this role, I am able to watch dreams come true. I work with prospective students who come to us with just a thought of becoming a nurse, and we’re able to take that thought and see it turn into a reality. And then on graduation day, to see the students graduate, it’s really the most fulfilling thing that I can imagine.”

When she learned she had won Employee of the Year, Jackson says she cried tears of joy. “I have been balancing a lot during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this was the reminder I needed, the reminder of why I do this every day,” she says.

“I love my job and the students that we serve. My success would not be possible if I did not have support from not only my amazing team but from my supervisor as well. I owe it to the admissions team and the students we serve to give 100 percent of me every day and nothing less.”

The award is presented to an employee who exemplifies the qualities of service, humanity, and commitment that Kelly exhibited during his career on UMB’s facilities staff from 1966 to 1989.

James T. Hill Scholarship

This year’s winner, **Lyndsay Smith**, works as a program specialist for the National Quality Improvement Center on Tailored Services, Placement Stability, and Permanency for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and Two-Spirit Children and Youth in Foster Care at the School of Social Work’s (SSW) Institute for Innovation and Implementation.

According to the program’s project director, **Angela Weeks, MPA**, Smith has gone above and beyond to seek out professional development opportunities during her three years at UMB.

“Last year alone, she presented at six conferences with the goal of sustaining and improving her public speaking skills,” Weeks says. “She also attended several on-campus offerings for professional development offered by the School of Social Work and UMB related to unconscious bias and diversity in the workplace.”

Smith, who is working toward a Master of Science degree in women’s and gender studies at Towson University, has served on SSW’s Diversity and Anti-Oppression Committee and worked with UMB colleagues to start a Diversity Advisory Council-sponsored affinity group for LGBTQ+ employees. The group aims to provide a place for LGBTQ+ staff and faculty to raise issues across UMB’s six professional schools and interdisciplinary Graduate School.

“I’ve dedicated my career so far to working toward equity and helping others in the public sector, whether in the fields of education, child welfare, health care, or nonprofit work,” Smith says. “I’m fortunate to have found a home to grow my career at UMB, an institution that values the development and growth of its employees.

“I’m honored to have my work recognized, and I’m excited to use the scholarship to continue improving the work I do here at UMB.”

The \$2,000 scholarship was established to support UMB’s commitment to staff development in recognition of Hill’s long and outstanding service to the University as well as his personal commitment to the professional development of UMB employees.

Community Service Awards

Two Community Service Awards were handed out for the first time, one to an individual and one to a team, in recognition of employees who are active in local community service organizations or have a long history of service on the local, national, or international level.

The individual honor went to **Adrianna Dunnock**, contracts administrator, Sponsored Programs Administration (SPA), Office of Research and Development, who is active in the Reach Foundation, a bicoastal charitable organization. As part of her role as the nonprofit’s program director, she has been working with Gaudenzia Weinberg Center to provide events for the women and children in the housing facility. The foundation also hosts an annual basketball tournament for children in Baltimore and Los Angeles, expungement clinics, and maternal health forums.

Emmanuel Shodeinde, JD, senior contracts administrator, says Dunnock's giving spirit is contagious throughout the SPA office. "No one is more deserving of an award for community service than Ms. Dunnock," he says. "One conversation with her, and the love for her community exudes through her body language and the unbridled passion of her words."

Shodeinde says Dunnock's charitable nature shined through when she told him that if she were to win the lottery, she would use her prize to build homes for single mothers in Baltimore.

"Generally when people talk about winning the lottery, they talk about all the things they would do for themselves," Shodeinde says. "Ms. Dunnock's desire is to help those who are less fortunate. If there were more Ms. Dunnocks in the world, the world would be a better place."

Dunnock says she was "pretty shocked" to have won the award, "especially to be recognized among such phenomenal individuals who are also working hard to better our communities."

She added, "I don't work in my community for the accolades, but more so because I love the people of Baltimore and I want to do my best to support our communities to provoke positive change. I am truly honored and appreciative for the recognition and support from UMB. I am proud to be part of an institution that not only is engaged with its employees but the surrounding community as well."

The team Community Service Award was given to the School of Nursing's (SON) Community Engagement Committee, which in 2019 included **Linda Daley Atila, MS; Ayamba Ayuk-Brown, MBA; Terrence Bradshaw; Samantha Hoffman, MS, CPNP-PC; Sarah Hokenmaier, MPA; Phyllis Lovito; Jillian Pahel; Mishawn Smith, MPA; Angela Staten, MS; Tara Wells; and Megan Woolley.**

The committee is a workgroup from SON's Staff Council, which organizes opportunities for faculty and staff to participate in volunteer experiences, fundraising events, and drives for items of need. In 2019, the group organized multiple events, including visits to Paul's Place to assist with lunch and clothing donation services as well as trips to UMB's Community Engagement Center to help serve lunch. Thirty-two staff or faculty members volunteered across these events for a combined 113 volunteer hours.

The committee also organized two service projects in 2019. Hooked on Helping was a program in which nearly 350 knitted or crocheted hats were donated to the neonatal intensive care unit at Mercy Medical Center. Fourteen employees combined to make hats, providing more than 400 service hours, and additional employees volunteered by donating yarn, posting on social media, creating flyers, organizing hat-making events, and managing collection stations.

"Several employees wanted to learn how to knit or crochet, and they used the opportunity to work with colleagues who could teach them," says **Mikki Coleman**, former chair of the Staff Council. "It was a great team-building experience and a fun way for staff and faculty members to work together."

The other service project, Share the Love, involved SON employees participating in fundraising efforts and volunteering to create 100 street survival kits that were donated to the UMB Police Department for its work with individuals experiencing homelessness.

"I am thrilled that our committee has been recognized for its work," says Hokenmaier, chair of the Community Engagement Committee and director of operations in SON's Department of Family and Community Health. "More importantly, I am proud to be part of this team and to work with colleagues who care deeply about making a difference in the UMB community."

Service Milestones

UMB annually recognizes employees who have hit service milestones in five-year increments between 20 and 50 years. In the video, a special note of appreciation was sent to seven employees who have served UMB for 40, 45, or 50 years:

50 years: Althea Pusateri, School of Medicine.

45 years: Beverly Huebel, School of Dentistry; **Mabel Zelle**, School of Medicine.

40 years: Linda Ferreira, Administration and Finance; **Regina Johnson**, Academic Affairs; **Christy Kopchinski**, Center for Information Technology Services; **Mary Jo Rodney**, Francis King Carey School of Law.

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