



# UMB News

## Employee Recognition: Awards, Tributes, and Fun

**April 22, 2021** | By [Lou Cortina](#)

For the second year in a row, the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) Employee Recognition and Service Awards event was held virtually because of COVID-19, but this year some fun, games, and video tributes were added to the April 20 program on Zoom.



*(From left) Aly Kwon, Rachel Laufer, and Josh Hiscock*

The University handed out the annual Cecil S. Kelly Memorial Employee of the Year Award, James T. Hill Scholarship, and Community Service Award while recognizing employees who celebrated service milestones in 2020, including one 50-year employee. The ceremony featured videotaped congratulations from UMB deans and

administration leaders, reflections from three longtime employees, and an online game of Kahoot for attendees featuring trivia questions about movies, sports, music, UMB, and more.

UMB President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**; **Juliet Dickerson, MS**, interim associate vice president, Human Resource Services (HRS); and **Mark Emmel, MAS**, director of organization and employee development, HRS, presided over the program, with help from University Events and Protocol and the Office of Communications and Public Affairs. Attendees offered congrats and shout-outs in the chat box, adding personal touches to the annual event that before COVID-19 featured lunch and a festive get-together at Westminster Hall.

“Our University is so fortunate to have a staff with such dedication, energy, and drive,” Jarrell said in his opening remarks. “It’s been an exceptionally difficult year for everyone, and I’m so proud of the creativity and resilience of our staff. I’m sorry that we couldn’t come together to celebrate in person, but that doesn’t diminish the contributions you have made to UMB over the years.

“There is enormous value in the kind of deep institutional knowledge this group represents. You know the University’s strengths and challenges, our history and traditions, our culture and climate. You are the ones whom colleagues seek out when they need the impossible. And during the past year, you have done the impossible.”

*(See or download the [event program](#).)*

## Cecil S. Kelly Memorial Employee of the Year Award

**Aly Kwon, MS**, regulatory affairs specialist for the University of Maryland School of Medicine’s (UMSOM) Center for Vaccine Development and Global Health (CVD), stepped up in a big way in early 2020 after a colleague resigned, leading to her recognition as UMB’s Employee of the Year.

Kwon, who works with ethics committees to get approvals for domestic clinical trials and monitors them as they continue, took on the additional task of overseeing the Vaccine and Treatment Evaluation Unit (VTEU) contract with the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, essentially doing a second job for five months.

VTEU is a large federal contract that has 18 active task orders, totaling over \$22 million in direct costs, according to Kwon’s supervisor, James Campbell, MD, MS, professor of pediatrics and chief of the pediatric clinical trials program at CVD.

Campbell said there was panic when the previous VTEU manager resigned, but it quickly subsided thanks to Kwon volunteering her services to keep the program running.

“During those five months, not one deliverable was missed. Not one report went in late. There was no interruption in the functioning of the VTEU program,” he said. “And there was no slide in Aly’s normal everyday regulatory work. She accomplished this voluntarily, without complaint of the extra stress this was adding to her life, and always with a smile on her face.”

The award, which comes with a \$1,500 bonus, 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.

Kwon said she was shocked to have won the award, given the accomplishments of her fellow nominees who were all UMB Employees of the Month in 2020, and plans to put her prize money toward a much-needed vacation with her husband and children.

“This honor is amazing,” Kwon said. “I’m just a small cog in a very big machine at CVD, and I want to thank my colleagues Brenda Dorsey, Lisa Chrisley, Carey Martin, Dr. James Campbell, and Dr. Kathleen Neuzil, our fearless CVD leader.”

### **James T. Hill Scholarship**

This year’s recipient, **Rachel Laufer, MPH**, lead research analyst at CVD, prides herself on finding new avenues for learning and professional development.

In 2019, she attended the Respiratory Syncytial Virus Network (ReSVINET) conference in Ghana to present her master’s thesis, “A Cost-Effectiveness Analysis of RSV Preventive Interventions in Mali,” to global experts in public health. RSV is a major childhood disease responsible for more than 60,000 deaths in children under 5 every year worldwide, most of them in low- and middle-income countries. The presentation helped attract funding support from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the nonprofit PATH.

In 2020, she attended the Summer Institute in Statistics and Modeling in Infectious Diseases (SISMID) hosted by the University of Washington, taking three courses, each focused on a different aspect of modeling disease dynamics. She plans to attend the 2021 event as well.

“Rachel is an extraordinarily talented member of my team, with demonstrated commitment to excellence in her work and to continuous improvement of her professional skills,” said Meagan Fitzpatrick, PhD, assistant professor at UMSOM and faculty member at CVD. “She has demonstrated an uncommon thirst for knowledge and unwavering drive, seizing on the unique opportunities for professional development that are offered by the University.”

“The James T. Hill Scholarship will afford me the opportunity to enroll in valuable courses from SISMID and learn advanced techniques in mathematical modeling that will better prepare me not only for my current position, but also for the rest of my career in global health,” Laufer said.

The \$2,000 scholarship was established to support the University’s commitment to staff development in recognition of James T. Hill’s long and outstanding service to the University as well as his personal commitment to the professional development of UMB employees.

### **Community Service Award**

This award recognizes employees who are active in local community service organizations or who have a long history of service on the local, national, and international levels. **Josh Hiscock, PhD, MA**, fits the bill.

Hiscock, executive director of annual giving and alumni relations at the University of Maryland School of Dentistry (UMSOD), is passionate about serving the community, volunteering over 25 hours a month with the Kiwanis Club of Ellicott City. He joined Kiwanis, a global service organization that works to strengthen communities and serve children, in 2010 and has served in several leadership roles with the Howard County club including president in 2017-2018.

He also is a longtime volunteer with Key Club International, mentoring and advising young leaders in the student-led high school service organization that is sponsored by Kiwanis. On the international level, Hiscock is chair of a seven-member Visionary Leadership Team creating a leadership development program for the 180,000-plus members of Kiwanis in 80 nations around the world.

In fall 2019, Hiscock founded a service initiative titled Backpacks for Breaks, which addresses food insecurity in Howard County, specifically at two schools in Columbia with low-income students. The past two Decembers, the program provided backpacks filled with food for students to eat during winter break, when free and reduced-price lunches are unavailable. In total, Backpacks for Breaks provided nearly 6,400 meals.

Hiscock coordinated with the Howard County Public School System staff to raise funds, purchase food, find volunteers, manage logistics, and secure news media coverage of the effort, which was the subject of articles in *The Baltimore Sun*, *Howard County Times*, and *Columbia Flier*.

“I saw a way for our club to make a meaningful difference and knew that we had to act,” Hiscock said. “We wanted to alleviate the stress on families so that kids could just be kids and enjoy their school breaks without worrying where their next meal would come from.

“Giving back to the community is important to me and has been a consistent passion in my life since high school,” he added. “It’s inspiring to work for an institution that values community engagement and service, and it’s an honor to be recognized by UMB and its leaders. We all have an opportunity to make an impact on the lives of others, and awards like this amplify the importance of each of us taking time to collaboratively address the needs of individuals and communities around us.”

### **50 Years and Other Milestones**

UMB annually recognizes employees who have hit service milestones in five-year increments between 20 and 50 years. In 2020, there were 121 such employees whose service time to the University totaled 3,115 years. One of them celebrated 50 years at UMB: Carol Stillwell, executive administrative assistant in UMSOD’s Division of Pediatric Dentistry.

Stillwell started at UMB in 1970 as a secretary at the University of Maryland School of Social Work and quickly shifted to a role in the UMB central office before joining UMSOD, where she has worked for the past 30 years. She is retiring at the end of April.

“What I’ve liked most about working at UMB is the camaraderie among our employees and that the people I’ve worked with all appreciate each other,” Stillwell said. “I love it here at the School of Dentistry. Seriously, I really love it. The people here are wonderful. Everyone manages to get along.”

Employees who celebrated milestones of 40 or 45 years in 2020 are:

**45 years: Paula Barkon**, Center for Information Technology Services, UMB; **Catherine Brown**, UMSOM; **Deborah Horstman**, UMSOD; **Nolene Taylor**, University of Maryland School of Nursing; **Darlene Watkins**, UMSOD.

**40 years: Sharon Bowser**, UMSOM; **James Gardner**, University of Maryland School of Pharmacy; **Bryan Soronson**, UMSOM; **Mary Travers**, UMSOD; **Lynn Vogelsang**, UMSOM.

UMB also announced during the program that **Lei Zhang, PhD**, research associate, UMSOM, was nominated for the University System of Maryland (USM) Board of Regents Staff Award, the highest honor bestowed by the board for achievements of staff employees from institutions within USM. Winners will be announced later this spring.

*Jen Badie contributed to this article.*

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