

UMB News

UMBrella Symposium Hails Possibilities of Courage, Bold Moves

March 13, 2024 | By [Lorri Angelloz](#)

“To some, it was impossible, but to you, it was completely possible,” Tisha Edwards, JD ’01, MSW ’00, remarked, praising Dawn Flythe Moore, first lady of Maryland, for her yearslong dedication to her ideals, her family, and people across the state.

Her comment came during the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) Women’s History Month Symposium, “Reimagine the Possibilities,” sponsored by the [UMBrella Group: UMB Roundtable on Empowerment in Leadership and Leveraging Aspirations](#).

The March 6 event, which featured Edwards in conversation with Moore during a morning keynote address, was kicked off by UMB President **Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS**, who welcomed nearly 200 participants to the annual event.

“February was Black History Month. March is Women’s History Month. We get to celebrate both,” Jarrell said before highlighting the accomplishments of the morning’s speakers, including Moore’s roles as philanthropist, campaign strategist, and the first Black first lady of Maryland and Edwards’ academic connections to the University as well as her position as Gov. Wes Moore’s secretary of appointments.

Following Jarrell’s remarks, Edwards opened the keynote discussion by touching on her almost decadelong friendship with the first family before asking Moore to recount her path from private citizen to state’s first lady.

Moore shared insights into her background, describing her journey from New York to Maryland, where she attended the University of Maryland, College Park, and her initial foray into state government, where she worked for then-Maryland Secretary of State John Willis. As she spoke about her current role as the state’s first lady, Moore expressed gratitude for the opportunity to serve alongside her husband. She also acknowledged the fears and uncertainties she encountered during Wes Moore’s campaign but added that the decision to run for office was a joint one.

“I married a public servant. And I believe in relationships, you have to let people do what they desire to do,” she explained. “We decided that together, we would make this run for office. And here we are.”

Moore touched on her roles in campaigns for former Gov. **Martin O’Malley, JD ’88**, and Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, as well as her time as chief of staff for Anthony Brown during his stint as lieutenant governor. The experience gave her unique insight into how a campaign for governor would impact her life as well as those of her husband and children, which is why she called upon the support of what Moore called “a whole family of troops,” including her mother, mother-in-law, and other relatives.

During the conversation, Edwards broached the subject of self-doubt with the first lady, noting, “We talked about your strength, your courage, your leadership. I want to talk about being vulnerable. And as women, I think we all know, there are moments when we’re in the room, and we’re questioning ourselves, our preparedness.”

Moore pointed to imposter syndrome, remarking that everyone in the audience had experienced it in some manner, and she connected the feeling to her journey in politics.

“I’m used to being a staff person. I’m used to being an advisor. But sometimes I sit at the table, and I’m like, ‘God, everybody’s looking at me,’” Moore said, and she acknowledged the importance of Governor Moore’s encouragement during such moments.



Shanna Hocking, founder and CEO of Hocking Leadership, LLC, reads an excerpt from her book, "One Bold Move a Day: Meaningful Actions Women Can Take to Fulfill Their Leadership and Career Potential," during the 2024 UMBrella Women's History Month Symposium.

so naturally to you, you might not even know what your superpower is until you do a little deeper reflection. Mine is resilience and determination," she explained, and stressed, "I just will not let other people deter me from reaching my goals. I will find another way to do this. Because in my heart, I know that I am meant for something more."

Hocking then delved more deeply into the concept of bold moves and how they contribute to personal and professional growth. She said that such moves are not always monumental actions but can also be small, courageous steps taken in everyday life.

"A bold move can be something that you shout to your friend from the rooftops, but the reality is, a bold move isn't always going to be something as significant as moving to a new city or taking a new job. Your one bold move might be asking for the server to bring you mustard you wanted instead of quietly wishing that they had," she said. "It might be speaking up in a meeting, even when your voice shakes, disagreeing with someone more senior than you are, negotiating your salary to get paid what you're worth. A bold move is one that challenges you to grow. Sometimes it's about capitalizing on an opportunity. And sometimes it's about creating that opportunity for yourself."

"You are where you are supposed to be, and you are in the room because that's where you belong. This is not some social experiment. This is not an act of benevolence," she recounted, reflecting on her husband's words of support. "This is because you really have something to offer."

Moore also discussed the role spirituality played in providing strength and encouragement during the run for governor. "No weapon formed against you shall prosper," she shared. "That was something that girded us with strength every day, you know, when things got very hard. We would say that to each other, because it was what we knew was going to get us over on the other side."

Jennifer B. Litchman, MA, UMB senior vice president for external relations and founder and chair of UMBrella, hosted the symposium's afternoon event, a fireside chat with Shanna Hocking, founder and CEO of Hocking Leadership, LLC, and author of "One Bold Move a Day: Meaningful Actions Women Can Take to Fulfill Their Leadership and Career Potential."

Hocking, who spent 20 years raising hundreds of millions of dollars and leading teams at organizations from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania to Duke University, opened the chat saying she discovered her passion for university fundraising at age 18.

She went on to describe how the COVID-19 pandemic prompted her to make two bold moves — launching a leadership development company and completing her book. Despite starting with no clients and being her family's primary breadwinner, she said her conviction in her mission propelled her, as it had her entire career. It was what led her to persevere in submitting her book proposal despite being rejected by 30 literary agents.

"You know, the thing about a superpower — and everyone has a superpower — it is the thing that makes you uniquely you. It is your strength, it comes

The discussion also explored the value of mentoring, specifically in mentoring other women. Hocking said such guidance was instrumental in her career.

"I was unabashedly focused on finding people who I admired to become my mentor. I would reach out to them, I would send them an email, and I would say, 'I'd love to learn more about your career,' " she explained. "And the thing about mentors is sometimes they're with you for one time, and sometimes they're with you for a whole job. Sometimes they're with you for a whole life."

Litchman applauded the importance of mentoring women in the workforce, recounting her own experience as a mentor before stating, "We have to remember that people are watching us, and they're modeling us. They are looking to us as that mentor." She emphasized the need for inclusivity and urged attendees to "pull up an extra chair" and create opportunities for all.

In addition to the two speakers, the symposium included midday breakout sessions, including:

"Embrace Your Curiosities and Experience More Joy: How Identifying and Indulging Your Curiosities Promotes More Joyful Living," presented by **Vanessa Carroll, MS**, nonprofit leadership consultant

"Finding Your Confidence (And Not Letting the Brushback Pitch Take You Out of the Game)," presented by Kerri Phillips, PhD, MSE, air and missile sector chief scientist, Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory

"Your Strengths Are Your Super Power," presented by Ronicka Briscoe, PhD, MPA, MS, executive coach, Winning on the Road, LLC

"Introverted Leadership," presented by **M.J. Tooley, MLS, AHIP, FMLA**, retired associate vice provost and retired dean, Health Sciences and Human Services Library, UMB

After the afternoon keynote address, the group took part in a session called "Taking Care of You: Self-Care Strategies for Mind, Body, and Heart," presented by Kathy Flaminio, MSW, LGSW, E-RYT 200, founder/CEO, Move Mindfully.

To shine light on talented and dedicated UMB employees, UMBrella also announced three awards to recognize the contributions made by individuals who espouse the mission and goals of the group. The 2024 winners, announced during the symposium, are:

UMBrella Person of the Year — On the Rise: Christina Manoto, MBA, MLIS, management advisory analyst, UMB

UMBrella Person of the Year — Leading the Way: Neijma Celestine-Donnor, JD, MSW, associate dean for diversity, equity, and inclusion and clinical assistant professor, University of Maryland School of Social Work

UMBrella Champion of the Year: Donna Parker, MD, FACP, senior associate dean for undergraduate medical education and professor, Department of Medicine, University of Maryland School of Medicine.

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