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ELM STORIES

Sustaining Excellence: Elizabeth Main Named UMB Employee of the Year

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The Office of Sustainability's director is honored for her creative and collaborative leadership in raising environmental awareness and launching initiatives that reduce UMB's carbon footprint.

Photo: Flanked by Malika Monger, left, and Dawn Rhodes, Elizabeth Main holds her plaque and certificate after being selected as UMB's Cecil S. Kelly Memorial Employee of the Year.



When Elizabeth Main, MPA, was honored as the University of Maryland, Baltimore's (UMB) **Employee of the Month in December 2024**, an audience of dozens filled the videoconference screen, underscoring the wide-ranging impact she's had with schools and departments around the University in her role as director of the Office of Sustainability.

Main was honored again during the Employee Recognition and Service Awards Luncheon at Westminster Hall on March 20, and this time the audience was larger and the honor bigger as she was named UMB's Cecil S. Kelly Memorial Employee of the Year from among a field of 12 nominees who were **Employee of the Month winners in 2024**.

Main said she is not one to seek the spotlight and was in "complete shock" after her name was announced by Dawn M. Rhodes, DBA, chief business and finance officer and senior vice president.

"There were so many amazing Employees of the Month last year, and I was not expecting this whatsoever," said Main, who received a certificate, crystal plaque, and \$1,000 as rewards for the Employee of the Year honor. "I don't like to be the center of attention. I would much rather work behind the scenes in a support role. Receiving Employee of the Month was unexpected and forced me to be front and center while receiving kind words from colleagues, and receiving Employee of the Year recognition pushed me even further into the spotlight."

The announcement promoted a hearty round of applause from the crowd of 200, then Rhodes praised Main for living UMB's core values through inclusive and collaborative work, her leadership in launching successful initiatives that significantly reduced UMB's carbon footprint, and working to establish, deliver, and enhance communications about sustainability across the University.

Rhodes read four quotes from the December Employee of the Month nomination, which was submitted by her supervisor, Anna Borgerding, MA, assistant vice president, Facilities and Operations, and included recommendations from Borgerding and four other UMB employees including Angela Ober, senior sustainability and effectiveness specialist, and Meredith Diloia, MS, sustainability and effectiveness specialist.

In one quote read by Rhodes, Denise Meyer, director, Environmental Services, said of Main: "Elizabeth's strategic vision has not only propelled our sustainability efforts forward but also has fostered a culture of environmental responsibility among staff and students alike. Her responsiveness and support for her team have created an environment where creativity and initiative are encouraged. She is always available to offer guidance, celebrate successes, and provide constructive feedback."

After the luncheon, Main thanked Borgerding, Ober, Diloia, and Meyer for their kind words and support.

"I would not have been nominated for Employee of the Month or received Employee of the Year if it wasn't for my amazing teammates, Angela and Meredith; my wonderful supervisor and mentor, Anna; and the incredible colleagues throughout UMB who support me and our office's work," Main said. "I share this award with all of them."

"I'm also grateful to see that the sustainability work our team has been doing since our office was founded in fall 2021 is being recognized at the institutional level. We are working each and every day to live out UMB's core values and integrate sustainability into the University's operations and culture, and this award tells me that we're on the right track."

Celebrating Service

Before the event turned its focus on Main, UMB highlighted employees who in 2024 celebrated 20-, 25-, 30-, 35-, or 40-year service anniversaries, including six who hit the 40-year mark: Jewell Benford, MSW; Keith Groves, DMin, MPC; Charlene Matthews; Marie Mackowick, PharmD; Christine Schmidt; and Mark Teske. Malika S. Monger, MPA, PHR, chief human resources officer and associate vice president, noted that the 134 employees in the group have combined for nearly 4,000 years of service to UMB. (See a list of the anniversary honorees in [the event program PDF](#).)

UMB President Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS, congratulated the employees, saying their institutional knowledge, commitment, and dedication are particularly needed at this time as the University faces funding challenges on the state and federal government levels and navigates policy changes from the Trump administration.

“You know the University’s strengths and our challenges, our history and traditions, our culture and climate,” Jarrell said. “You’re the ones whom colleagues seek out when they need the impossible. You give wise counsel and demonstrate our core values. What I’m most grateful for is that you know your work matters, and you do it like it matters. I’m so proud of the creativity and resilience of our staff. I’m glad that we can celebrate all of you today.”

UMB also announced the winner of the Community Service Award, Paris Barnes, MS, senior training specialist, University of Maryland School of Pharmacy, and the recipient of the James T. Hill Scholarship, Jahmoy Colquhoun, MS, program management specialist, UMB Police and Public Safety. *(Read about **Barnes’ community engagement efforts** and **Colquhoun’s commitment to professional development.**)*

To conclude, Monger recognized members of UMB’s Staff Senate who were in attendance and thanked staff who helped organize and promote the event from Human Resources and its Employee Learning and Development team and the Office of the President, Protocol and Special Events, and Communications and Public Affairs.

“It’s an honor to be here to celebrate all of you — and it’s an honor just to be working at UMB,” Monger said. “The people at our University are doing great things, and we have great staff members. You all make a world of difference, and I thank you for your service and dedication.”